



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

AQU CATALUNYA 2016 SUMMARY ANNUAL REPORT



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AQU CATALUNYA, 2017



Generalitat
de Catalunya



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INTRODUCTION

This document is a summary of the AQU Catalunya 2016 Annual Report, which describes the main activities carried out by the Agency over the course of the year, the most important of which are described below

During 2016, AQU Catalunya continued working on adapting to the requirements of **Act 15/2015, 21 July, concerning the Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency** (AQU Catalunya Act), as well as collaborating in the drawing up of the **Statutes of AQU Catalunya**, which were approved under the provisions of Decree 315/2016, 21 November.

In the sphere of **institutional quality**, an important development was the endorsement of the new Framework for the ex-ante accreditation, monitoring, modification and ex-post accreditation of degree programmes at all universities and higher education institutions in Catalonia, relating to the transition from programme review to institutional review.

As regards the **quality assurance of teaching staff**, the Agency's Research Assessment Commission took over the responsibilities of the CLiC Committee, which dealt with tenure-eligible and collaborating teaching staff. Applications to the Serra Hùnter programme continued to be assessed and an agreement was signed with the public universities in Catalonia defining the procedure and evaluation for the issuance of reports in recognition of the activities of temporary assistant professors.

With regard to **knowledge generation and transfer**, of particular mention was the approval and implementation of the programme catalogue, together with the completion of the 2014 graduate employment outcomes survey and study. The call for applications and grant scheme for more in-depth studies on the findings of the employers survey was completed, and the studies were monitored. The collaborative agreement between Obra Social "la Caixa" and AQU Catalunya was also renewed for a second survey, covering the period between 2017-2019.

In the field of **internationalisation**, the Agency continued to host the Secretariat of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), it actively participated in four international projects (TeSLA, IMPALA, PACAgro and EQTeL), it undertook one international review at the Universidad de San Martín de Porres (Peru) and provided expert advice on various academic programmes at the University of Andorra.

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Of particular note in the area of **strategic management** was the setting up and implementation of the EUC (*Estudis Universitaris de Catalunya*) and EUC Reports web portals.

And last but not least, in relation to **internal organisation**, of particular note was the satisfactory ISO 9001:2008 and ISO 27001:2013 external certification audit of the Agency's information management and security system, undertaken by the Spanish certifying agency AENOR.

For the complete version of the AQU Catalunya 2016 Summary Annual Report (in Catalan), please see: http://www.aqu.cat/doc/doc_83673536_1.pdf

INSTITUTIONAL QUALITY

1. Framework for the ex-ante accreditation, monitoring, modification and accreditation

In order to better address the requirements of quality assurance, as a consequence of greater momentum among degree courses to adapt and ensure they are in line with EHEA guidelines, the Agency's Governing Board endorsed the **new VSMA Framework** on 16 July 2016, the main features of which are as follows:

1. Impetus to institutional review with the aim of self-accredited/self-accrediting institutions.
2. Impetus to the automatic generation of review reports to enhance process efficiency.
3. The reinforcement of accreditation as a process that creates greater added value for institutions.
4. Greater consistency in the map of qualifications through the use of cluster benchmarking.

2. Accreditation

During 2016, 83 external review panels were convened and a total number of 87 site visits made to universities and other higher education institutions (HEIs) and 289 degree courses evaluated and reviewed. 13 of the review panels were international and involved the participation of academic staff from different European universities.

Issuance of accreditation reports

225 accreditation reports were issued in 2016. 25% of accredited degree programmes were awarded accreditation at the level of "on track to excellence", while conditional accreditation was granted (with prescriptions/conditions) in the case of 13%. In the case of conditional accreditation, a progress report must be submitted within two years to show that any shortcomings identified in a programme have been addressed.

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The following table shows the results according to field of study:

	Accreditation withheld	Conditional accreditation	Accreditation	Accreditation "on track to excellence"	Total	Accreditation "on track to excellence" (as a %)
Arts and Humanities		3	22	8	33	24%
Social and Legal Sciences		16	42	25	83	30%
Experimental Sciences		1	15	12	28	43%
Health Sciences		5	19	6	30	20%
Engineering and Architecture		4	34	6	44	14%
Total		29	139	57	225	25%

AQU Catalunya has so far accredited 496 degree programmes, which account for 49% of the total number of programmes delivered at higher education institutions (HEIs) in Catalonia.

286 applications for accreditation were submitted by HEIs during 2016. Accreditation reports are subsequently referred to the corresponding national and regional authorities for the administrative processing of programme accreditation. Following the release of an accreditation report, AQU Catalunya issues the corresponding certificates and quality labels that are awarded to programmes and institutions as an instrument of distinction that serves to inform society at large that they have successfully undergone accreditation.



Additional dimensions

Applications in 2016 also covered the assessment of three dimensions that are additional to accreditation, as a complement to the compulsory process of programme review. The accreditation of these additional dimensions by AQU Catalunya is voluntary and serves as recognition of a programme's distinguishing feature/s. Applications are accepted throughout the year for the assessment of the following additional dimensions:

- Career development, employability and recruitment

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- Research-teaching linkages
- Internationalisation

The review and assessment of these additional dimensions are undertaken in accordance with the Guide to the Assessment of Additional Dimensions in the Accreditation of Recognised Bachelor's and Master's Degree Programmes, which was endorsed by the Governing Board in October 2016.

Programmes that successfully undergo assessment are eligible to use the corresponding quality label:



3. Ex-ante accreditation, modification and monitoring

The design of any proposal for a new bachelor, master's or doctoral programme must undergo **ex-ante accreditation** (also referred to as validation) prior to introduction, which involves a procedure that targets continuous improvement and enhancement.

A total of 85 proposals for the validation of recognised degrees were submitted by HEIs in Catalonia during the year: 29 bachelor, 54 master's and 2 doctoral programmes. 86% of the total number of validation proposals were positively assessed. According to educational level, all of the bachelor's proposals (100%) were positively assessed, 78% in the case of master's programmes and all proposals (100%) for doctoral degrees. In terms of the type of validation, 44% were programme revalidations and 56% were new programme validations .

With regard to applications for the **modification** of programmes already introduced, 157 proposals were submitted in 2016: 96 for undergraduate programmes, 55 for Master's programmes and 6 for doctoral/PhD programmes. This figure was slightly higher than in 2015, due to the fact that the universities made use of the accreditation procedure to update programme specifications and make appropriate changes.

In relation to **monitoring**, AQU Catalunya issued progress reports for 14 programmes leading to awards in the Visual and Performing Arts. Monitoring is based on the *Guide to the monitoring of programmes in the Visual and Performing Arts* (AQU Catalunya, 2013), which is an adaptation of the *Guide to the monitoring of recognised Bachelor and Master's degree programmes* for programmes in the Visual and Performing Arts.

4. Certification of internal quality assurance systems (IQAS)

AQU Catalunya has been assisting universities in the design of faculty IQAS through the AUDIT programme since 2007. The Agency and the universities annually plan the certification of IQAS implementation in faculties and schools. Institutions must submit an application for the certification for each faculty or school using the corresponding form, which is submitted to the official registry.

5. Support for the internationalisation of the university system in Catalonia

AQU Catalunya has identified the internationalisation of degree programmes delivered in Catalonia as one of the areas that give great impetus to excellence in higher education. The two mechanisms that it uses are:

- **Internationalisation as an additional dimension in programme accreditation**

5 undergraduate/Bachelor and 13 Master's programmes applied for internationalisation as an additional dimension in programme accreditation in 2016 and were reviewed and assessed by an international panel of experts appointed by AQU Catalunya. The application of external QA mechanisms specifically designed for activities relating to internationalisation should facilitate internationalisation strategies by universities and HEIs in Catalonia.

- **Thematic certification of programmes (quality labels and seals)**

In accordance with the *Framework for the positioning of AQU Catalunya regarding subject-specific quality labels* (2014), support was given to the Polytechnic University of Catalonia (UPC) and the University of Lleida to jointly carry out comprehensive reviews of both programme accreditation and review for international EUR-ACE® and Euro-Inf® certification by the Accreditation Agency for Degree Programmes in Engineering, Informatics, Natural Sciences and Mathematics (ASIIN).

QUALITY ASSURANCE OF TEACHING

1. Ex-ante (pre-selection) accreditation of university teaching staff

In 2016 AQU Catalunya continued to cooperate with the Government of Catalonia's Executive Council (*Govern*) in the call for applications for faculty staff recruitment at universities in Catalonia under the Serra Hùnter programme. In the second calls for applications for tenure-eligible lecturing staff posts and research posts, a total number of 293 applications were received.

Reports for tenure-eligible lecturing staff

There was a 10% increase in the number of applications to the call for the recruitment of tenure-eligible lecturing staff at universities in 2016 compared to the previous year. The results of the calls for applications processed in 2015 were as follows:

Table 1. First call for applications in 2016: tenure-eligible teaching staff¹

Field of knowledge	TS	TSR	P	F	D	RP	RE	RD	TF	TD	% F
Humanities	38	4	0	19	15	0	0	0	19	15	55.9%
Social Sciences	86	6	0	51	25	1	1	2	52	28	63.8%
Experimental Sciences	20	1	0	11	7	0	0	1	11	8	57.9%
Life Sciences	26	0	0	19	7	0	0	0	19	7	73.1%
Medicine and Health Sciences	41	3	0	26	11	1	0	0	26	12	68.4%
Engineering and	64	3	0	49	12	0	0	0	49	12	80.3%

¹ TS, total applications; TSR, applications closed with no final decision; P, pending; F, positive; D, unfavourable; RE, appeals upheld; RD, appeals dismissed; RP, pending an appeal; TF, total positive; TD, total unfavourable; % F, positive as a % of the total (excluding applications closed with no final decision).

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Architecture

Total

275	17	0	175	77	2	1	3	176	82	67.8%

Table 2. Second call for applications 2016 for tenure-eligible teaching staff

Field of knowledge	TS	TSR	P	F	D	TF	TD	% F
Humanities	79	6	0	46	27	46	27	63.0%
Social Sciences	109	10	0	49	50	49	50	49.5%
Experimental Sciences	38	2	0	31	5	31	5	86.1%
Life Sciences	52	4	0	36	12	36	12	75.0%
Medicine and Health Sciences	69	6	0	43	20	43	20	68.3%
Engineering and Architecture	137	25	1	76	35	76	35	67.9%
Total	484	53	1	281	149	281	149	65.2%

Accreditation of research and advanced research

2016 saw an 8% increase in the number of applications submitted in the calls for applications from senior academic staff (associate professor and full professor staff) compared to 2015. The results of the calls processed in 2016 were as follows:

Table 3. First call for applications in 2016 - associate professors

Field of knowledge	TS	TSR	P	F	D	RP	TF	TD	% F
Humanities	34	4	0	18	9	3	18	12	60.0%

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Social Sciences	65	3	0	37	18	7	37	25	59.7%
Experimental Sciences	25	1	0	19	4	1	19	5	79.2%
Life Sciences	30	0	0	16	13	1	16	14	53.3%
Medicine and Health Sciences	83	5	0	54	15	9	54	24	69.2%
Engineering and Architecture	57	3	0	41	10	3	41	13	75.9%
Total	294	16	0	185	69	24	185	93	66.5%

Table 4. Second call for applications in 2016 - associate professors

Committee	T	TSR	P	F	D	TF	TD	% F
Humanities	58	21	0	18	19	18	19	48.6%
Social Sciences	111	32	0	45	34	45	34	57.0%
Experimental Sciences	21	1	0	17	3	17	3	85.0%
Life Sciences	22	1	0	10	11	10	11	47.6%
Medicine and Health Sciences	63	12	0	37	14	37	14	72.5%
Engineering and Architecture	44	8	0	28	8	28	8	77.8%
Total	319	75	0	155	89	155	89	63.5%

Table 5. First call for applications in 2016 - full professors

Committee	T	TSR	P	F	D	RP	TF	TD	% F
Humanities	14	0	0	10	2	2	10	4	71.4%
Social Sciences	36	5	0	12	14	5	12	19	38.7%
Experimental Sciences	16	0	0	15	1	0	15	1	93.8%
Life Sciences	11	0	0	9	1	1	9	2	81.8%
Medicine and Health Sciences	27	1	0	20	5	1	20	6	76.9%
Engineering and Architecture	23	1	0	18	2	2	18	4	81.8%
Total	127	7	0	84	25	11	84	36	70.0%

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Table 6. Second call for applications in 2016 - full professors

Committee	T	TSR	P	F	D	TF	TD	% F
Humanities	8	0	0	3	5	3	5	37.5%
Social Sciences	15	0	15	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Experimental Sciences	12	1	0	5	6	5	6	45.5%
Life Sciences	8	0	0	4	4	4	4	50.0%
Medicine and Health Sciences	20	2	0	13	5	13	5	72.2%
Engineering and Architecture	16	0	0	12	4	12	4	75.0%
Total	79	3	15	37	24	37	24	48.7%

Teaching assessment certificates

Four applications were received during 2015, all of which were positively assessed.

2. Assessment of merits in research, teaching and management

Provision of additional salary allowances to public service and contract teaching and research staff at public universities in Catalonia is based on the assessment of individual merits in teaching, research and management.²

In 2016, AQU Catalunya entered into an agreement with the public universities in Catalonia to carry out assessment and review for the issuing of reports in recognition of the research and related activities (for six-year periods) of temporary assistant professors. As a result of the signing of this extraordinary agreement, assistant professors in temporary posts can obtain recognition for their research work. Pursuant to the agreement, assessment is for all intents and purposes of an academic nature and does not lead to any additional financial remuneration. The first call for applications for the issuance of reports in recognition of research work for this category was made at the end of 2016, and 178 applications were submitted.

² Decree 405/2006, 24 October, whereby additional salary allowances were established for both public service (civil servant) and contract teaching and research staff at public universities in Catalonia.

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Merits in research

Table 7. Applications for the issuance of reports in recognition of research according to field of knowledge

Committee	Applications
Humanities	29
Social Sciences	67
Experimental Sciences	17
Life Sciences	18
Medicine and Health Sciences	12
Engineering and Architecture	35
Total	178

Table 8. 2016 call for applications from public service teaching and research staff at public universities

Committee	T	TSR	F	D	RP	TF	TD	% F
Humanities	80	3	76	1	0	76	1	98.7%
Social Sciences	163	7	147	5	4	147	9	94.2%
Experimental Sciences	108	3	103	2	0	103	2	98.1%
Life Sciences	49	0	49	0	0	49	0	100.0%
Medicine and Health Sciences	71	5	66	0	0	66	0	100.0%
Engineering and Architecture	118	6	111	0	1	111	1	99.1%
Total	589	24	552	8	5	552	13	97.7%

Table 9. 2016 call for applications from contract teaching and research staff at public universities

Committee	TS	TSR	P	F	D	RP	RE	RD	TF	TD	% F
Humanities	55	5	0	35	12	0	0	3	35	15	70.0%
Social Sciences	118	24	0	76	12	0	3	3	79	15	80.9%

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Experimental Sciences	68	8	0	49	8	0	1	2	50	10	81.7%
Life Sciences	50	5	0	41	2	0	1	1	42	3	91.1%
Medicine and Health Sciences	31	6	0	16	6	0	0	3	16	9	64.0%
Engineering and Architecture	120	18	0	92	5	0	4	1	96	6	90.2%
Total	442	66	0	309	45	0	9	13	318	58	82.2%

Evaluation of six-year periods of research and the award of research premiums by agreement

AQU Catalunya has different agreements to review and evaluate the research and related activities of teaching staff and researchers at private universities in Catalonia, research staff at the Polytechnic University of Catalonia (UPC) and the following affiliated institutions: the Catalan Institute for Physical Education (INEFC), which is affiliated with the University of Barcelona (UB) and the University of Lleida; the TecnoCampus Foundation (Mataró-Maresme), affiliated with the Polytechnic University of Catalonia (UPC) and the Pompeu Fabra University; the EUSS School of Engineering, affiliated with the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB); the EUSES School of Health and Sport, which is affiliated with the University of Girona; and the EEI School of Engineering (Igualada), affiliated with the Polytechnic University of Catalonia (UPC). The criteria and procedures are the same as those used in the review and evaluation of research and related activities of public service and contract teaching and research staff at public universities in Catalonia.

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Table 10. Institutions with which AQU Catalunya has agreements for the evaluation of six-year periods of research and the award of research premiums. Results for 2016

Institution	T	TSR	F	D	RP	TF	TD	% F
Private universities in Catalonia	109	4	72	20	13	72	33	68.6%
Affiliated institutions	10	1	4	4	1	4	5	44.4%
Total	119	5	76	24	14	76	38	63.9%

Merits in teaching and management

Merit-based evaluation of teaching: teaching quality assurance handbooks

Subsequent to the new legislation dealing with AQU Catalunya,³ the certification of merits in teaching and management is now dealt with by AQU's Research Assessment Commission (CAR) (which was previously handled by the Quality Assurance Commission/CAQ). In addition, AQU's former CEMAI committee, which dealt with the assessment of individual merits and activities of teaching staff, was renamed the Teaching and Management Assessment Committee (CEAADG).

In 2016 a new committee was appointed to accredit the teaching quality assurance handbooks used at the Ramon Llull University and the International University of Catalonia. In addition, the CEAADG worked on producing the strategy for extending teaching assessment and evaluation to university-affiliated institutions.

During 2016, the Agency also certified the review reports on the merits in teaching of teaching staff produced by the public universities in Catalonia, using the model provided in their respective teaching quality assurance handbooks.

Table 11. Results of the 2015 call for certification of the merit-based evaluation of teaching

Potential applicants	Total applicants	Percentage applications	Positive	Percentage positive/ applications	Unfavourable	Percentage positive/ potential
2,440	1,384	56.7%	1,286	92.9%	57	52.7%

The number of potential applicants includes teaching staff from previous calls for applications with the option to participate in the 2015 call for applications.

³ Act 15/2015, 21 July, concerning the Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency (AQU Catalunya).

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Merit-based evaluation of skills in management

Table 12. Results of the 2015 call for certification of the merit-based evaluation of management

6-year periods assessed	Positive	Unfavourable	1st period	2nd period	3rd period	4th period
300	300	0	106	73	72	49

The information in the table refers to periods of externally assessed skills in management, not individuals.

KNOWLEDGE GENERATION AND TRANSFER

1. The Catalan university system

Programme catalogue

AQU Catalunya, in cooperation with the universities in Catalonia, produced a programme catalogue based on an earlier catalogue produced by the Agency in 2001. The new catalogue was compiled on the basis of external sources of reference and models, together with the codes assigned to degree courses by the Directorate General for Universities and the Ministry. The catalogue establishes up to four levels of programme aggregation.

AQU's Institutional and Programme Review Commission (CAIP) endorsed the new catalogue, which has started to be applied.

The transition into employment of graduates (graduate employment outcomes)

During 2016 the fifth study and survey (started in 2014) in the graduate employment outcomes project was brought to a close with an event titled **The impact of the crisis on graduate employment outcomes**, which included the presentation of the findings of the Masters survey set out in the *Employment outcomes of Master's graduates* report and the results and findings of the studies by the research groups awarded grants to carry out more in-depth research of the survey results (13 April, Ramon Llull University).



The projects were carried out and presented by research groups led by:

- Dr. Helena Troiano, Education and Labour Studies Research Group (GRET), Department of Sociology, Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB), and

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- Dr. Marc Sáez, Statistics, Econometrics and Health Research Group (GRECS), University of Girona and the Centre for Biomedical Networking Research in Epidemiology and Public Health (CIBERESP).

During 2016, AQU Catalunya collaborated with the *Fundació Universitat-Empresa de les Illes Balears* and the University of the Balearic Islands in the coordination of fieldwork and processing of the findings of a survey of graduate employment outcomes at the University of the Balearic Islands.

Preparatory work was also started for the sixth graduate employment outcomes survey, which is to be carried out in 2017 and will involve the participation of all public and private universities in Catalonia, together with their affiliated schools and institutions, as well as one university outside of Catalonia. One new development in the 2017 survey will be the participation for the first time in what will be a pilot study of schools and institutions under the Government of Catalonia's Ministry for Education that deliver bachelor-level programmes leading to awards in the Visual and Performing Arts.

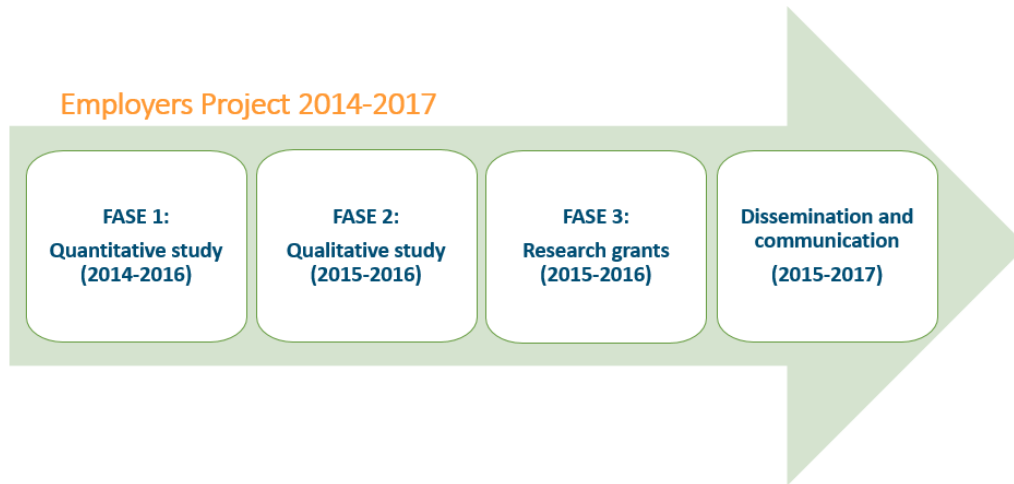
Graduate employment outcomes and employability, from the perspective of employers

Through an agreement signed with the Government of Catalonia, “la Caixa” Bank Foundation collaborates with the Agency to carry out a study on the transition to employment of graduates from the point of view of employers. The purpose of the study and accompanying survey, which complement the three-yearly survey of the employment outcomes of graduates of universities in Catalonia, is to give universities insight into perceptions in the labour market regarding the skills, education and training of graduates on completion of their studies at university.

In 2016 Obra Social “la Caixa” and AQU Catalunya renewed their joint collaboration agreement in order to undertake a second survey covering the period from 2017-2019 and thereby give continuity to the project.

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The 2014-2016 study was organised according to three stages:



Stage 1: Quantitative study

The first findings of the reports on the employability and skills of graduates were presented in 2015, with the findings for the health sector being released in 2016:

- The report entitled *Employability and skills of recent graduates in Nursing*, which was published in July 2016, complements the results of the survey of the employment outcomes of graduates in Nursing, as well as the qualitative results of the focus group consisting of supervisors and directors of nursing. The study also provided an opportunity to identify strong and weak points, from the employers' point of view, of post-Bologna Bachelor degrees in Nursing compared to pre-Bologna programmes in Nursing.
- Within the framework of the survey of the health sector, a report on the *Employability and skills of internal resident doctors (interns)* was published in October. The aim was to identify and analyse the skills required by graduates in Medicine in the initial stage of their professional careers in medicine, which consists of a period of generally four or five years working as a resident doctor (MIR).

A total number of four reports were produced, all of which are publicly available.

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Stage 2: Qualitative study

Based on the work of twelve focus groups established according to different sectors of economic activity, an overall qualitative analysis was carried out and twelve sectoral reports produced, with a focus on certain programmes:

Table 1. Qualitative reports and related programmes

Financial entities, focusing on programmes in Economics, Business Management and Administration and other similar degrees

Construction and Building, focusing on programmes in Architecture, Engineering Civil and other similar degrees

Industry, focusing on programmes in Industrial Engineering and other similar degrees

Information and Communications Technologies, focusing on programmes in Telecommunications Engineering, Informatics and other similar degrees

Mass media, focusing on programmes in Journalism, Communication, Audio-visual Communication and other similar degrees

Consultancy, focusing on different types of programme, such as Business Management and Administration, Labour Relations, Engineering in Industrial Organization and management

Early childhood and primary education, focusing on programmes in Early Childhood Education and Primary Education

Secondary education, focusing on the Master's in Secondary Education Teacher Training

Medicine, focusing on programmes in Medicine

Nursing, focusing on programmes in Nursing

Legal services, focusing on programmes in Law, Labour Relations and Criminology

Educational and social services, focusing on programmes in Psychology, Education Studies, Psychopedagogy, Social Work and Social Education

These reports were made public in 2017.

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Stage 3: Research grants

In 2016 a call for applications for grants was launched and processed to fund research into the findings of the Employers project.

The *ad hoc* selection committee in charge of awarding the grants selected the following projects:

Table 14. Projects selected by the grants committee

Subject	Selected projects
Analysis of the "Employers in the private sector" data base	Joan Guardia, University of Barcelona (UB)
Analysis of the "Employers in the private sector" data base	Elisabet Motellón, Open University of Catalonia
Analysis of the "Education institutions" data base	Montserrat Freixa, University of Barcelona (UB)
Analysis of the "Education institutions" data base	Mireia Civís, Ramon Llull University
Analysis of the "Healthcare facilities" data base	(void)

The reports produced by the research groups will be made public in 2017.

Graduate satisfaction survey (bachelor and master's programmes)

Bachelor's programmes

The main objective of this project is to use the findings of the survey to establish a series of common indicators of the satisfaction of the graduate population and provide both the university system and course coordinators with the requisite information for programme enhancement and improvement.

AQU Catalunya instigated the carrying out of the second survey during 2016 and signed a collaboration agreement with the University of Vic-Central University of Catalonia, Pompeu Fabra University and Rovira i Virgili University dealing with the Agency's coordination and carrying out of the field work. The fieldwork, which began in December 2016 and will be

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completed in January 2017, will cover graduates who completed their studies in the 2015-2016 academic year. The findings of the survey will be analysed during 2017.

Master's programmes

AQU Catalunya continued working during 2016 on the design of instruments to gather information on the satisfaction of graduates of master's programmes.

Following the analysis of the series of experiences at both national and international level and the work carried out by the workgroup made up of students and academic experts, two different instruments were chosen to gather information on the satisfaction of graduates of master's programmes. At programme level, a catalogue of key dimensions and aspects for gathering information on an annual basis was proposed, with the aim of making specific information available on each study programme for the purposes of monitoring and accreditation. At the level of the university system as a whole in Catalonia, a survey to provide reliable aggregate information on the quality of master's programmes in Catalonia was proposed. These two proposals have been referred to the universities and are currently in the process of being approved.

The Engineering Observatory

AQU Catalunya started to collaborate with the Professional Association of Industrial Engineers of Catalonia (COEIC) within the framework of the Engineering Observatory (*Observatori de l'Enginyeria*).

The aim of the project is to produce a report on the current situation of engineering in Catalonia, together with its international standing and the requirements for the competitive development of Catalan industry and enterprises over the next ten years. The Engineering Observatory will rely on a broad-based survey to be carried out of engineers in Catalonia and of business, industry and institutions that they are involved with professionally.

The Agency's participation in this initial stage of the project focused on centralising the necessary data provided by professional bodies and associations, as well as universities and other higher education institutions in Catalonia.

Indicators of the university system in Catalonia

AQU Catalunya is highly aware of the importance of indicators for decision-making in the quality assurance and enhancement of programmes and the analysis of specific areas of the university system.

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To this end, the Agency continued working on upgrading and improving both the indicators and scope of information provided on the WINDDAT website, which displays teaching indicators used in programme delivery and analysis. In terms of the indicators, information is now provided on courses being offered, and not just at individual programme level, so that the information on places and admission grades is now as accurate as possible. Two new indicators on classroom teaching hours were also added.

Information on course teaching at the University of Vic-Central University of Catalonia from the 2013-2014 academic year onwards was also made available on WINDDAT in 2016.

The Agency also worked on establishing the link between programmes that undergo revalidation (a repeat ex-ante accreditation), mainly Master's programmes, which will allow for more accurate analysis. Working in collaboration with the Secretariat for Universities' Directorate General for Universities, a codification system was defined to jointly display the data of courses no longer running with those of new emerging courses in the case of revalidated programmes.

2. Workshops and events (including media events)

The following events were organised during 2016:

AUDIT certificates award ceremony for programmes in the Visual and Performing Arts

Cotxeres Hall, Palau Robert, 30 March 2016

This event was in recognition of the work of schools and institutes offering programmes in the visual and performing arts, with the award of certificates accrediting the successful review and assessment of their internal quality assurance systems (IQAs). More than sixty people took part in the ceremony, mainly the heads of schools and institutes for the visual and performing arts, those who participated in the AUDIT programme's reviews of the schools and institutes for the visual and performing arts, institutional representatives and staff from the Government of Catalonia's Ministry of Education.

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The impact of the crisis on graduate employment outcomes

Sala Multimèdia, Institut Químic de Sarrià, 13 April 2016

The event included the presentation of the findings of the analysis of the employment outcomes survey of Master's graduates and the findings of the studies awarded grants by AQU Catalunya for research into the employment outcomes of graduates.



What is the purpose of external quality assurance?

Auditorium, AQU Catalunya, 23 September 2016

This workshop formed part of the last stage in the dissemination of the IMPALA project, an EU project with the objective of assessing the observable impact of external quality assurance by QA agencies, the types of impact and the mechanisms involved. In the workshop the scope of the project was extended to cover the assessment of public policy in the field of education and, in general, evidence-based policies.

Event marking the 20th anniversary of AQU Catalunya

Palau Reial de Pedralbes, 25 October 2016

This event marked the twentieth anniversary of the Agency and its work in improving and enhancing the university system in Catalonia.

Those taking part included the president of AQU Catalunya, Josep Joan Moreso; Gemma Rauret, the director of AQU Catalunya from 1998 to 2006; the president of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and Jordi Baiget, the Government of Catalonia's Minister for Enterprise and Knowledge.



INTERNATIONALISATION

1. International institutional relations

The main organisations that AQU Catalunya maintains relations with include:

INQAAHE

Beginning in October 2013 and through until 30 June 2018, **AQU Catalunya hosts the Secretariat of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE)**, an international association with more than 270 organisations involved in the quality assurance of higher education, the majority of which are QA agencies.

The Agency's activities in hosting the organisation's Secretariat focus mainly on the management of annual calls and projects, support for the Board of Directors, support for the members and economic management.



ENQA

AQU Catalunya has been a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) since the association was founded in 2000. The Agency actively participates in various different ENQA working groups, including the **Internal Quality Assurance** working group, the main mission of which is to analyse and provide knowledge on the outcomes of the ENQA external review process; the **Impact of quality assurance** working group (finished), the main focus of which was to reflect on the impact of the quality assurance in higher education; the **Quality assurance and recognition** working group, set up to map current practices on external quality assurance of academic recognition among institutions and ENQA agencies; and the **Quality assurance and E-learning** working group, coordinated by AQU Catalunya, with



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the general purpose of establishing a series of recommendations for the quality assurance of e-provision.

EQAR

The European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) is a register of QA agencies that have demonstrated substantial compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance. AQU Catalunya has been an independent member on the EQAR Register Committee since 2015.

ECA

AQU Catalunya joined the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA), the primary aim of which is the mutual recognition of decisions concerning accreditation and quality assurance, in 2010.

AQU Catalunya participates in various of the Consortium's working groups, and coordinates the ECA Working Group on mutual recognition of the accreditation of joint programmes. This group analyses ways in which the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes can be implemented.⁴ The Agency also forms part of the Certification Group's standing committee.



2. International projects

The international projects that the Agency participated in during 2016 were as follows:

- An Adaptive Trust-based e-assessment System for Learning, **TeSLA** (in progress, started in 2016)
- Impact Analysis of External Quality Assurance Processes in Higher Education Institutions. Pluralistic Methodology and Application of a Formative Transdisciplinary Impact Evaluation, **IMPALA** (finished, 2013-2016)

⁴ <https://www.eqar.eu/fileadmin/documents/bologna/02_European_Approach_QA_of_Joint_Programmes_v1_0.pdf>.

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- Development of Public Accreditation of Agricultural programmes in Russia, **PACAgro** (in progress, started in 2014)
- Enhancing Quality of Technology-Enhanced Learning at Jordanian Universities, **EQTeL** (in progress, started in 2015)

3. Quality assurance and expert advice

Under specific agreements, the Agency also undertook the following activities involving quality assurance and expert advice:

- Review and assessment procedure for the validation of institutional academic standards: AQU Catalunya entered into an agreement with the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences at the **Universidad de San Martín de Porres** (Peru), within the framework of international accreditation.
- Expert advice and guidance for programme quality: AQU Catalunya signed a collaboration agreement with the Government of Andorra's Department of Higher Education, Research and Grants (Ministry for Education and Higher Education) to advise the **University of Andorra** on the quality assurance of various programmes of study.

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

1. Compliance with recent legislation governing AQU Catalunya

The Agency worked throughout the year to adapt and bring the organisation in line with the requirements of Act 15/2015, 21 July, on the Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency (AQU Catalunya) and Decree 315/2016, 8 November, concerning the approval of its Statutes.

The most important adaptations put into effect were:

- The transformation of the Quality Assurance Commission into the Institutional and Programme Review Commission.
- The integration of the CLiC Commission (which dealt with tenure-eligible and collaborating teaching staff) into the Research Assessment Commission.
- The adaptation and transformation of the special committee (CEMAI) for the assessment of individual merits and activities of teaching staff into the special committee for academic staff teaching and management.
- The start of work to draw up the contract programme between AQU Catalunya and the Government of Catalonia's Executive Council for the next four years.

2. Preparation for the ESG review in 2017

In 2016 AQU Catalunya signed the contract with the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) for it to coordinate the external review of AQU Catalunya and the Agency's compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015), which will take place in 2017.

During the year, AQU Catalunya also produced the requisite self-assessment report on the basis of the *Guidelines for ENQA Agency Review (October 2015)*, in accordance with the structure given in annex II (Guide of content for the self-

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assessment report). The Agency's Standing Committee, as delegated by the Governing Board, also endorsed the self-assessment report, which was referred to ENQA to start the external review procedure.

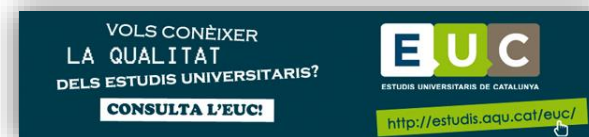
3. Implementation of the Strategic Plan for 2015-2018

AQU Catalunya continued implementation of the Strategic Plan for 2015-2018, the details of which are specified in the activities endorsed on an annual basis by the Governing Board. The Plan underpins the technical quality of the Agency's activities, takes into account and incorporates where possible international best practices, increases the involvement of the universities and other HEIs in the Agency's activities and increases the visibility of AQU Catalunya among the different stakeholder groups, while maintaining its rigorous standards.

4. Communication

EUC

AQU Catalunya set up the EUC web portal (*Estudis Universitaris de Catalunya*), a trilingual search engine (in Catalan, Spanish and English) with information on the quality and quality assurance of recognised bachelor-level and master's degree programmes at universities and other HEIs in Catalonia. Produced in cooperation with the Secretariat for Universities and Research and the universities in Catalonia, the aim of the new EUC portal, in accordance with ENQA standards, is to extend the visibility of the results of external site visits and the accreditation of recognised programmes, in addition to presenting programme quality in a way that is easy to comprehend for all stakeholders.



EUC Reports (*EUC Informes*)

In 2016 the EUC Reports web portal was also launched, in succession to the Agency's review reports web portal launched in 2011 for the publication of reports on the delivery of study programmes resulting from the different QA procedures carried out by the Agency.



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The new web portal also includes the publication of reports on programmes in the Visual and Performing Arts that come under the Government of Catalonia's Ministry of Education.

The Agency's website

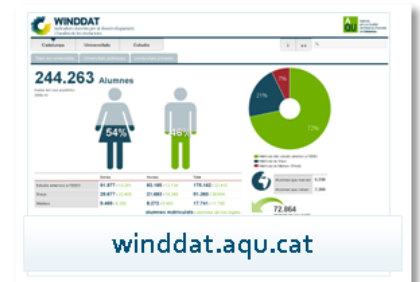
In 2016 the contents of the website were revised and improvements made to menu legibility and structure. Pages were updated in line with the Agency's activities and new pages created with the results and findings of the projects undertaken. The number of website visits consolidated at around 165,000 (18% higher than in 2015), with documents registering more than 52,800 visits (4% higher than in 2015).



WINDDAT - teaching indicators for programme delivery and analysis

WINDDAT is a public website that displays data on student demand, admission grades, number of places offered, the credit completion rate, etc., which can be used by university authorities to draw up programme progress reports and compare the data of other courses similar to their own that are being run in Catalonia.

In 2016, WINDDAT received 66,124 visits.



YouTube

AQU Catalunya opened a YouTube channel in 2015 in order to increase its presence in social networks and disseminate the activities it carries out. The channel received 2,261 visits in 2016.



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Twitter

At the end of 2016 the AQU Catalunya Twitter account had 925 followers, which was a 44% increase over the number in 2015, and 299 tweets were sent. In addition, there were 377 mentions of @aqucatalunya and 10,000 profile visits.



Media outlets

During 2016 there were 27 citations in written news media.

The director and president of the Agency were also interviewed throughout the year by different media outlets:

- Interview of AQU Catalunya's director in *La Vanguardia* newspaper (13/06/2016) about the quality of bachelor and master's programmes at Catalan universities, the possibility of attracting more foreign students and the situation regarding the employment outcomes of graduates of different degree courses.
- Interview of AQU Catalunya's president on the *Notícies en Xarxa* programme (22/06/2016) on the occasion of the university entrance exams.
- Interview of AQU Catalunya's director on the Radio 4 programme, *Llibres, píxels i valors* (28/11/2016), on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of AQU Catalunya.

Online newsletter (*eButlletí*)

The four corresponding issues for the year (numbers 80 to 83) of AQU's online newsletter (*eButlletí*) in Catalan, Spanish and English were produced and sent to the 6,390 subscribers.

External communication plan

AQU Catalunya began drawing up an external communication plan with the aim of defining, on the one hand, communication strategies that improve and increase the knowledge and awareness of its users and, on the other, the key messages that the Agency seeks to convey to society in a way that is clear, easily understandable and adapted to each target group.

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Publications

AQU Catalunya produced 51 publications, which included the reports with the results and findings of the graduate employment outcomes survey and the Employers project, methodological materials designed for the Agency's various different QA procedures, and the 2015 Annual Report.

INTERNAL ORGANISATION

During 2016, AQU Catalunya addressed key aspects of accountability and optimisation in the allocation of human and physical resources to the different projects and activities undertaken by the Agency

The quality management and information security system satisfactorily passed the external certification audit according to ISO 9001:2008 and ISO 27001:2013, which was carried out by AENOR, the Spanish certification body. In relation to the information security system, intense work was done to reduce risks and attain a high level of compliance with the controls stipulated by ISO standard 27002.

With regard to administrative data processing, one key aspect was the launch of the EUC (<http://estudis.aqu.cat>) and the EUC Reports (<http://estudis.aqu.cat/informes/Web/Inici>) web portals. The migration of the EUC and WINDDAT to AQU Catalunya's platforms and servers was also undertaken. The procedure and associated criteria for managing experts and those collaborating with the Agency were defined, approved and simplified. In addition, the necessary tools for analysing the profile of candidates applying for teaching staff assessment and submitting CVs were developed

With regard to IT systems, connection was made to the CSUC's *Anella Científica* network; wifi was made publicly available on a daily password basis; the Agency complied with the controls specified in ISO standard 27002; and all necessary support was provided to the users of AQU Catalunya.

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Agència per a la Qualitat del Sistema Universitari de Catalunya

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