



Agència  
per a la Qualitat  
del Sistema Universitari  
de **Catalunya**

# GUIDE TO THE ASSESSMENT OF ADDITIONAL DIMENSIONS IN THE ACCREDITATION OF RECOGNISED BACHELOR'S AND MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAMMES

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1. Aims of the guide .....	5
1.2. Regulatory framework.....	6
<b>2. ORGANISATION AND PLANNING OF THE ASSESSMENT .....</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1. Assessment committees .....	8
2.2. The assessment procedure .....	9
2.3. The appeal procedure.....	165
<b>3. DIMENSIONS AND STANDARDS OF THE ASSESSMENT .....</b>	<b>176</b>
3.1. Employment outcomes and development .....	176
3.2. Interaction between research and teaching.....	232
3.3. Internationalisation.....	286
<b>4. RESULTS OF THE ASSESSMENT .....</b>	<b>353</b>
4.1. Final report.....	353
4.2. Hallmarks .....	353
4.3. Effects of the assessment.....	364
<b>5. FOLLOW-UP AND CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT.....</b>	<b>375</b>
<b>6. REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>386</b>



## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Aims of the guide

Accreditations are summative assessments with the goal of assuring the quality of the educational service provided within the university system according to certain guidelines. In other words, they are designed to guarantee minimum thresholds within the dimensions established (“doing what needs to be done properly”). As stipulated in the Framework for the validation, monitoring, modification and accreditation of recognised university degrees (AQU Catalunya, 2016a), in the case of the Catalan university system the specific procedure for accreditation is set out in the *Guide to the accreditation of recognised Bachelor’s and Master’s degree programmes* (AQU Catalunya, 2016b). Nevertheless, accreditation of degree programmes is less conducive to encouraging continual improvement beyond these established minimums (Westerheijden *et al.*, 2006).

On the other hand, the accreditation of additional dimensions presumes that minimum quality levels have already been verified in the accreditation procedure, and the aim of this additional accreditation is to assess whether the dimensions stand out above average levels in specific areas of interest. In the same manner that accreditation provides a vision of quality as perfection (doing what needs to be done properly), these additional dimensions provide a vision of quality as an exception or mark of excellence (Rodríguez, 2013), which is taken on when embarking on an assessment procedure in order to stand out from other institutions or programmes in specific segments of study or research. Accreditation assessment standards, based on European quality assurance standards, are independent from the operation of other degree programmes in said standard. However, within certain standards, additional dimensions add an element of comparison or distinction. The degree programmes or institutions aspiring to the additional dimension must demonstrate commitment and results that stand out above the average.

Quality differs depending on the viewpoint from which it is reviewed (intrinsic perspective vs. extrinsic perspective, disciplinary perspective, user perspective, labour market perspective, etc.). These perspectives may even include aspects of criteria that contradict one another (Vroeijerstijn, 1995). For instance, while the percentage of associate teaching staff may be an indicator of quality from the standpoint of suitability for the labour market, the percentage of PhD teaching staff and the associated research indicators are far more significant when it comes to the sphere of research. Along these lines, the additional dimensions enable the field of specialisation of the degree programmes or institutions to be highlighted.

The aim of this guide is to provide an explanation of what these dimensions consist of in order to allow interested parties to assess whether it would be appropriate to apply for the respective accreditation, whilst detailing the entire assessment procedure that has been designed on the context of the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) (ENQA, 2015).

Accordingly, by lending priority to the improvement of information available to the actors involved (students, universities, etc.), and to the improvement of the quality of the degree programmes,

AQU Catalunya is allowing for the possible accreditation of three additional dimensions in those degree programmes where they have a particular impact. To be precise, the dimensions incorporated in this guide are as follows:

- **Employment outcomes and development.** Employability is one of the pillars underpinning the European labour market strategy. Ever since the Sorbonne Declaration was signed in 1998, it has formed part of the strategy of the European Higher Education Area. Employability has also been an important aspect of the Catalan university system (SUC), as shown by the surveys regularly carried out since 2001. With this dimension, the aim is to lend distinction to degree programmes with results that show sound professional relevance and excellence in their access to the labour market guidance services and processes.
- The minimum requirements to apply for the assessment of this dimension are: sound employment outcomes; and a demonstrable interest in steering the programme to meet the needs of the labour market (for instance, incorporating mandatory external training placements) and in favouring graduates' access to the labour market by engaging in suitable guidance and mediation actions.
- **Interaction between research and teaching.** Since the early 19th century, universities have been conceived as institutions for the transfer and creation of knowledge (modern universities according to the Humboldtian model of higher education), in other words, institutions based on unity between teaching and research (AQU Catalunya, 2005). With this dimension, the aim is to lend distinction to degree programmes that not only excel in research but for which research is also a core component of teaching.
- The minimum requirements to apply for the assessment of this dimension are: teaching staff on the programme with active sexennials (six-year periods of external assessment of research activity) involving research that is at least partly related to the study programme; and student research projects (final-year projects and dissertations of Bachelor's/Master's degrees) that are research-oriented.
- **Internationalisation.** The process for the establishment of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is conceived as an initiative of international cooperation to heighten the competitiveness of HEIs within a global context. The concept of internationalisation dates back to the 1990s (Wit *et al.*, 2015), a time when actions such as mobility and education in multicultural skills went from being isolated, reactive strategies to proactive strategies stemming from increased cross-border training, marketing and competitiveness. With this dimension, the aim is to lend distinction to degree programmes that not only offer mobility of students and teaching staff but which also capitalise on mobility in order to forge intercultural skills and promote international networking.
- Accordingly, the minimum requirements to apply for the assessment of this dimension are: mobility applied to students and teaching staff; and evidence that the study programme is geared to training professionals in international settings (for instance, working in multicultural teams, etc.).

For these additional dimensions, this guide has the following twofold goal:

- To enable faculties to be well-acquainted with the procedure for assessing additional dimensions to allow them to act accordingly and strengthen the specific areas viewed as particularly significant in the improvement of those dimensions.
- To guarantee that the individuals in charge of implementing the processes linked to additional dimensions and indeed the people assessing their implementation have the same points of reference.

## 1.2. Regulatory framework

Organic Act 4/2007, of 12 April, amending Organic Act 6/2001, of 21 December, on Universities (LOMLOU) lays the foundations for adapting university to the new EHEA. Among other aspects, the Act determined a new structure for university degree programmes and qualifications. Subsequently, Royal Decree 1393/2007, of 29 October (amended by Royal Decrees 861/2010 and 99/2011), established the organisation of recognised university programmes. In keeping with the principles set forth in the Organic Act, the Royal Decree extended university independence whereby, on the basis of established rules, it was now incumbent upon the universities themselves to determine and propose the study programmes to run and the qualifications to award, without being bound by a pre-established catalogue as they had been hitherto.

In return for greater university independence, proposals for new degree programmes must be submitted to an *ex ante* assessment procedure (known as verification) and, after a period of four years (for Master's degrees) or six years (for Bachelor's degrees and PhD programmes), be submitted to an *ex post* assessment procedure (accreditation) based on the procedure and terms stipulated by the Government of Catalonia. In all cases, this must include a visit by experts external to the university. The potential for each degree programme to be granted recognition for one or more of the three additional dimensions – namely, **employment outcomes and development, interaction between research and teaching, and internationalisation** – is reliant on this accreditation procedure.

**Accreditation of additional dimensions is an optional process. The result has no bearing whatsoever on the outcome of the accreditation awarded to the specific degree programmes.**

The criteria for accreditation are determined jointly by the quality agencies that are registered on the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) in line with international quality standards, in particular, the ESGs (ENQA, 2015) and the remaining legal regulations.

## 2. ORGANISATION AND PLANNING OF THE ASSESSMENT

### 2.1. Assessment committees

The procedure for assessing additional dimensions involves external assessment committees (CAEs) and the AQU Catalunya Institutional and Programme Assessment Committee (CAIP).

#### 2.1.1. External assessment committees (CAEs)

The assessment process for each additional dimension relies on an external assessment committee (CAE, from the Catalan) which undertakes a visit to the institution. It is incumbent upon said body to draft a report on the visit on the basis of the standards laid down herein.

There must be at least one different CAE for each of the three additional dimensions envisaged in this guide. Each CAE must be formed by no less than four individuals with the following profiles:

1. Experts in the additional dimension
 

At least two individuals with expertise in the respective additional dimension. Specifically, according to the dimension:

  - **Employment outcomes and development:** academics with acknowledged standing (sexennials) and expertise in the employment framework and/or in career guidance/placement services. Management of external training placements, participation in cooperation projects with employers (dual training, industrial PhD, etc.) and previous experience in a managerial role would be an advantage.
  - **Interaction between research and teaching:** academics with acknowledged standing in the field of research (sexennials) and teaching (five-year teaching periods, teaching awards or distinctions, participation in teaching innovation projects, etc.).
  - **Internationalisation:** academics with expertise in processes outside Spain, preferably in processes for assessment of internationalisation, competitive international projects and mobility. Experience/management/positions in international relations services would be an advantage.

At least one of these two individuals should be a teacher and researcher from a HEI. As a general rule, the committee should be chaired by the academic person with the greatest seniority, provided said individual has held a position of authority on a governing body.

2. Methodology expert

At least one person with specific expertise in quality assessment methodologies for university systems. These people will preferably be technical staff of a quality agency or a technical quality unit (UTQ, from the Catalan) at a university outside Catalonia, with

experience in quality assurance systems and quality assessment of degree programmes, institutions or teaching staff.

### 3. Student

An undergraduate or postgraduate student.

Members of CAEs are selected and appointed in accordance with the AQU Catalunya selection criteria, and they must ensure that independence, objectivity, absence of conflicts of interests, ethical commitment and confidentiality form the pillars of their work. Accordingly, committee members should be external to the institution they are assessing and have no association with it whatsoever.

To ensure the necessary transparency, the composition of CAEs will be published on the AQU Catalunya website.

#### **2.1.2. The Institutional and Programme Assessment Committee**

Among other functions, it shall be incumbent on the Institutional and Programme Assessment Committee (CAIP, from the Catalan) to issue the final assessment report on the additional dimensions for each degree programme.

The CAIP shall be formed by the following members:

1. A chairperson.
2. No more than six people of acknowledged academic or professional standing from the university community of Catalonia.
3. No more than six people of acknowledged academic or professional standing from the international university community.
4. A secretary, who must be an individual employed by AQU Catalunya, appointed by the committee's chairperson.

It is incumbent on the CAIP to select and appoint the members of the CAEs who will conduct external visits, assuring independence, objectivity, absence of conflicts of interests, ethical commitment and confidentiality.

To ensure the necessary transparency, the composition of the CAIP and the background of its members will be published on the AQU Catalunya website.

## **2.2. The assessment procedure**

### **2.2.1. Description of the assessment procedure**

The procedure for the assessment of the additional dimensions comprises the following key stages:

1. **Application for participation.** Institutions must submit an assessment application for each degree programme and dimension on the context of the specific agreement established between the university and AQU Catalunya for conducting the assessment.

In the application, the institution shall undertake to provide AQU Catalunya with access to the documentation specified in this guide.

The procedure for submitting and recording an official application is detailed on AQU Catalunya's website ([www.aqu.cat](http://www.aqu.cat)).

2. **Planning the visit.** AQU Catalunya will coordinate with the Catalan HEIs or universities to set the dates of external site visits to each institution. This coordination must be approved at the end of the academic year immediately prior to the one in which the visit will be conducted or at the very beginning of the respective academic year.
3. **Documentation to be supplied to the CAE.** Three months before the CAE conducts its assessment visit to the institution (excluding August and other bank holiday and/or holiday periods), the institution must make available the following documentation associated with the dimension applied for:

- a) **The self-assessment report.** The self-assessment report must be based on the guidelines specified in section 2.2.2 of this guide.
- b) **A sample of students' achievements**, if applicable. A selection of evidence should be prepared from assessment tests of students within the framework of final-year projects and dissertations of Bachelor's/Master's degrees, external training placements and a selection of compulsory subjects. The selection of the written tests, projects and/or reports should be carried out in such a way that there are examples of varying marks and it should be taken from the last completed academic year.

4. **Preliminary analysis.** The CAE will conduct a preliminary analysis of the documentation and evidence provided to identify quality issues or areas in which more details are required, which must be addressed before the external site visit. During the aforesaid visit, an assessment will be made of the quality and relevance of both the evidence and the self-assessment report. On the basis of this, the external assessment committee chairperson and secretary will have to decide if more or better information needs to be provided by the institution.

If the CAE considers it highly unlikely that a favourable report will be issued upon completion of the entire procedure, it must notify the CAIP of this circumstance so the latter may decide whether it is appropriate for the procedure to continue. If applicable, the process may be concluded thereupon.

5. **Preliminary site visit (optional).** Depending on the outcome of the preliminary analysis, and no later than six weeks after the documentation is submitted, the CAE may decide to

carry out a preliminary visit to the institution to request additional information, resolve doubts or address any other matter it deems important. In this case, the institution must be represented by at least the following two people: the academic coordinator and the person responsible for processes linked to the additional dimension under assessment. During the preliminary visit a decision will be made as to whether to pursue the external assessment process or whether the evidence provided indicates that it would be suitable to postpone it.

6. **Preliminary report.** On the basis of the preliminary visit, or when none is made, on the basis of the preliminary analysis, the CAE will issue a preliminary report assessing the quality of the evidence submitted, identifying areas in which additional evidence is required, and advising on whether the faculty should continue with the certification process.
7. **Visit.** The primary goal of this stage is to gain an acquaintance *in situ* of how aspects referred to in the additional dimensions in degree programmes are unfolding. During the visit, the evidence provided will be compared or validated, any discrepancies or conflicts will be identified and, if applicable, further evidence will be obtained in order to review areas not envisaged in the documentation provided. In order to perform the assessment, the CAE should use the provided rubric table, giving appropriate examples.

Generally speaking, the external visit is conducted 6 weeks after the preliminary report has been issued. The faculty of the degree programme organises the timetable for the visit, which defines the various previously agreed hearings that are to be held with the CAE and the visit to the facilities. Space and facilities will also need to be set aside for the work of the CAE.

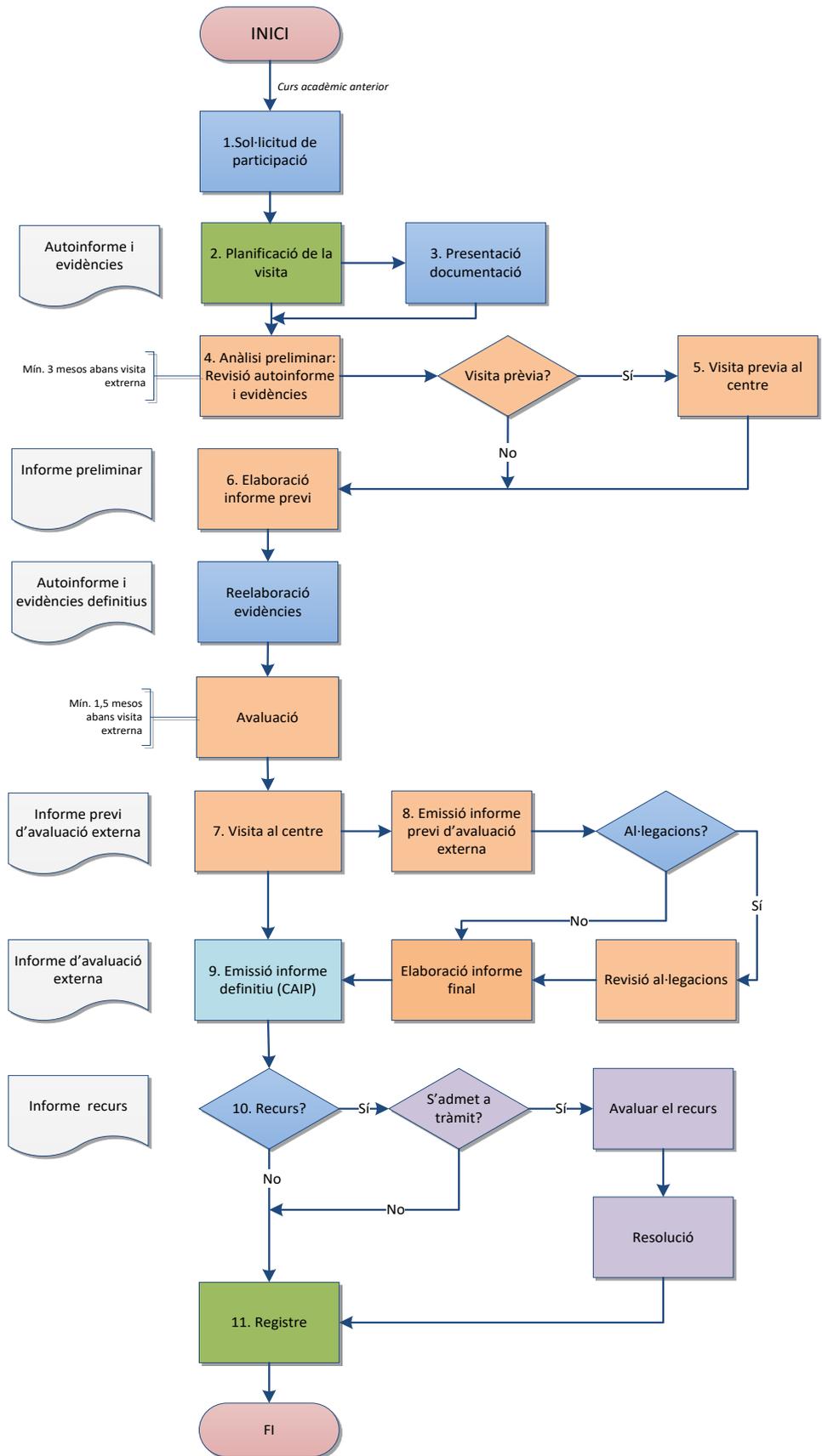
A half day-long visit is considered a suitable average length of time for assessing each dimension in each degree programme.

8. **Preliminary external assessment report.** No later than six weeks after the visit, the CAE will send AQU Catalunya its preliminary report to be forwarded to the institution, which will then have a period of 20 days in which to send its observations.
9. **Amendments to the preliminary report and issue of the definitive external assessment report.** Within a maximum period of 20 days, subject to an examination of the remarks made on the report by the institution, the CAE shall draw up and issue a definitive visit report and the CAIP will issue its definitive report assessing the additional dimension. Therein, it will identify best practices observed and make recommendations for enhancing the additional dimension in the degree programmes. The result of the report will be specified as favourable or unfavourable, as described in section 2.2.3 of this guide.
10. **The appeal procedure.** An appeal may be lodged to AQU Catalunya Appeals Committee in objection to reports issued by the CAIP. The procedure for lodging and resolving on appeals is detailed in section 2.3.



11. **Register.** AQU Catalunya will create a specific public register of the degree programmes for which a favourable assessment has been given for each additional dimension, which will be made available via its website.

An organisational chart of the procedure for assessing additional dimensions is set out below:



### 2.2.2. The self-assessment report

In order to assure the quality of the process, amongst other aspects the self-assessment report should be:

- Complete, rigorous and specific. The report should include an analysis and assessment of what are considered the key elements for the particular context being analysed and for enhancement.
- Based on evidence produced in the follow-up process and on new evidence from the study programmes (for example, student achievements).
- Systematic and detailed in the analysis of the causes and consequently of whatever is necessary to carry through the improvements and enhancements.
- Balanced, in terms of both the positive aspects and aspects to be improved or enhanced.
- Shared and validated by the university community in order to ensure its representation in the analysis. The self-assessment report should be made public and approved according to the procedures laid down in the IQAS.

The self-assessment report – focusing solely on the additional dimension under assessment – should be prepared on the basis of the following stages:

1. **Setting up the internal assessment committee (CAI, from the Catalan).** The unit under assessment, in accordance with the IQAS, has to set up the faculty's committee that is responsible for producing the self-assessment report. The committee will need to consist of representatives from the faculty's various stakeholders, such as academic coordinators, teaching staff, administrative staff, students and any others considered appropriate.
2. **Systematic data collection.** By following the procedures set out in the IQAS, the CAI needs to aggregate the information gathered in previous follow-up reports and add the most recent data and figures corresponding to the last academic year. The aggregation will include the data and analyses of both the degree programme and the field linked to the additional dimension assessed. The information can be either quantitative or qualitative, and range from input data and indicators to processes and the outcomes of activities in the faculty. The information in the self-assessment report should encompass the past five years over which the degree programme has been taught.
3. **Drawing up the self-assessment report.** Once all information is available, the CAI will need to thoroughly analyse and discuss the data and figures in order to meet the pertinent standards and establish the basis for an effective enhancement plan.

The self-assessment report must meet the standards for accreditation defined in this guide in relation to the additional dimension under assessment. It is therefore not necessary to incorporate aspects of the degree programme that are not directly associated with the dimension. The self-assessment report is to be set out according to the following main sections:

- Presentation of the degree programme in relation to which the additional dimension is being assessed.
  - The process of producing the self-assessment report.
  - Assessment of compliance with standards.
  - Proposal of the enhancement plan.
  - Evidence.
4. **Public information.** The institution will submit the self-assessment report for public consultation in order that it may be validated by the university community. No report which has not been presented for public consultation may be submitted to AQU Catalunya.
  5. **Final validation and referral to AQU Catalunya.** Lastly, the self-assessment report has to be validated by the institution's corresponding body before being referred to AQU Catalunya.

### 2.2.3. Results of the certification process

The assessment standards for the three additional dimensions included in this guide are set out in section 3 herein.

These standards are centred on the approach and the tools implemented within the degree programme to favour the specific additional dimension. Moreover, they are focussed on the results obtained in the aforesaid dimension. In other words, to secure a favourable assessment, it is necessary to implement distinctive actions that favour the dimension and, at the same time, achieve positive results within it.

In accordance with the rubrics included in each of the additional dimensions detailed in this guide, every standard is assessed according to three levels:

- “Quality-level compliant”: the standard is reached in full and, furthermore, examples of best practices are identified that exceed the required minimums.
- “Compliant”: the standard is reached in full within the study programme.
- “Non-compliant”: the study programme fails to achieve the minimum level required by the respective standard. The improvements that need to be implemented are so substantial that it would not be possible to reach the standard within a reasonable timeframe.

Once all the standards of a dimension have been assessed, the CAE will make an overall review of the extent to which the dimension is implemented as a whole. The assessment of each dimension will be determined by the weighting of the various standards that comprise the dimension. As a result, an assessment of “implemented to a satisfactory level” may be attained even if a certain standard is assessed as non-compliant.

The final outcome of the assessment conducted by the CAIP on each of the additional dimensions will be identified using the same three levels: “quality-level compliant”, “compliant” or “non-compliant”, as specified in section 4.1 of this guide.



### **2.3. The appeal procedure**

Once the final accreditation report has been issued by the CAIP, the institution will have a period of 20 days in order to lodge an appeal to AQU Catalunya Appeals Committee, which must issue a resolution within a period of no more than 3 months.

Upon completion of this procedure – either due to no statement being lodged by the institution or due to the statement being resolved – the assessment will be deemed as terminated and, to this end, the result will be disclosed as specified in section 4 of this guide.

### 3. DIMENSIONS AND STANDARDS OF THE ASSESSMENT

Below are details of the standards for assessing each of the three additional dimensions included in this guide: employment outcomes and development, interaction between research and teaching, and internationalisation.

#### 3.1. Employment outcomes and development

According to the *Report on Progress in Quality Assurance in Higher Education* (European Commission, 2014), one of the challenges in university education is meeting the needs of the labour market.

From the standpoint of the labour market, quality has to do with the relevance of the study profile within the labour market, the achievement of specific, cross-disciplinary skills enhancing graduates' employability and the existence of effective services that simplify the transition of graduates (Association of Dutch Polytechnics and Colleges, 1993).

According to the OECD (OECD, 2013), a skill-enhancing strategy for a more productive economic outlook calls for the availability of a system of information on changing demands for skills, the identification of strengths and weaknesses in skills achieved to date and the development of policies for improvements. In addition, the aforementioned body favours an international comparison of skills achievement and closer cooperation with the economic sector when designing and implementing study programmes.

McKinsey (McKinsey, 2013) points to three key moments in the design of a system that encourages accession to the labour market:

- Transition in university (job guidance and information).
- Development of studies, known as building skills, comprising three areas: study plan (programme content and quality), delivery (teaching staff and teaching approach) and accountability (quality assurance on an international level).
- Job searching: guidance services.

In short, the assessment of excellence with regard to employability must take into account the dimensions shown below:

- The focus, structure and content of the study plan – to include or not professionally-oriented training placements.
- The teaching/learning process: teaching methodology, types of activities and assessment of learning, particularly the assessment of external training placements.
- Specific actions (external or supplementary to the study plan) for developing employability-related skills.
- Operating structures and direct actions (for example, placement service) encouraging the graduates' employment integration.

The results of the employment outcomes survey must be incorporated into the processes for designing and reviewing study plans and the plans of action for job placement services.

Furthermore, it is both necessary and pertinent to assess the employment outcomes from the objective viewpoint of the status attained and from the subjective viewpoint of how suitable the studies are to the performance of the occupation.

Lastly, it is important not to overlook an array of structural factors that may affect the final outcome of employment integration, both with regard to the labour market and the type of study programme. It is known that the type of study programme determines both the focus of the studies and the type of professional transition. For instance, studies of a professional nature involve access to the regulated labour market (teaching, nursing, engineering); on the other hand, graduates from unofficial study programmes have access to the open labour market and compete with graduates from other study programmes (AQU Catalunya, 2005).

However, whilst the employability dimension provides an indication to users, minimum results are needed in relation to employment outcomes indicators (employment rates above the working population average for the age range and high adaptation rates). Nevertheless, **although necessary, employment outcomes alone do not suffice**. There must be a demonstrably active interest in gearing the programme to meet the needs of the labour market (for instance, the existence and weight of mandatory external training placements or associate teaching staff) and in encouraging access of graduates to the aforementioned labour market through suitable actions.

In accordance with the above, three sub-dimensions need to be considered in order to assess employment outcomes and development:

- A. Study programme for employability
- B. Specific programmes for developing skills to improve employment outcomes
- C. General employment outcomes

Accordingly, upon awarding accreditation to the degree programme, the following standard is expected to have been met:

The study programme adopts an approach oriented to the employment integration of its students and fits within an institutional strategy for developing professional skills and fostering employment integration, the results of which are positive.

The standard is broken down into the following specific sub-standards:

- 1.1. The study programme is oriented to the professional environment within its field, it includes professionally-oriented training placements and some of its teaching staff have employment experience in the specific field of the degree programme.
- 1.2. The institution runs programmes encouraging the achievement of professional skills and fostering employment integration.
- 1.3. The degree programme achieves employment outcomes indicators in relation to its graduates that are aligned to the respective production sector and the current economic climate.

## A. Study programme for employability

The study programme must be geared to fostering the employment integration of its graduates: it must take into account the professional environment within its field and include external training placements and professionally-oriented final-year Bachelor's/Master's degree projects and dissertations, among other areas. Another significant factor will be the professional track record of teaching staff. The results of indicators on satisfaction with the education received and external training placements will also play a decisive role in the assessment of this dimension.

Specifically, it is expected that the study programme will review the following aspects and provide evidence on them:

### 1) Programme focus

- a) Level of institutionalisation in the relationship between the study programme and the labour market.  
Instruments for assessing employability (for example, observatories, alumni associations, teaching staff involved in the labour market, employment surveys, etc.).  
Liaising bodies, frequency of meetings or consultations. Mechanisms for gathering the opinion of employers (boards, consultations, surveys with training placement tutors, consultations with professional bodies, documents on the employment prospects or situation, etc.).
- b) Mechanisms for updating the study programme on the basis of evidence gathered through information collection systems on demand for labour.  
Frequency of meetings or consultations.  
Evidence showing that employers' opinions have been incorporated into processes for re-designing and reviewing study plans.
- c) Incorporation of the results of the employment integration survey into the re-design and review of study plans.
- d) Status of training placements: weight (ECTS) of compulsory external training placements and, if applicable, optional placements.

### 2) Teaching staff profile

- a) Professional experience and fulfilment of teaching topics. Percentage of associate teaching staff. Professional track record of associate teaching staff (for instance, number of years' experience in the sector, position, etc.).
- b) Suitability in supervising professional training placements.

### 3) Training placements: quality, supervision and assessment

- a) Existence of a plan for external training placements. Selection of work centres and management of the allocation process. Mechanisms for reviewing and improving the training placement plan.

Sufficient number and suitability of work centres in relation to the sectors of integration. Mechanisms for the assessment and follow-up of centres. Student satisfaction with the range and quality of training placement centres available.

- b) Supervision mechanisms. Number of students for each training placement tutor. Dedication of training placement tutors. Acknowledgment mechanisms for external training placement tutors. Student satisfaction with the training placement supervision process.
- c) Assessment mechanisms. Existence and suitability of assessment rubrics and criteria. Extent to which the results make it possible to distinguish between students.
- d) Professionally-oriented practical assignments included in subjects. This section includes practical assignments such as problem-solving, case studies, laboratory experiments, clinical practices, field trips, etc. These must be practical assignments that require assessment of work or outcomes. In terms of quality criteria, consideration will be given to their weight (ECTS) compared to other more traditional methodologies (such as lectures), their nature (practical assignments firmly based on professional practice), student satisfaction, transparency in assessment (for instance, through the use of rubrics) and the assessment results.
- e) Final-year Bachelor's/Master's degree projects prepared on the context of cooperation with a company or institution (suitability of the nature of the project to the professional activity, suitability of supervision processes and, lastly, suitability and transparency of assessment criteria).
- f) Results:
  - Employment integration percentage based on professional training placements.
  - Satisfaction with professional training placements: work centres, teaching staff and students.

#### 4) Satisfaction with the study programme for employability (AQU Catalunya survey)

- a) Valuation of theoretical and practical education equal to or above the average for the discipline.
- b) Likelihood of the studies being run again equal to or above the average for the discipline.
- c) Employers' opinion regarding the education received by graduates.

## B. Specific programmes for developing skills to improve employment integration

Aside from gearing the study programme towards employability, the institution will need to have implemented further actions for developing skills for employability and to foster employment integration.

Specifically, it is expected that the institution will review the following aspects and provide evidence on them:

### 1) Actions for developing skills for employability

- a) Planning of such actions.

- b) Analysis of the level of achievement of skills and their usefulness to graduates who perform university-level functions. The analysis must show strengths on a comparative basis with other similar degree programmes (lower skills gap, strength in a particular cross-disciplinary skill, etc.).
- c) Participant satisfaction.

## 2) Actions to foster employment integration

This includes placement services, tutorial programmes and career guidance, etc.

- a) Staff resources and structure of the unit in charge. Existence of staff with expertise in career guidance.
- b) Procedures for action.  
Coordination between tutorial actions, the guidance service, the placement service and community services.
- c) Volume of activity:
  - i) Supply and demand in relation to the number of graduates.
  - ii) Student participation in the placement service and other actions.
- d) Employment outcomes:
  - i) Percentage of individuals gaining their first job through training placements as part of their study programme compared to the average for similar degree programmes.
  - ii) Percentage of individuals gaining their first job through the university placement service compared to the average for similar degree programmes.

## C. General employment outcomes (AQU Catalunya survey)

Every three years since 2001, AQU Catalunya has conducted an employment integration survey on Catalan university degree programmes. Initially focussing on Bachelor's degrees, it has gradually come to incorporate Master's and PhD programmes. The survey provides a wealth of information and indicators concerning the quality of employment integration among students who graduate in Catalonia.

The institution is expected to conduct a comparative review of at least the following indicators:

- Rate of employment (percentage of graduates in employment 3 years after receiving their qualification).
- Adequacy rate (percentage of graduates performing university-level functions).
- Specialisation rate (percentage of graduates performing functions specific to their degree programme).
- Income (indicator example: percentage of employees earning a salary of more than two thousand euros).
- Percentage of graduates on a permanent contract.
- Analysis of the skills gap in the job. Strengths in the study plan (high level of education and high level of usefulness) and weaknesses (high level of usefulness but poor level of education) should be highlighted.

For graduates, the comparative analysis should be conducted overall for the discipline; for Master's, it should be in relation to the average for Catalonia.

## Rubrics

<b>1.1. The study programme is oriented to the professional environment within its field, it includes professionally-oriented training placements and some of its teaching staff have employment experience in the specific field of the degree programme.</b>	
<b>Quality-level compliant</b>	The degree programme study plan is geared to professional practice, it incorporates it in most subjects and it includes compulsory training placements with highly satisfactory results.
	Most teaching staff have professional experience in the specific field of the degree programme.
	Graduates are highly satisfied with their employability-related skills training.
<b>Compliant</b>	The degree programme study plan is geared to professional practice, it incorporates it in many subjects and it includes compulsory training placements with satisfactory results.
	Many teaching staff have professional experience in the specific field of the degree programme.
	Graduates are satisfied with their employability-related skills training.
<b>Non-compliant</b>	The degree programme study plan is not geared to professional practice.
	In general, teaching staff lack professional experience in the specific field of the degree programme.
	Graduates are dissatisfied with their employability-related skills training.
<b>1.2. The institution runs programmes encouraging the achievement of professional skills and fostering employment integration.</b>	
<b>Quality-level compliant</b>	The institution has implemented relevant actions and programmes to assure the acquisition of skills and to foster employment integration.
	Participants are highly satisfied with the activities they have carried out.
<b>Compliant</b>	The institution has implemented actions and programmes that foster the acquisition of skills and employment integration.
	Participants are satisfied with the activities they have carried out.
<b>Non-compliant</b>	The institution has not implemented sufficient actions and programmes to foster the acquisition of skills and employment integration.

	Participants are dissatisfied with the activities they have carried out.
<b>1.3. The degree programme achieves employment outcomes in relation to its graduates that are aligned to the respective production sector and the current economic climate.</b>	
<b>Quality-level compliant</b>	Results on employment and its adequacy (employment status, pay grade, job stability, etc.) are optimal.
<b>Compliant</b>	Results on employment and its adequacy (employment status, pay grade, job stability, etc.) are positive and are aligned to those applicable in the respective production sector.
<b>Non-compliant</b>	Results on employment and its adequacy (employment status, pay grade, job stability, etc.) are not aligned to those applicable in the respective production sector.

### 3.2. Interaction between research and teaching

The aim of this dimension is to convey the extent to which interaction between research and teaching in the study programme benefits student learning, i.e., the extent to which research in the discipline is used to strengthen student learning and teaching.

To be eligible for accreditation in this dimension, teaching staff should have active sexennials involving research that is at least partly related to the study programme, and the final-year - Bachelor's/Master's degree projects and dissertations should be research-oriented.

Although there is no question that one characteristic of the excellence of a study programme relates to the relevance, intensity and quality of the research conducted by the teaching staff, it is also true that such research must be relevant in relation to:

- The focus, structure and content of the study plan.
- The teaching/learning process: teaching methodology, types of activities, learning assessment (particularly for final-year Bachelor's/Master's degree projects and dissertations).
- The involvement or participation of students in research projects in accordance with their study level at various points in their educational pathway.

In accordance with the above, the following two sub-dimensions need to be considered in order to assess interaction between research and teaching:

- A. Study programme for research.
- B. Potential, intensity and quality of the research activity carried out by teaching staff.

Accordingly, upon awarding accreditation to the degree programme, the following standard is expected to have been met:

The institution actively promotes the incorporation of research conducted by teaching staff in the respective discipline into study programmes in order to enhance student learning and results.

The standard is broken down into the following specific sub-standards:

- 2.1. The study programme is scientifically up-to-date and is oriented to research in such a way that enables students to gain an introduction to it.
- 2.2. The teaching staff linked to the study programme are actively involved in research, knowledge transfer and innovation. The results of research (competitive research projects, publications, patents, sexennials, etc.) are indicative of the quality.

## A. Study programme for research

The study programme must be oriented to research in such a way that enables students to become involved. Aspects such as the up-to-date nature of the content, the potential for students to contribute to research and progression of studies (through Master's degrees or PhD programmes), among others, are relevant areas to take into account. It will also be essential to substantiate teaching staff dedication to research.

Specifically, it is expected that the institution will review the following aspects and provide evidence on them:

### 1) Study programme focus or orientation

- a) Orientation of the study plan (teaching in a research environment).
- b) Final-year Bachelor's/Master's degree projects and dissertations associated with the research topics of the research groups and the presentation thereof (posters, presentations in internal or external seminars, papers, etc.).
- c) Student participation in or contribution to the research of groups or involvement at research centres external to the university.
- d) Progression of studies:
  - i) From Bachelor's degree to Master's degree.
  - ii) From Master's degree to PhD.
- e) Organisation of extracurricular activities linked to R&D&I.
- f) Capacity to attract students.

### 2) Dedication of teaching staff with close ties to research

- a) Bachelor's degree:
  - i) Final-year Bachelor's degree project.
- b) Master's degree:
  - i) Final-year Master's degree project.

- c) PhD
  - i) Training activities.
  - ii) Thesis supervision and direction.

### 3) Access to and use of research infrastructure in degree programmes

## B. Potential, intensity and quality of the research activity carried out by teaching staff

### 1) Teaching staff profile and structure

- a) Category.
- b) Dedication.
- c) Sexennials:
  - i) National.
  - ii) Catalan.
  - iii) Sexennials obtained compared to potential sexennials.
  - iv) Active sexennials.
- d) *H*-index.

### 2) Research projects

- a) Teaching staff (permanent and accredited) belonging to SGR (Catalan Government grant awardee) groups.
- b) Teaching staff involved as principal investigators (PI) in competitive research projects:
  - i) International.
  - ii) National.
  - iii) Catalan.
- c) Teaching staff (non-PI) involved in competitive research projects:
  - i) International.
  - ii) National.
  - iii) Catalan.
- d) Percentage of teaching staff involved in non-competitive research projects.

### 3) Research results

- a) Publications in indexed scientific journals (JCR/SJR):
  - i) First quartile.
  - ii) Second quartile.
  - iii) Others.
- b) Publications in other indexed scientific journals (CARHUS, Latindex, etc.):
  - i) Level A.
  - ii) Others.
- c) Books and book chapters.

### 4) Innovation and knowledge transfer

- a) Patents / utility models:
  - i) Registered.
  - ii) In use.
- b) Contracts and agreements with companies and institutions.
- c) Spin-offs.
- d) Publications stemming from projects with socio-economic actors describing commercial products, prototypes or projects of extraordinary uniqueness.
- e) Contributions to industrial or commercial standards regulated by public organisations, professional associations and other bodies.

## 5) Awards and distinctions for R&D&I merits

### Note:

Aside from the research potential, it is necessary to consider that the key element in attaining accreditation for this dimension is the link between the research conducted by the teaching staff and the study programme. Along these lines, it is important to show evidence of links between teaching staff, their research (fields), the subjects they teach on the programme and the research projects they have directed. This makes it simpler to assess the extent of interaction between research and teaching. A format such as the one in the table below gives an example of how this link could be reviewed:

Lecturer	Research (fields)	Subjects taught	Directed projects

## Rubrics

2.1. The study programme is scientifically up-to-date and is oriented to research in such a way that enables students to gain an introduction to it.	
<b>Quality-level compliant</b>	Overall, the study programme is geared to student achievement of research skills, its content is scientifically up-to-date and it incorporates research conducted by the teaching staff.
	All students have engaged in research activities in the institution's research groups making use of research infrastructure.
	More than 50% of graduates pursue PhD studies.
	All teaching staff in charge of projects are actively involved in research and the subject areas of the projects are linked to the specialisation in research.

<b>Compliant</b>	The study programme is geared to introducing students to research and the content is scientifically up-to-date.
	Between 25% and 50% of graduates pursue PhD studies.
	Most teaching staff in charge of projects are actively involved in research and the subject areas of the projects are linked to the specialisation in research.
<b>Non-compliant</b>	The study programme is not adequately geared to the students' specialisation in research.
	Less than 25% of graduates pursue PhD studies.
	The teaching staff in charge of projects have no certified research activity and the subject areas of the projects are scarcely linked to the specialisation in research.
<b>2.2. The teaching staff linked to the study programme are actively involved in research, knowledge transfer and innovation. The results of research (competitive research projects, publications, patents, sexennials, etc.) are indicative of the quality.</b>	
<b>Quality-level compliant</b>	The teaching staff profile and structure are highly appropriate. All teaching staff hold a PhD and at least 80% have an active research sexennial and are full-time.
	All teaching staff take part in competitive research projects: a substantial proportion of them as the principal investigator (PI). Their scientific output has a high international impact in the respective field of knowledge.
	A prominent level of innovation and knowledge transfer activity is carried out.
<b>Compliant</b>	The teaching staff profile and structure are appropriate. All teaching staff hold a PhD and at least 60% have an active research sexennial and are full-time.
	At least 80% of teaching staff take part in competitive research projects: some of them as the principal investigator (PI). Their scientific output has a fair international impact in the respective field of knowledge.
	Teaching staff are engaged in a fair level of innovation and knowledge transfer activity.
<b>Non-compliant</b>	The teaching staff profile and structure are not appropriate and most staff do not have adequate levels of certified research activity.
	Teaching staff participation in competitive research projects bears shortcomings and their scientific output has very little impact in the respective field of knowledge.
	Teaching staff are scarcely engaged in innovation and knowledge transfer activity.

### 3.3. Internationalisation

Although the concept of competitiveness is widespread in today's context of globalisation and internationalisation, it is important not to overlook the significance of cooperation and networking in the pursuit of excellence. New technologies make it possible to transcend traditional borders and foster alternative forms of cooperation in complex sectors such as education.

It is within this framework that internationalisation of study programmes should promote, among other aspects, initiatives such as the creation of international partnerships to promote renewed benefits for students, teaching staff and the Catalan university system as a whole.

In accordance with the above, three sub-dimensions need to be considered in order to assess internationalisation:

- A. Study programme for internationalisation
- B. Internationalisation of teaching staff
- C. Results in internationalisation

As Jane Knight (Knight, J., 2008) points out, internationalisation of higher education is approached from two complementary standpoints: one is internationalisation at home; the other is internationalisation abroad. There is an increasing need to distinguish between internationalisation that focuses more on the institution and study programmes at home and internationalisation that focuses more on transnational education, i.e., education abroad. Internationalisation at home relates to all aspects of internationalisation unfolding within an institution, within a university faculty and its study programmes, including the intercultural and international dimension in the research and learning process, extracurricular activities and liaison with local cultural/ethnic groups, in addition to the inclusion of foreign students and scholarship holders in campus life and activities. On the other hand, transnational education or education abroad has recently been emerging as a notion tantamount to internationalisation and has led to some degree of confusion surrounding the concept.

The former group may encompass activities such as the inclusion of international developments and visions; the integration of the experiences of foreign students and their visions into the teaching methodology; extracurricular activities; liaison with local cultural/ethnic groups, etc. The latter group may encompass activities such as the mobility of students, teaching staff and researchers; the mode of teaching delivery of the study plan (MOOC, virtualisation, etc.); the mobility of institutions opening faculties abroad; international research, curriculum or professional development projects, etc.

All these activities enable institutions to become international; however, it is important to recall that internationalisation goes much further and takes the form of a process where institutions advance by integrating internationalisation into their management systems and by coordinating activities in an appropriate fashion.

Accordingly, upon awarding accreditation to the degree programme, the following standard is expected to have been met:



The study programme has a clear international calling, is oriented to fostering internationalisation of students, promotes the international activities of teaching staff and is backed by a supportive framework to guarantee effective results.

The standard is broken down into the following specific sub-standards:

- 3.1. The study programme is designed to encourage knowledge and skills acquisition to favour academic and professional development in international settings. The programme content, the selection of students and the support provided by the institution are aligned to achieving the internationalisation of the programme.
- 3.2. The institution guarantees that the teaching staff on the study programme have a profile incorporating international academic and networking experience to effectively aid in reaching the internationalisation goals set.
- 3.3. The internationalisation of the degree programme is managed on the basis of a process of continual improvement ensuring satisfactory results by making use of state-of-the-art technologies.

## A. Study programme for internationalisation

### 1) Study programme focus or orientation

- a) Internationalised programme structure (joint programmes / double degree programmes).
- b) Knowledge and skills favouring professional development in international settings.
- c) Facilitation of knowledge and skills acquisition:
  - i) Mandatory teaching given in third languages.
  - ii) Agreements favouring international mobility of local students.
  - iii) Programme for the professionalization of students by means of international training placements.
  - iv) Assessment of knowledge and skills using exams incorporating the use of third languages (encouragement of the use of third languages in exams, allowing students the option of using these languages to complete exams).
- d) International acknowledgments received.
- e) Measures to encourage the presence of foreign teaching staff in the activities and subjects of the programme.

### 2) Students

- a) Suitable system for the selection of local and foreign students according to the international focus of the programme.
- b) Existence of agreements attracting international students towards the programme through mobility.
- c) System for the assessment and acknowledgment of learning acquired external to the programme (linked to processes for international academic mobility and/or mobility in internationalised professional settings).

### 3) Support for internationalisation

- a) Mechanism for public disclosure on the programme quality, particularly addressed to international stakeholders.
- b) Systems for supporting international mobility of students:

- i) Hosting of students from other universities.
- ii) Promotion of the mobility of local and international students through incentives offered by the university (establishment of joint degree programmes, grant systems, advice, etc.).
- c) Specific credentials for completion of the mobility process or programme.

## B. Internationalisation of teaching staff

### 1) Teaching staff profile

- a) Teaching staff on the programme with international academic experience:
  - i) PhD thesis prepared at a foreign university.
  - ii) Stays at foreign research institutions and universities.
  - iii) Participation in research projects awarded by an international body in which teams formed by members of foreign universities and research centres are involved.
- b) Foreign lecturers teaching on the programme (as permanent or visiting professors).

### 2) Integration of the programme's teaching staff in international networks

- a) Activity of teaching staff in international teaching cooperation networks.
- b) Activity of teaching staff in international research networks.
- c) International agreements for teaching staff exchange and mobility.

## C. Internationalisation results

### 1) Students

- a) Foreign students taking courses as part of education cooperation agreements (i.e., Erasmus or Study Abroad programmes).
- b) Foreign students enrolling with the institution from the outset in order to complete the full study programme.
- c) Home students taking part in international academic mobility programmes.
- d) Home students taking part in international professionally-oriented training placement programmes.

### 2) Graduates

- a) Graduates that have undertaken an international stay.
- b) Graduates who have undertaken professionally-oriented training placements in organisations, bodies or companies based abroad in line with the programme training plan.
- c) Foreign graduates.
- d) Graduates completing joint international diplomas or double degree programmes organised in conjunction with universities abroad.

### 3) Programme enhancement and sustainability

- a) System for the follow-up of the programme's international activity using indicators.

- b) Indicator-based mechanism for gaining an acquaintance of student and teaching staff satisfaction with all aspects that encourage the internationalisation of the programme.
- c) Use of new technologies applied to the teaching/learning process to encourage the internationalisation of said process (MOOC, agreements for teaching certain subjects online in conjunction with other universities, etc.).

## Rubrics

3.1. The study programme is designed to encourage knowledge and skills acquisition to favour academic and professional development in international settings. The programme content, the selection of students and the support provided by the institution are aligned to achieving the internationalisation of the programme.	
<b>Quality-level compliant</b>	The study programme is designed with a clear international calling: all elements (programme structure, teaching, training placements, mobility, etc.) are integrated in such a way as to favour professional development in international settings.
	The institution has implemented processes to assure appropriate selection of students and applies effective mechanisms (agreements, acknowledgments for learning, etc.) that favour their mobility.
	The institution has implemented mechanisms to support local and international students which are viewed as highly appropriate by the body of students on the degree programme.
<b>Compliant</b>	The study programme is designed to favour professional development in international settings.
	The institution has implemented processes to encourage appropriate selection of students on the degree programme and applies reasonably effective mechanisms (agreements, acknowledgments for learning, etc.) that favour their mobility.
	The institution has implemented mechanisms to support local and international students which are largely viewed as appropriate by the body of students on the degree programme.
<b>Non-compliant</b>	The various elements of the study programme (programme structure, teaching, training placements, mobility, etc.) do not constitute a clear proposal to favour professional development in international settings.
	The institution has applied processes to encourage appropriate selection of students on the degree programme and has applied mechanisms (agreements, acknowledgments for learning, etc.) to favour their mobility, but is unable to demonstrate the results achieved.
	The valuation of students in relation to the mechanisms implemented by the institution to support local and international students on the degree programme is not known.

3.2. The institution guarantees that the teaching staff on the study programme have a profile incorporating international academic and networking experience to effectively aid in reaching the internationalisation goals set.	
<b>Quality-level compliant</b>	The teaching staff on the programme include a substantial number of academics that have acknowledged international standing or a track record incorporating stays abroad and who take part in international projects awarded by leading international organisations. The body of teaching staff includes a significant number of foreign academics that take part in teaching occasionally or on a long-term basis.
	The institution actively favours teaching staff involvement in international research and/or teaching cooperation networks and it fosters the establishment of agreements for the mobility and exchange of teaching staff, obtaining satisfactory results. Lines of action are defined according to criteria established in the institution's vision of internationalisation.
<b>Compliant</b>	The teaching staff on the programme include a number of academics that have acknowledged international standing or a track record incorporating stays abroad and who take part in international projects. The body of teaching staff includes a number of foreign academics that take part in teaching occasionally or on a long-term basis.
	Teaching staff on the programme are involved in international research and/or teaching cooperation networks and make use of agreements for the mobility and exchange of teaching staff.
<b>Non-compliant</b>	The teaching staff on the programme include academics with a limited international track record. The body of teaching staff includes few foreign academics that take part in teaching, either occasionally or on a long-term basis.
	Teaching staff on the programme are not involved in international networks to a substantial extent.
3.3. The internationalisation of the degree programme is managed on the basis of a process of continual improvement ensuring satisfactory results by making use of state-of-the-art technologies.	
<b>Quality-level compliant</b>	The institution benefits from an international activity management system incorporated into its IQAS. The institution reviews the results of internationalisation beyond qualitative information, it considers those results and it assesses the effect of the internationalisation actions carried out on stakeholders. Stakeholder satisfaction carries particular importance in the review conducted.
	Internationalisation indicator results are optimal and show that the degree programme is well-ranked among its international equivalents.
	The degree programme effectively incorporates new technologies applied to teaching/learning processes into the study programme to foster internationalisation.
<b>Compliant</b>	The institution reviews the results of internationalisation using qualitative information and indicators, it considers those results and it assesses the effect of

	the internationalisation actions carried out on stakeholders, along with their level of satisfaction.
	Internationalisation indicator results are positive. The degree programme is on track to being on a par with its international equivalents.
	The degree programme uses new technologies applied to teaching/learning processes to foster internationalisation.
<b>Non-compliant</b>	The institution reviews the results of internationalisation only in part. Although it considers those indicators, it does not assess the effect of the internationalisation actions carried out on stakeholders, nor does it consider their level of satisfaction.
	Internationalisation indicator results are poor and show that the degree programme has a long way to go before being on a par with its international equivalents.
	The degree programme makes little or no use of new technologies applied to teaching/learning processes to foster internationalisation.

## 4. ASSESSMENT RESULT

### 4.1. Final report

The final assessment report issued by the CAIP on each of the additional dimensions will make a determination assessed according to three levels:

- “Quality-level compliant”: the standard is reached in full and, furthermore, examples of best practices are identified that exceed the required minimums.
- “Compliant”: the standard is reached in full within the study programme.
- “Non-compliant”: the study programme fails to achieve the minimum level required by the respective standard. The improvements that need to be implemented are so substantial that it would not be possible to reach the standard within a reasonable timeframe.

Using this assessment of the standards, the final report issued by the CAIP must include at least the following:

1. Description of the context of the degree programme.
2. Description of the procedure used, including the experts involved.
3. Results of the assessment for each of the standards.
4. Final assessment result.
5. Best practices identified.
6. Proposals for improvement (recommendations for follow-up measures).

If a report issues a final outcome of “quality-level compliant” or “compliant”, the additional dimension will be deemed to have been achieved. Accordingly, AQU Catalunya shall publish the following documents on its Review Reports portal:

1. The final report on the visit undertaken for assessment of the additional dimension.
2. The final assessment report on the additional dimension issued by the CAIP.

Both reports will be disclosed upon completion of the entire procedure by AQU Catalunya, including resolving on the appeal, if any, regardless of whether they are used as the primary source of evidence in other instances.

### 4.2. Hallmarks

If the report on an additional dimension attains a result of “quality-level compliant” or “compliant”, a quality hallmark will be awarded, which shall be included within the hallmark for the accreditation of the specific degree programme. It will be valid for a period of five years, and may be renewed for periods of equal length subject to successful completion of a new external assessment procedure.



The terms of use are specified in the *Segells de qualitat d'AQU Catalunya i condicions per al seu ús (AQU Catalunya quality hallmarks and terms of use thereof)* document, approved by the Governing Board of AQU Catalunya on 8 July 2014.

These hallmarks will be published on the University Study Programmes of Catalonia (EUC) website: <http://estudis.aqu.cat>.

### 4.3. Effects of the assessment

A valuation of “quality-level compliant” or “compliant” for each of the additional dimensions confirms that the degree programme has suitable mechanisms in place to manage the objective set (employment, internationalisation or teaching-research interaction) in an appropriate fashion, whilst also attaining highly satisfactory results in these areas.

On the other hand, a valuation of “non-compliant” in the assessment of the additional dimension means that the institution will have to wait another two years in order to be able to re-apply for assessment for the specific degree programme, when it is deemed that the management system and results may be better established.

## 5. FOLLOW-UP AND CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT

A valuation of “quality-level compliant” or “compliant” for any of the additional dimensions shall be valid for a period of five years. Even so, as clearly detailed in the pertinent guidelines relating to the standard for implementing assessment processes (ESG 2.3) (ENQA, 2015):

“External quality assurance does not end with the report by the experts. The report provides clear guidance for institutional action. Agencies have a consistent follow-up process for considering the action taken by the institution. The nature of the follow-up will depend on the design of the external quality assurance.”

In keeping with this assumption, and taking into consideration the outcome of the assessment of the additional dimension, the goal of AQU Catalunya should be to ensure that the institution swiftly addresses areas with scope for improvement and that a spirit of accomplishment is encouraged.

With this approach in mind, throughout the effective period of the assessment the institution shall be responsible for performing follow-ups and favouring continual improvement of the dimension management system pursuant to its own internal management processes. To this end, the institution must report on the situation regarding improvements implemented by means of degree-programme follow-up reports (IST, from the Catalan) as specified in the AQU Catalunya *Guia per al seguiment de les titulacions oficials de grau i màster* (Guide to the follow-up of recognised Bachelor’s degree and Master’s degree programmes). These reports should also detail changes made as a result of the alterations required which were stipulated in the report for assessment of the additional dimension.

If the institution makes any change to the nature of the programme degree that could affect the scope or validity of the assessment, this must be specified in the IST. In addition, such changes should be reported to AQU Catalunya so it may assess the continued validity of the assessment made.

The CAIP reserves the right to change the scope of the assessment, cancel it or revoke it on the basis of information compiled in the ISTs or any other evidence-based source, if:

- Changes take place that bring about an irreversible, detrimental effect on the conditions under which the additional dimension of the degree programme was assessed.
- The certificate is used for improper purposes.

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