



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

AQU Catalunya self-evaluation report (according to the ENQA European model)

6 March 2007

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1. Introduction

The university system of the Autonomous Community of Catalonia consists of seven public universities, four private universities, and one distance university (UOC) with the legal status of a private university but totally funded from public sources. Total student enrolment is 238,000 (182,000 public + 22,000 private + 34,000 UOC), with a full time equivalent undergraduate student number of 168,000. This total figure includes 11,500 graduate students, who produce 1,300 theses a year. The number of undergraduate degrees awarded in the same period is 32,500.

The total number of equivalent full time teaching staff and researchers is 12,500, which gives a ratio of 13.5 students/teacher (12.2 students/teacher in the public system). In addition, there are 8,000 administrative and services support staff.

The Agency for the Quality of the University System in Catalonia (AQU Catalunya or simply AQU) was set up in 1996 with the mission to promote quality improvement in Catalan universities. The Board of Management of this consortium was made up of the rectors (vice-chancellors) and chairpersons of the Boards of the seven Catalan public universities and representatives from the Generalitat de Catalunya (Autonomous Government of Catalonia/Catalan Government). The Agency's main instrument for achieving its mission was, as it is today, the institutional assessment of quality, and it was also entrusted with analysing the results of the university system and proposing measures to improve the services provided by the Catalan public universities to society. The successful projection of the consortium, which was the first quality agency to be set up in Spain, was established early on at both the European and international levels.

In 2003, there was a change in the legal status of AQU Catalunya as a consequence of a reform of the framework legislation concerning Spanish universities, and there were ensuing changes in legislation in the regional Autonomous Communities. The Spanish legislation (Spanish Universities Act) introduced, for the first time, mechanisms to promote academic excellence through a new quality system that was objective, independent and transparent, and which provided the assurance of merit and capability in teaching staff selection and promotion, and quality improvement in all other areas of university activity. The Catalan Universities Act (2003), which was embedded into the basic framework defined by the national Spanish Universities Act, expanded on the jurisdiction of the Generalitat de Catalunya over education and research. It established AQU Catalunya as the main instrument for quality promotion and assurance, to be carried out through assessment, process certification and the accreditation of learning processes in the Catalan university system and within the framework of the EHEA.

The Agency is headed by a president, a Board of Management and an executive director, and its operations are carried out through three committees that deal with institutional and programme quality, research assessment and junior teaching staff and professor accreditation.

The AQU President, who is also Chairman of the Board, is an individual chosen among 'personalities of recognised prestige' in university circles and appointed by the Generalitat de Catalunya for a period of four years, on a renewable basis. The President's main functions are to supervise the attainment of the agency's goals, to represent AQU Catalunya at the institutional level, and to brief Government and the Parliament of Catalonia on the Agency's activity.

The Board of Management is the governing body of AQU Catalunya. It is made up of the president of the Agency, the rectors of the public universities and the UOC, three rectors of private universities, the chairpersons of the social councils of the public universities, three distinguished persons from the academic community, two persons designated by the government, the three AQU committee chairpersons, and the AQU director. The Board's main functions are to approve the annual activities agenda and the economic balance sheet, and to establish the Agency's strategic goals.

The Director of AQU Catalunya is the Agency's Executive Director and representative of the Board of Management regarding the implementation of agreements adopted by the Board. The Director is designated by the Generalitat de Catalunya, subsequent to consultation with the Board of Management and subject to a proposal by the President of the Agency, for a period of four years, which is renewable for two further terms of office.

There are currently thirty staff employees working at AQU Catalunya, and the Agency's annual budget for 2005 was EUR 2,262,000.

2. Terms of reference

The review evaluates the way in which, and to what extent AQU fulfils the standards for ENQA membership and thus the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*. Consequently, the review also provides information to the ENQA Board to aid its consideration of whether AQU's Full Membership in ENQA is to be reconfirmed.

In addition to the European context, the review aims at providing feedback on AQU's role and tasks in the contexts of the Catalan and Spanish higher education systems. AQU's teaching staff assessment programme is unparalleled in Europe and is closely linked to the management of academic staff in the universities. The particular dual system of recruited and civil servant staff that exists is defined by legislation. The review is therefore also expected to evaluate and comment on the effectiveness of the management of the teaching staff assessment procedure by AQU and whether it meets the set aims.

The evaluation of AQU Catalunya

Due to the fact that there is currently no national regulation or body capable of appropriately carrying out the external review of quality assurance agencies for higher education in Catalonia and Spain, a request was made by AQU for the ENQA to be responsible for the external evaluation of the agency.

Internal evaluation process

The AQU's Board of Management has approved AQU Catalunya's candidature to be evaluated in accordance with the standards and guidelines of the ENQA in order for AQU Catalunya to continue as a full member of the ENQA. The Board of Management furthermore accepts the proposal of an coordinated evaluation together with the Spanish ANECA national agency, which is formalised in the joint application made by the two agencies to be evaluated by the ENQA.

Dr. Pere Botella is the representative appointed by AQU Catalunya for the process of coordinating the methodology established with the ANECA.

Operationally speaking, the Board of Management requested the Quality Assessment Committee to be in charge of the evaluation of AQU Catalunya in accordance with the ENQA's standards and guidelines.

AQU Catalunya appoints an internal evaluation committee made up of the:

- Director of AQU Catalunya (Chairperson of the internal evaluation committee)
- President of AQU Catalunya

- Chairperson of the Committee that evaluates tenure-track and non-civil servant non-PhD teaching staff
- Chairperson of the Research Assessment Committee
- Representative of the Quality Assessment Committee
- Head of Quality Assessment
- Head of Teaching Staff Assessment
- Head of Planning and Communication

This internal committee will receive guidance from the members of the Quality Assessment Committee. A working group will help the internal committee in the drawing up of the self-evaluation report, and will be made up of:

- Chairperson of the Quality Assessment Committee's sub-committee on degree and study programme evaluation
- Chairperson of the Quality Assessment Committee's sub-committee on university institution and activities evaluation
- Chairperson of the Quality Assessment Committee's sub-committee on individual merits and activities evaluation
- The AQU Catalunya legal representative
- The AQU Catalunya Administration Manager
- The AQU Catalunya Financial And Human Resources Manager
- The Heads of the various sections of AQU Catalunya

Approval of the self-evaluation report is given by the Quality Assessment Committee, to which the Board of Management delegates responsibility for this purpose. The Board of Management is informed of the content of the report, which it ratifies at the end of the process, prior to it being sent to the ENQA.

3. Background and current state of evaluation and higher education in Catalonia

The Catalan university system: structure and figures

The Catalan university system is made up of twelve universities, the structure and legal status of which are given below:

University	Students	Status	
Universitat de Barcelona	56,111	Public	Comprehensive university, where the Social Sciences, Experimental Sciences and the Humanities are of particular importance. A long-established university that, up until the nineteen sixties, was the only one in Catalonia.
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona	38,117	Public	Comprehensive university, where the Social Sciences, Experimental Sciences and the Humanities are of particular importance. Founded in the 1960s.
Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya	33,242	Public	University that specialises in Engineering studies. Founded in the early 1970s to bring together different institutions with a long-standing tradition in technical subjects in Catalonia.
Universitat Pompeu Fabra	10,213	Public	University that specialises in the Social Sciences, which also has offers technical subjects and Life Sciences. Founded in the 1990s.
Universitat de Girona	12,680	Public	Comprehensive university, with its campus in the city of Girona. Founded in the early 1990s to bring together different institutions of the universities in Barcelona
Universitat de Lleida	8,425	Public	Comprehensive university, where Food and Agricultural Studies are of particular importance. The campus is in the city of Lleida. A long-established university that was reopened in the early 1990s, bringing together different institutions of the universities in Barcelona.
Universitat Rovira i Virgili	11,962	Public	Comprehensive university, where studies in Chemistry are of particular importance. The campus is in the city of Tarragona. Founded in the early 1990s to bring together different institutions of the universities in Barcelona
Universitat Ramon Llull	13,140	Private	A Christian-inspired, comprehensive university. Founded in the early 1990s to bring together different long-established institutions in Catalonia
Open University of Catalonia (UOC)	33,996	Private	Distance learning university, with on-line degree programmes in the Humanities, Social Sciences and Technical Science subjects. Founded in the early 1990s.
Universitat de Vic	5,113	Private	Comprehensive university, with its campus in the city of Vic. Founded at the end of the 20th century.
International University of Catalonia	2,406	Private	A Christian-inspired, comprehensive university. Founded at the end of the 20th century.
Universitat Abat Oliba	564	Private	A Christian-inspired university offering degree programmes in the Social Sciences. Founded at the beginning of the 21st century.

The Agency for Quality Assurance in the Catalan University System (AQU Catalunya)

The rapid development of university systems during the eighties, together with a new context characterised by the changing technological model, the internationalisation of societies and the growing importance of the knowledge factor in the workings of the economy had, by the mid-nineties and in line with other European countries, led to the need in Catalonia for processes involving university quality assurance and improvement to be established.

The *Agència per a la Qualitat del Sistema Universitari a Catalunya* (Agency for Quality Assurance in the University System in Catalonia) was legally established on 26 September 1996 as a consortium between the Generalitat de Catalunya and the public (state-run) universities in Catalonia, with the aim of promoting quality improvement in the Catalan university system through its main instrument, the institutional assessment of quality, aimed mainly at university degree programmes. The Catalan Universities Act transformed the consortium/Agency into a public corporation, and with a slight modification in its name (*Agència per a la Qualitat del Sistema Universitari de Catalunya / Agency for Quality Assurance in the Catalan University System*), the agency commonly became known as AQU Catalunya. The new AQU Catalunya maintained the legacy of the former consortium and widened its membership with representatives from the private universities, amongst others, and also developed new powers in the fields of quality assessment and teaching staff and research evaluation.

The following stages mark the Agency's course of development:

1996-1997: founded and established as a consortium.

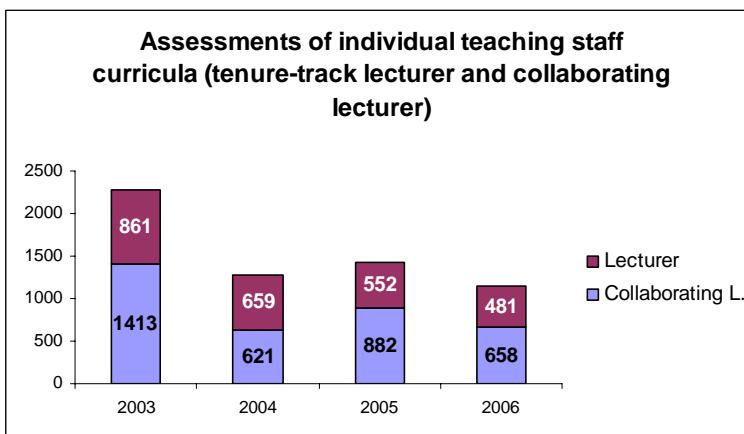
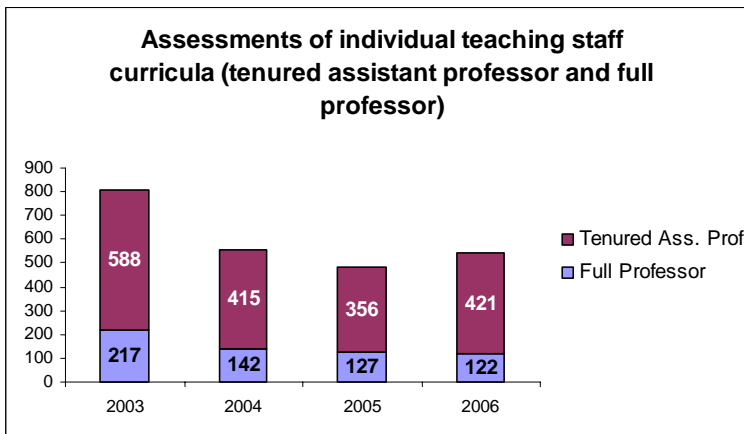
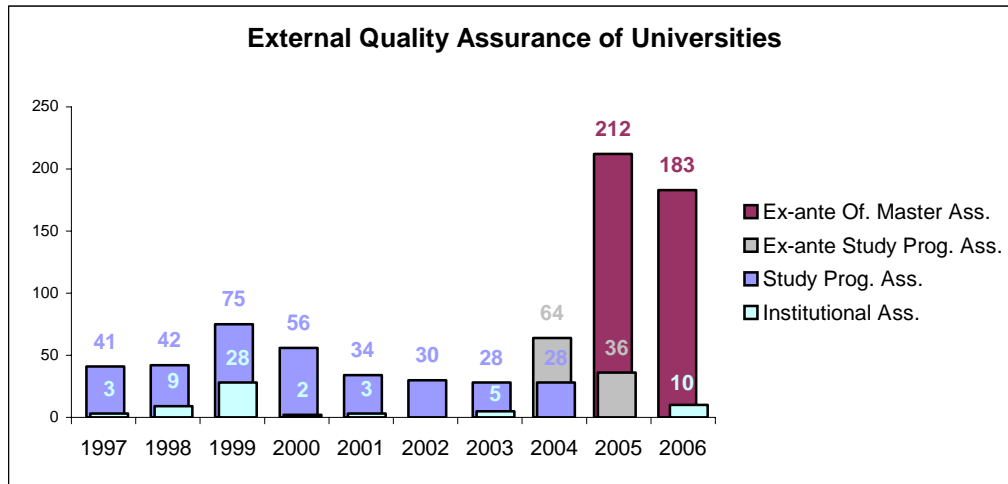
1998-1999: consolidation of its evaluation and assessment activities; growth and development of the internal organisation and start of its external projection, particularly in Europe.

2000-2001: full consolidation of the organisation; external recognition of the activities carried out; prioritisation given to the innovation of methodology, and the establishing of groundwork for its future projection through the approval of an action plan for 2001-2007 to improve the Catalan university system.

2002-2003: passing of the Catalan Universities Act; start of a new entity with more extensive powers.

2003-2006: consolidation of the new powers and cooperation with the universities in the process of adaptation to the EHEA.

Summary of activities:



Reports and publications

Annual reports [8, Catalan] Publications on evaluation processes concerning the quality of the Catalan university system, with the results of the evaluations carried out and completed during the year.

General frameworks [9 Catalan, 6 Spanish, 3 English] Documents that set out the fundamental theoretical and practical aspects of university quality assurance in strategic fields. They bring together good practices put into effect by the universities and recommendations by experts, and are intended to be an instrument for the universities for designing quality policies and a reference document for external evaluators.

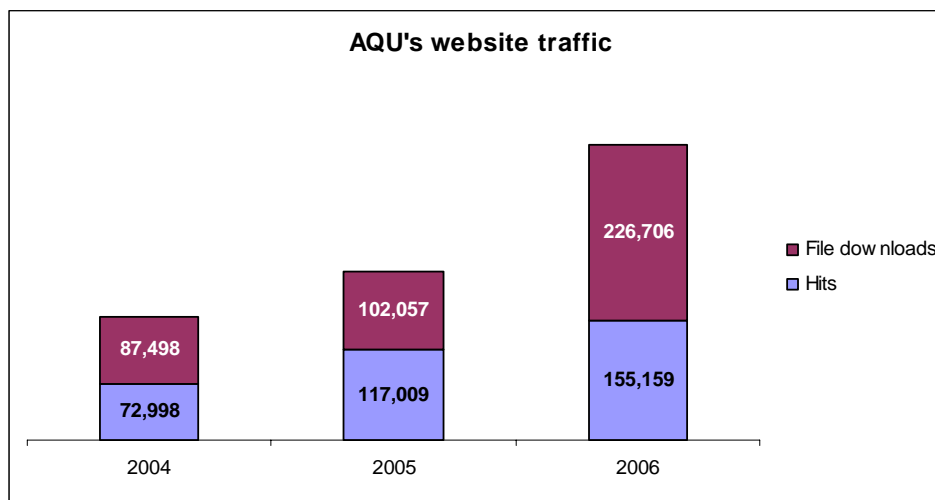
Publications on particular subjects [2] Studies on the quality of higher education.

Workshop publications [8] Publications with the main papers, contributions and conclusions presented in workshops organised by AQU Catalunya in collaboration with the universities.

DISSENY programme¹ publications [3 Catalan, 3 Spanish, 3 English] Guides for designing degree programmes within the framework of the EHEA, given the definition of a programme specification (competence profile) that describes the basic competences required of graduates and the definition of the instruments to evaluate these skills.

Reports [4 Catalan, 3 Spanish, 3 English] Documents through which the Agency's annual activities are made accountable to society.

e-Bulletin [31] AQU News [32, on-line publication]



4. Internal evaluation

Standard 3.2. Official status

Documentation

Document	Section	Type
Law 1/2003, of 19 February: Catalan Universities Act	article 139	2
AQU Catalunya statutes	article 1	2
Decree-law 212/2006, of 23 May, on the structure of the Ministry of Education and Universities	article 2.3.a)	2

Standard and guideline application

AQU Catalunya has full legal personality and capacity and its own assets with which it carries out its functions. It is a public corporation of the Generalitat de Catalunya that conforms to civil law, in accordance with article 139 of the Catalan Universities Law.

The Agency's assessment, accreditation and certification activities are considered to be administrative activities, subject to public law and its safeguards.

With regard to this standard, positive appraisal is given to the legislative recognition of AQU Catalunya, whereby it was granted its own legal personality and powers in assessment, accreditation and certification.

Standard 3.3. Activities

Documentation

Document	Section	Type
Law 1/2003, of 19 February: Catalan Universities Act	article 140	2
AQU Catalunya statutes	articles, 3, 4, 5, 9.1 and 11	2
E E.01. Planning of activities (Procedures for the activities plan, programming and the activities report)		3
Current code of ethics I		2
Principles and criteria for drawing up the code of ethics		4
Annual activities plan		2
Annual activities report		2
AQU Catalunya annual report		2

Standard and guideline application

1. Activities

The Catalan Universities Law established the legislative and legal framework for the activities that AQU Catalunya may carry out. It specifically defines the aim of AQU Catalunya as being *the assessment, accreditation and certification of quality within the terms of reference of the universities and higher education institutions in Catalonia*, and it marks out the Agency's functions (article 140) as follows:

Evaluation of institutional quality:

1. The assessment of degree programmes leading to the award of officially recognised degrees and specific university awarded degrees given by universities and higher education institutions (HEIs).
2. Certification of the quality of the universities' degree programmes, management and activities.
3. The accreditation of degree programmes within the framework of the standards and guidelines of the ENQA.
4. The assessment of educational institutions established in Catalonia that offer degree programmes leading to the award of foreign HEI degrees.
5. The accreditation of systems and procedures for assessing university quality, including those concerning the teaching activities of academic staff.
6. The assessment of university and HEI activities, programmes, services and management.
7. Promoting the assessment and comparability of quality standards within European and international contexts.

Assessment of university teaching staff:

8. The issuing of relevant reports concerning the recruitment of tenure track and non-civil servant, non-PhD teaching staff.
9. The issuing of research and advanced research accreditation, in order to comply with the legal requirement whereby the appointment of senior academic staff (assistant professors and full professors) at universities calls for prior accreditation by AQU.
10. The assessment of researchers' activities, and assessment of the individual merits of research by civil servant and non-civil servant teaching and research staff for the allocation of salary bonuses, in accordance with articles 55 and 69 of the Spanish Universities Act.
11. Assessment of the research activity of teaching and research staff at private universities, which provides for verification of the regulations that specify that 25% of teaching staff must have a PhD and teaching staff accreditation from AQU Catalunya or another corresponding agency.
12. The assessment of the individual teaching and management merits of civil servant and non-civil servant teaching and research staff for the allocation of salary bonuses in accordance with articles 55 and 69 of the Spanish Universities Act.

Studies, consulting, cooperation and others:

13. The preparation of studies to improve and introduce innovation into the models for assessment, certification and accreditation.

14. The issuing of evaluation reports aimed at the universities, educational administration, social stakeholders and society in general.
15. Consulting with the educational authorities, universities and other institutions on the scope of their functions.
16. The setting up of links for cooperation and collaboration with other regional, national and international agencies with assessment, accreditation and certification functions.
17. Matters commissioned to it by the government department with jurisdiction over universities, and the universities, by agreement.
18. Other functions assigned to it by the Catalan Universities Act, the AQU statutes and other prevailing regulations.

The AQU statutes go one step further in that, in addition to reproducing the same aims and functions laid down in the Catalan Universities Act (articles 3 and 4), they state that the agency shall work according to an activities programme (article 5), which shall be drawn up by the Director of the Agency (article 11) and approved by the Board of Management (article 9). AQU Catalunya is also under the obligation to prepare an annual activities report, which the Board of Management must also approve and send to the government department with jurisdiction over universities (article 5) for its respective approval.

2. The annual planning of activities and the Activities Report

Planning of the Agency's activities is one of the strategic processes (E.01, planning of activities); it includes a description of the procedure for preparing and modifying the annual planning of activities; monitoring the annual activities programme; and how the annual Activities Report is drawn up and approved.

Both the Activities Plan and the annual Activities Report are published on the AQU Catalunya website.

Standard 3.4. Resources

Documentation

Document	Section	Type
Economic resources		
Law on annual budgets	Annex	4
Law 4/1985, of 29 March, concerning the regulation of public enterprise in Catalonia	articles 2, 16, 29, 30	4
Financial audit		4
Catalan Universities Act (2003)	article 153	2
AQU statutes	articles 24 and 27	2
AQU Catalunya 2005 Budget		4

Support procedures according to the ISO standard		4
Annual activities plan		2
Human resources		
Catalan Universities Act (2003)	article 151	2
AQU statutes	article 23	2
Functional organisation chart of AQU Catalunya by sections and professional categories		4
CVs of the management and experts specialising in assessment		
Job specifications list		4
Employment and working conditions of regular AQU Catalunya employees		4
Training Plan and Annual Report		4
Plan for the prevention of risks at work		4
Annual goals		4
Support procedures according to the ISO standard		4
Material resources		
Inventory		4
Act 4/1985, of 29 March, on the regulation of public enterprise in Catalonia	article 24	4
Support procedures according to the ISO standard		4

1. Economic resources

On the basis of the legal framework and the draft activities plan, the Agency draws up a preliminary draft budget that is approved by the Board of Management. The preliminary draft budget and the activities are then sent to the Generalitat de Catalunya's corresponding department with jurisdiction regarding universities to be included in the Government's general budget. The AQU Catalunya annual budget is issued annually in the Generalitat de Catalunya's Finance Act.

AQU Catalunya has autonomy with regard to the distribution and annual monitoring of the budget, which is implemented according to the planning of annual activities, the purpose being to guarantee the availability of financial resources for the Agency's activities throughout the year.

Performance of the 2005 budget

Although AQU Catalunya receives income from various sources², 97% of the Agency's total income in 2005 came from current transfers from the Generalitat de Catalunya, which were allocated to

² (Article 153 (2) of the Catalan Universities Law and article 24 (2) of the AQU Catalunya statutes):

- a) Those allocated under the Catalan Government's budgets.
- b) Revenue from its own assets and privileges, and those assigned to it.
- c) Income from the Agency's activity.
- d) Grants and donations from public and private entities and private individuals.

finance the agency's current and personnel expenditure. Conferral of these transfers at the beginning of the year in the Finance Act makes the required annual resources available for all activities envisaged in the Activities Plan.

The disadvantage with this arrangement is that it makes the Agency overly dependent on the Generalitat de Catalunya and susceptible to general budget fluctuations, such as the application of overall budget continuations by the government from one year to the next.

The remaining income came from, amongst other sources, fees received for the accreditation of teaching staff, which accounted for 1.37% of total operating income, and banking interest (0.94%). European projects, which accounted for 0.5% of AQU Catalunya's budgeted income, accounted for an additional, extra-budgetary source.

The AQU Catalunya expense budget consists of capital and budget appropriations stipulated in the prevailing regulations and two budget items provided for internally to calculate and monitor the cost of AQU Catalunya's main activities, namely, the evaluation of institutional quality and teaching staff assessment.

Income and expenditure of programmes, 2005³

INCOME		EXPENDITURE	
CURRENT TRANSFERS - GENERALITAT	2,209,990.00	TOTAL - INSTITUTIONAL QUALITY ASSESSMENT	740,309.58
ACCREDITATION FEES	30,899.21	Staff wages	192,061.83
BANK INTEREST	21,176.47	Quality consultancy and working groups	37,599.93
		Assessment programmes (external evaluation)	128,005.36
		Committees set up under legislation: (CAQ, ATP, ACAU, CEMAI)	40,607.59
		Workshops	21,687.42
		Publications and methodology material	80,753.26
		External projection and exchange	19,584.82
		Transfers granted to universities	220,009.37
		TOTAL TEACHING STAFF ASSESSMENT	567,025.12
		Staff wages	220,046.11
		Teaching staff assessment programmes	279,616.87
		Committees set up under legislation: CLIC and CAR	31,888.08

e) Credits and loans granted to it, where applicable and in accordance with the prevailing regulations.

f) Any other applicable sources.

³ All figures in euros.

		Publications	1,975.92
		Announcements in the press and the Official Journal (DOGC)	33,498.14
		TOTAL OVERHEADS	878,919.75
		Staff	516,131.33
		Expenditure on current goods and services	362,788.42
		RETAINED EARNINGS	75,811.23
TOTAL INCOME	2,262,065.68	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	2,262,065.68

For individual degree programme assessments in 2006, AQU Catalunya set aside an average of EUR 4,817 on external evaluation (this figure takes in fees, travel expenses and accommodation). In the case of extended evaluations (where various degree programmes are analysed simultaneously in the same visit), the figure for each degree programme is lower.

In terms of the Catalan university system as a whole, investment in the external quality assurance of university degree programmes is clearly low. AQU Catalunya is however deliberating the future optimisation of these resources, especially when, from the legal standpoint, the accreditation of all officially recognised degree programmes is called for. This process of deliberation on quality assurance mechanisms and the cost of their implementation may lead to consideration of the need for greater diversification in the Agency's income.

The accounts of AQU Catalunya are subject to an annual financial audit (4) by the financial control section (*Subdirecció General de Control Financer*) of the Generalitat de Catalunya's Ministry of Economy and Finance⁴.

One weak point in the management of the Agency's economic resources, as pointed out in the annual activities plan (2), is the lack of an effective and efficient software package for unifying the three types of economic management (financial, budgeting and costs). This problem is not exclusive to AQU Catalunya, and many other public enterprises that are dependent on the Generalitat de Catalunya are affected in a similar way. In order to solve these shortcomings and to homogenise and unify public enterprise accounting practices, the Catalan Ministry of Economy and Finance has been working to develop the SAP software system since the beginning of 2005. The programme also facilitates the rendering of accounts to the Ministry of Economy and Finance. Implementation of this new programme will lead to important changes in the way the preliminary draft budget is prepared, and in its monitoring.

⁴ As stipulated in article 16 of the law concerning the regulation of public enterprise, article 27 of the AQU Catalunya statutes (4), and the annual activities plan (2).

2. Human resources

As is laid down in article 151 of the Catalan Universities Act and article 23 of the AQU Catalunya statutes, the staff of AQU Catalunya is made up of the Agency's permanent staff, who are hired and contracted as regular employees on the basis of merit and capability, and personnel from the Catalan Administration and the public universities. The staff is currently made up of permanent staff who are regular employees.

The staff consists of thirty employees, details of which are given in the organisational chart of AQU Catalunya (4), who are distributed among four sections: Administration, Institutional Assessment, Teaching Staff Assessment, and Planning and Communication. The distribution of professional categories takes in 3 heads of section, 8 senior technical experts, 7 expert managers, 10 administrative staff and 2 junior office staff. This number of staff has so far been adequate for the Agency to effectively and efficiently carry out all of its external quality assurance work. New powers assigned to AQU Catalunya last summer (2006) now call for a reappraisal of this situation.

AQU Catalunya subscribes to the working arrangement and conditions agreement of non-permanent staff at AQU Catalunya, which regulates aspects such as staff working conditions, the filling of internal and external vacancies, employee promotion, training and manpower development, wage conditions and performance-related salaries. The working arrangement and conditions agreement has led to the process for giving full coverage to employment with the Agency being started in 2006, which will stabilise the job situation of its employees.

A training scheme,⁵ which is monitored and an annual report produced, is approved annually. AQU Catalunya finances training activities in the scheme with 2% of the total amount allocated to Chapter I of the budget.

In line with the prevailing regulations, in 2005 AQU Catalunya also implemented a plan for the prevention of risks at work, with all employees receiving the relevant training, and voluntary medical check-ups have been made on the Agency's staff.

As a way of giving incentive to the staff with regard to goals and programmed activities, AQU Catalunya has a performance-related salary policy that includes bonuses for goal achievement⁶, as stated in the working arrangement and conditions agreement. Evaluation and monitoring of compliance with goals is made during the year and a final assessment made at the end of the year.

One weak aspect regarding human resources has been that no software package has been used to unify all of the human resource-related procedures. A better description and appraisal of the various different jobs would also be very useful

⁵ AQU Catalunya's support processes I.16, I.17 and S.06.03 set out the procedures for preparing and carrying out the training scheme, as well as for drawing up the annual report.

⁶ These goals are general and specific to each section and individual

Aside from its regular staff, AQU Catalunya also collaborates with advisers and experts in each activity, who make up sub-committees and working groups that help external quality assurance processes to run more efficiently.

The number of experts and advisers that collaborated with AQU Catalunya in 2005 is given below:

Institutional quality assessment:

- 1 adviser in the field of university quality
- 1 consultant on research centre assessment
- Assessment of “pre-Bologna” degree programmes - PRO-QU 2005: 51 advisers
- Assessment of library services: 40 advisers
- Assessment of distance degree programmes: 2 experts
- Assessment of officially recognised postgraduate programmes: 47 advisers
- Assessment of the pilot plan to adapt degree programmes to the EHEA: 26 experts
- Assessment of the monitoring of the pilot plan to adapt degree programmes to the EHEA: 7
- Assessment of teaching staff at private universities: 14
- Assessment of European Master’s programmes TEEP II: 10 advisers (at no cost to AQU Catalunya)
- Working groups to develop the methodology and frameworks of reference: 9 members

Teaching staff assessment:

- The committee that assesses tenure-track and non-civil servant non-PhD teaching staff and its sub-committees is made up of 59 members.
- The committee that assesses tenured and senior teaching staff is made up of 60 members.

3. Material resources

Inventory

AQU Catalunya maintains an inventory (4) of all of its moveable assets, data processing equipment, software packages and programmes, etc.

In addition to periodic monitoring of the budget, the Agency’s requirements and anticipated needs for tangible assets and the constant renewal of obsolete assets are monitored. All of AQU Catalunya’s tangible assets are authorised according to the prevailing regulations.

Computer hardware

AQU Catalunya provides equipment that is sufficient and appropriate for the organisation's working requirements. There is a balance between needs and the technical specifications of the computer equipment. The prevailing policy with regard to computer systems is that equipment be homogeneous and as compatible as possible in order to create economies of scale. AQU Catalunya currently has the following computer equipment: servers: 4 units; computers: 38 desktop computers, 11 PC laptops and 1 Macintosh laptop; peripherals: 8 printers (4 colour), 2 photocopiers, 2 scanners, and 2 faxes

Software packages

1. **Gesta:** A modular and multiuser system that integrates data and processes and provides support to the growing number of AQU Catalunya's activities, Gesta is the Agency's most important software package. Modules that are operational at the present time are those that deal with persons, institutional assessment, teaching and research staff assessment, invoicing, document management, website content, groups and security.
2. **The AQU Catalunya website:** The website is AQU Catalunya's main instrument for instant communication. All relevant information for the university community and potential users regarding the Agency's services and activities is posted and made available there.
3. **The AQU Catalunya extranet:** The extranet is a on-line workspace open to collaborators and working groups of AQU Catalunya. It is currently being used by the members of the teaching staff and research assessment committees to assess the dossiers and draw up the corresponding technical reports (via a system of on-line questionnaires).

AQU Catalunya also has other back-up software packages⁷.

The agency has recently begun to use automatic text translation programmes in the assessment of different aspects of the Catalan university system by experts outside of the system itself

The library

⁷ Intranet for incidents/inventory/use, and Access databases for certain projects. Mention must also be made of the Microsoft Office 2003 package, with the corresponding licenses and updates. The web mail server for the personal accounts of users at AQU Catalunya is Microsoft Exchange Server, which provides for the sharing of information. Adobe Acrobat 6.0 Standard is used for .pdf document management and other back-up software, such as Photoshop CS, Microsoft Visio 2003, WinRar, etc., which are installed on a job requirements basis.

The AQU Catalunya library currently houses around 750 documents, all of which are catalogued in the Generalitat de Catalunya's joint specialised libraries catalogue (BEG) and the joint Catalan universities catalogue (CCUC).

The main body of these documents (approximately 400 documents) is on subjects directly related to the activity of AQU Catalunya⁸.

The main services that the library offers AQU Catalunya employees are document search, acquisition and the handling of internal loans. There is also an interlibrary loan service between the AQU library and other Generalitat and university libraries.

Most documents however are accessed via the Internet by specialist technical experts.

Procurement of material resources:

All administrative procurement procedures are set down in the Agency's support processes (I.20. on procurement guidelines, I.21. on instructions for processing large procurements and tenders and S.07. on the rendering of services/procurement), which describe the procedure for these to be carried out in a way that assures process quality.

Standard 3.5. Mission statement

Documentation

Document	Section	Type
Law 1/2003, of 19 February: Catalan Universities Act	article 140	2
AQU Catalunya statutes	article 3, 4, 5	2
Services catalogue		3
AQU Catalunya quality manual		3
Activities report		2
Reports on the process of assessing university quality		2

⁸ Subjects: university quality, university and the labour market, teaching processes and methods, competence profiles, and institutional and teaching staff assessment. This group also includes documentation from other agencies and all of the bibliographical production of AQU Catalunya. The remaining documents include reports received from Catalan universities, documentation produced by the DIUE (former Ministry of Innovation, Universities and Enterprises), and documentation on subjects that are relevant to the running of the Agency, such as economics, legislation, etc. The library also has a collection of journals that AQU Catalunya subscribes to or that are freely distributed.

Standard and guideline application

The goals and functions of AQU Catalunya are clearly defined in the Catalan Universities Act (article 140) and are stated in the Agency's statutes (articles 3 and 4), which also regulate the requirement that AQU Catalunya is run in accordance with a quality system (article 5). The goals and functions of AQU Catalunya are given on the Agency's website and in its' services catalogue, in Catalan, Spanish and English.

AQU Catalunya's main activity is external quality assurance and a systematic approach is applied in its work methods to achieve its aims and purpose. In the evaluation processes that the Agency carries out, its external quality assurance procedures act as a complement to the internal mechanisms used by universities.

The internal quality management system, which was certified on 22 May 2006, ensures that AQU Catalunya's activities are carried out in accordance with its *raison d'être* and established requirements. The system includes the quality manual which sets out the quality policy approved by the Board of Management, the mission statement and the vision for AQU Catalunya. The quality policy focuses on three instruments: the code of ethics, external evaluation on the basis of the European model and, lastly, the Agency's ISO 9001:2000-based quality management system, which has been certified by a duly accredited body.

AQU Catalunya periodically reviews its activities in order to ensure their continuous improvement. Ad hoc reviews are incorporated into each activity within the procedure itself and there is also an annual review, which is based on the results of the ad hoc reviews.

A periodical account is also given of the activities being carried out by the Agency in the annual Activities Report and also in special reports, including the annual report on the process of quality assessment in the Catalan university system.

Standard 3.6. Independence

Documentation

Document	Section	Type
Law 1/2003, of 19 February: Catalan Universities Act	Preamble, 148	2
AQU Catalunya statutes	article 5.3 and 17.5	2
Quality management system		2 and 4

Appointment of AQU Catalunya's governing bodies and assessment bodies

Procedure for the appointment of the governing bodies and the assessment bodies of AQU Catalunya		
	Who makes the nomination	Prior consultation
AQU President	Appointed by the Executive Council of the Generalitat de Catalunya, at the proposal of the incumbent of the government department with jurisdiction over universities, from 'personalities of recognised prestige' in university circles (article 141.a) Catalan Universities Law)	Proposed by the Minister of the corresponding government department.
Director of AQU Catalunya	Designated by the incumbent of the government department with jurisdiction over universities, on the advice of the Board of Management, at the proposal of the President of the Agency (article 143.2 Catalan Universities Law, article 11.1 AQU Catalunya statutes)	Proposed by the President and on the advice of the Board of Management.
Secretary of AQU Catalunya	The Board of Management shall appoint a Secretary (article 12.1, AQU Catalunya statutes)	
Chairperson of the CAQ ⁹	Appointed by the <i>incumbent of the government department with jurisdiction over universities</i> , on the advice of the AQU President (article 144 Catalan Universities Law, article 14.1.a) Statutes)	On the advice of the AQU President
Chairperson of the CLiC ¹⁰	Appointed by the <i>incumbent of the government department with jurisdiction over universities</i> (article 145 Catalan Universities Law, article 15.1.a) Statutes)	
Chairperson of the CAR ¹¹	Appointed by the <i>incumbent of the government department with jurisdiction over universities</i> (article 146 Catalan Universities Law, article 16.1.a) Statutes)	
Chairpersons of the CAQ sub-committees	The <i>CAQ Chairperson</i> may delegate one of the members of the CAQ as chairperson of the sub-committees (article 11 Regulation CAQ)	
Chairpersons of the CLiC sub-committees	The <i>CLiC Chairperson</i> appoints the chairpersons of the sub-committees (article 5, regulation on the sub-committees of the CLiC)	
Chairpersons of the CAR sub-committees	The <i>CAR Chairperson</i> appoints the chairpersons of the sub-committees (article 4, regulation of the CAR)	
Members of the Board of Management	Article 142, Catalan Universities Law	
Members of the CAQ	Designated by the <i>Director of AQU Catalunya</i> , on the advice of the Board of Management (article 144.2 Catalan Universities Law, article 14.2 Statutes)	On the advice of the Board of Management
Members of the CLiC	- 2 persons designated by the <i>incumbent of the government department with jurisdiction over universities</i> (article 15.1.b) Statutes) - 5 persons designated by the <i>AQU Catalunya Board of Management</i> , at the proposal of the AQU President (article 15.1.c) Statutes)	At the proposal of the AQU President
	- 4 persons designated by the <i>incumbent of the government department with jurisdiction over</i>	

⁹ CAQ: Quality Assessment Committee

¹⁰ CLiC: Committee that deals with tenure-track and non-civil servant non-PhD teaching staff

¹¹ CAR: Research Assessment Committee

Members of the CAR	<i>universities</i> (article 16.1.b) Statutes) - 16 persons designated by the <i>AQU Catalunya Board of Management</i> , at the proposal of the AQU President (article 16.1.c) Statutes)	At the proposal of the AQU President
External advisers CAQ	The <i>CAQ chairperson</i> nominates the advisory members of the sub-committees, on the advice of the committee members (article 8 CAQ regulation)	
External advisers CLiC	The <i>CLiC chairperson</i> nominates the advisory members of the sub-committees, on the advice of the committee members (article 5.2.k) CLiC Regulation)	On the advice of the members of the CLiC
External advisers CAR	The <i>CAR chairperson</i> nominates the advisory members of the sub-committees, on the advice of the committee members (article 6.2.l) CAR Regulation)	On the advice of the committee members

Standard and guideline application

In order for the Agency to be able to deal with its new obligations deriving from both the Spanish and Catalan legislation and to have adequate assurance of its independence, professionalism and freedom to operate that are all characteristic of the way that agencies in Europe operate, AQU Catalunya has adopted the legal form of a public corporation which conforms to civil law and has its own legal personality, in accordance with the Catalan Universities Law.

Article 148 of the Catalan Universities Law also recognises the **technical independence** of the advisory committees, which reach agreement on the assessments to be carried out by the Agency in their respective fields, and are responsible for approving reports issued by AQU Catalunya on the processes of external quality assurance.

Article 5.3 of the Statutes stipulates that internal AQU Catalunya documents (on the internal quality system and the code of ethics) must be open and periodically reviewed, and they must contain general principles that assure the **technical independence** of the advisory committees.

It is also laid down that actions by persons who provide services or collaborate with AQU Catalunya must respect the internal quality system and the principles established in the code of ethics.

The operational independence of AQU Catalunya from HEIs and the government is thereby safeguarded by way of official documents.

The definition and running of the Agency's methods and technical procedures, the appointment and contracting of external experts, and the establishing of the results of quality assurance processes are carried out autonomously and independently of the government (the Executive) and the universities as legislation and internal processes guarantee the technical independence of the advisory committees.

In the quality assurance process, consultations are held with the actors involved in higher education; this involves *the Executive*, through coordination with representatives of the government department with jurisdiction over universities, the universities, for example the rectors (vice-chancellors), vice-rectors competent in quality matters, and the technical units that deal with quality. The students are not consulted although they do participate in internal evaluation, and also recently external evaluation processes [training courses for the effective involvement of students on external evaluation committees have already been started]. It is AQU Catalunya however that issues the final

conclusions, as laid down in the abovementioned regulations where it stipulates that it is the assessment bodies that are ultimately responsible for evaluations made in their respective fields.

The change in the legal structure from a consortium agency (in which the Catalan universities and the Ministry participate as a consortium) to a public corporation, attached to the government department with jurisdiction over universities, has led to difficulties in identifying elements that put across AQU Catalunya's independence from the public image point of view.

One consequence of this is that nomination of the top posts in the governing and assessment bodies is made by the incumbent (i.e. the Minister) of the Executive's ministry with jurisdiction over universities (on the advice of AQU Catalunya's Board of Management, in certain cases), in accordance with the Catalan Universities Law and the agency's Statutes.

These factors could limit the independence of AQU Catalunya and its committees if the Executive were to make interventionist use of the authority granted to it under the same regulations.

Any such limitations are dealt with however by the working of the committees as collegial bodies, so that, for example, if the nomination of the chairpersons of the advisory committees lies with the incumbent of the government department with jurisdiction over universities, the decisions of these bodies can be made according to a majority of the members. Several flow diagrams of assessments by AQU Catalunya committees are appended¹².

Certain dysfunctions in relation to the Agency's independence could potentially arise as a result of the current regulatory framework and the fact that the incumbent of the government department with jurisdiction over the universities appoints the chairpersons and certain members of the Agency's assessment bodies. Another solution would be for the AQU Board of Management to include representatives of the Generalitat de Catalunya and the universities, as well as representatives of the student body and relevant stakeholders. This steering body, with wide range of representatives, would have the function of nominating the chairpersons and/or members of AQU Catalunya's evaluation committees.

Consideration must also be given to the approval of the annual programme of activities made by the Board of Management, which with in its present composition includes the rectors of universities that are assessed. This reduces the degree of independence required of AQU Catalunya.

¹² *Annex I: OP.01 Assessment of degree programmes and institutions. OP.01.05 Drawing up and approval of the annual report*

Annex II: OP.01 Assessment of degree programmes and institutions. OP.01.06 Experimental project assessment

Annex III: OP.03 Teaching staff assessment. OP.03.03 Carrying out of the assessment.

Standard 3.7. External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies (a. Institutional Assessment)

Documentation

The evidence in support of this section is distributed below in the requirements for the standard.

Standard and guideline application

1. Institutional quality processes

The external quality assurance processes used by AQU Catalunya, that form part of its goals in accordance with the Catalan Universities Act (article 140), are:

1. The assessment of degree programmes leading to the award of recognised and non-recognised (specific to a particular university) degrees given by universities and HEIs.
2. Certification of the quality of university degree programmes, management and activities.
3. Accreditation of degree programmes on the basis of ENQA standards and guidelines.
4. Assessment of educational institutions established in Catalonia that give degree programmes leading to the award of higher degrees from foreign universities.
5. Accreditation of university quality assessment systems and procedures, including those that refer to the teaching activities of academic staff.
6. Assessment of university and HEI activities, programmes, services and management.

AQU Catalunya has either completely or partially implemented points 1, 2, and 6 of these activities. The standards and procedures are being defined for points 3, 4 and 5.

Activities corresponding to point 1:

- Assessment of pre-Bologna degree programmes (Pro-QU programme and Virtual [distance learning]). 290 degree programmes have been voluntarily assessed since the Agency was set up, of which 12 follow-up assessments have been made and 32 ex post assessments. The majority of the degree programme assessments were carried out on recognised degree programmes, and have covered around 70% of this type of degree programme being offered.
- Assessment of proposals for new recognised Master's programmes (POP programme). AQU Catalunya has carried out the compulsory assessment of proposals for 373 recognised Master's programmes over the last two years, which is practically 100% of all programmes.
- Evaluation of proposals to adapt degree programmes to the European Higher Education Area (Pilot Plan). During the two years in which this voluntary plan has been in operation, all of the 100 proposals submitted have been assessed.

It is important to point out that it is not degree programmes that are assessed in the POP programme and Pilot Plan but proposals for degree programmes, which leads to a certain divergence in the

compliance of standards. In the case of the Pilot Plan, evaluation of the proposal is complemented by the annual monitoring of results, which facilitates preparation of the self-evaluation reports prior to accreditation.

Activities corresponding to point 2:

- Certification of the teaching assessment manuals in the universities.

Activities corresponding to point 6:

- Assessment of library services. The library services of all of the public universities (7) were assessed on a voluntary basis in the first cycle, and library services in 10 universities (7 public and 3 private) were assessed in the second cycle.

1.1. Prior definition of processes, criteria and procedures

The external quality assurance processes carried out by AQU Catalunya, irrespective of whether they lead to a formal decision or not, provide for the prior definition of the processes, standards and procedure involved.

The defining of these processes involves the drawing up of an initial proposal by AQU Catalunya's technical unit. This proposal, once endorsed by the management, is made available to the Quality Assessment Committee (CAQ) and its sub-committees. The various committees analyse the proposal and, where appropriate, request the opinion of audiences linked with the process prior to its approval and that of the standards and procedures.

Once it has been approved either by the CAQ or the sub-committees, AQU Catalunya posts the methodology on its website. Printed copies are also distributed to the units that have been assessed at the request of the universities.

The AQU Catalunya manuals specify the processes and guidelines for assessment, whereas details of the schedule and other logistical factors are given in the agreements signed every year between AQU Catalunya and the universities.

Documents	Section	Type
Minutes of the approval of the assessment methodology: ProQU, Virtual, Pilot Plan, POP programme, certification of the teaching staff assessment manuals.		4
Posting on the AQU Catalunya website of the processes, guidelines and procedures: ProQU, Virtual, Pilot Plan, POP programme, certification of the teaching staff assessment manuals.		1
Agreements signed with the universities.		4
General guide to carrying out pilot test runs (ATP 3 May 2004)		4
Minutes of the meeting between those in charge of European convergence (11/03/05)		4

1.2. Inclusion, in the procedures, of the self-evaluation of the institution subject to assessment

The quality assessment of all degree programmes that are under way (ProQU and Virtual) includes a self-evaluation stage that is compulsory in order for the external assessment to be carried out. The self-evaluation process is also carried out in the assessment of libraries. Self-evaluation includes, without exception, sections where the strong and weak points of the dimensions analysed are considered, as a complement to the descriptive elements and evidence. The self-evaluation methodology also calls for an assessment by the internal committees of the situation regarding the quality indicators.

The Pilot Plan for the adaptation of degree programmes includes annual self-evaluation reports on the results of the implementation of degree adaptation. The requirement that these reports be drawn up is specified in the agreements signed by the government department with jurisdiction over universities, the universities themselves and AQU Catalunya. Self-evaluation in new Master's degrees programme has not been carried out however as these degree programmes have not started to run yet.

Certification of the teaching staff assessment manuals is currently in the design stage. AQU Catalunya is to publish a resolution informing the universities of the procedure and criteria for accrediting the teaching assessment models.

Documents	Section	Type
Assessment guides: ProQU, virtual, libraries.		1
Self-evaluation reports ProQU and libraries.		1
Pilot Plan agreement.		4
Guidelines for designing and implementing an institutional model for assessing the teaching activities of academic staff in public universities in Catalonia.		1
Standards for the certification of teaching assessment manuals.		1

1.3. External evaluation by a committee of experts, which includes, where applicable, student participation and visits that the agency considers to be appropriate

All quality assurance processes that include self-evaluation are complemented by an external evaluation carried out by a committee of experts. External evaluation is also included in quality assurance processes that do not call for self-evaluation. This is the case of external assessment by AQU Catalunya in relation to proposals to develop new university degree programmes within the framework of the EHEA (recognised postgraduate degrees, Pilot Plan), and the certification of teaching staff assessment manuals prepared by the universities.

The external evaluation procedures are described in the methodology guidebooks and/or the agreements to develop each programme. The make-up of the committees of experts is established

according to the general characteristic of each programme. It always includes, however, experts of renowned prestige in both Catalonia and other areas of Spain. AQU Catalunya puts particular emphasis on appointing experts from outside of Catalonia.

In accordance with AQU Catalunya's quality procedures, the typical committee make-up for the external evaluation of current degree programmes is two professors, one professional, one expert in quality assurance and one student; for library assessment, there is one professor, one library expert, one expert in quality assurance and one student. In the case of proposals for recognised Master's degrees (POP), external evaluation is directed by four professors (in previous annual evaluations, external evaluation of each proposal was individually assessed by two experts). The specifications for the appointment of experts are made public and approved by AQU Catalunya committees.

For the ProQu 2005 programmes, 24 professors, 12 professionals in the field of public enterprise and administration, 12 quality assurance experts and 3 students were appointed by AQU Catalunya. The libraries programme involved the appointment of 14 external advisers, of which 6 were professors, 5 professionals in the sector, 4 quality assurance experts and 6 students.

Student participation on AQU Catalunya's external committees is a recent phenomenon. In order to increase and enhance student participation in external evaluation, AQU Catalunya, in collaboration with the universities, has organised training courses for students who are interested in the subject.

External evaluation involves visits to the unit in the case of the evaluation of degree programmes that are already fully implemented and library services. In other cases, external evaluation is carried out according to the documentary analysis submitted by the universities.

The work of the external committees is described in the evaluation guidebook. The external committees are also provided with documentary information on the aims of the evaluation, the work of the committee, and the structure and preparation of the external evaluation report.

The profile of experts involved in all programmes is specified by AQU Catalunya. The philosophy that guides AQU Catalunya in defining the profile specifications for experts is that of combining expertise, independence and the diversity of advisory perspectives. Expertise is guaranteed through the appointment of professors and heads of department with knowledge of the discipline and/or management and quality assurance. Independence is promoted through the appointment of experts from outside the Catalan university system¹³, and by way of statements regarding the non-conflict of interests with the units that are assessed. The diversity of advisory perspectives is provided for through the appointment of experts from different disciplines, professionals from outside of the university, and trained students and experts in quality assurance.

¹³ Over 200 institutional advisers have been appointed over the past two years, 20% of which were from outside of Catalonia.

Documents	Section	Type
External evaluation guidebooks: ProQU, virtual, Libraries.		1
Assessment protocols for the POP programme and Pilot Plan.		1
Assessment protocol for the university teaching staff assessment manuals.		1
Public evaluation reports (published by the external evaluation committees), ProQU, Libraries.		1
External evaluation reports: ProQU, Libraries; POP, Pilot Plan.		1
Profile specifications of the experts		1
Appointment of experts.		4
Training course for students.		4
Experts' cvs.		4

1.4. Publication of reports that include decisions, recommendations or other formal conclusions

The AQU Catalunya annual report includes the results of the assessment of current degree programmes and libraries. These reports are prepared by the AQU technical unit from the self-evaluation and external evaluation reports, and are approved by AQU's Quality Assessment committees.

In relation to assessment processes concerning proposals for new officially recognised Master's degrees and proposals for EHEA adaptation, approval of the reports was also given by AQU's Quality Assessment committees, and they were subsequently sent to the government department with jurisdiction over universities. The universities responsible for the Master's proposals also received copies.

These public reports include a section with formal conclusions and specific sections with proposals for improvement for each degree programme.

Documents	Section	Type
AQU Catalunya report (includes ProQU, Libraries).		1
Executive report and conclusions of the assessment process: ProQU		1
Public report manual certification.		1
Pilot Plan and POP report.		4
Copy of the Ministry's notification to the universities on the processing of the POP report and Pilot Plan.		4

1.5. The existence of a monitoring procedure to assess actions carried out by the institution subject to the process of quality assurance in view of the recommendations included in the report

The methodology used by AQU Catalunya for the monitoring and assessment of the Improvement Plans has been applied to current degree programmes; monitoring of the assessment of six departments in a university has also taken place. Participation in this process is voluntary. Up until the present time, assessment has been made of the implementation of the improvement plans of ten degree programmes in five universities.

The low level of participation in this programme is mainly due to two factors: the relative newness of the institutional assessment plan that, while institutional assessment has become consolidated as an instrument that serves quality assurance, is still pending the formal structuring of the improvement plans. Account needs to be taken of the fact that several universities have chosen to carry out the ex post assessment of degree programmes prior to assessing the improvement plans. Consideration must also be given to the certain delay, due to the setting up of the EHEA, in activity by the universities in assessing long-established degree programmes, which involved considerable effort that can now be increasingly transferred to designing the new curricula.

Documents	Section	Type
Guide to the assessment of improvement plans.		1
<i>General framework for establishing, monitoring and reviewing improvement plans.</i>		1
AQU Catalunya report.		1
Internal and external assessment monitoring reports.		4
Publication of Lleida workshop "Implementing improvements".		1

1.6. The resolution of a formal appeal procedure regarding formal decisions, or where conclusions have been reached that produce formal effects

The AQU Catalunya statutes (article 29) and the committee regulations lay down that the proceedings of the CAQ and its sub-committees may be subject to a right of appeal before the AQU Catalunya Standing Committee, the result of which is final.

Pending the putting into effect of accreditation systems due to a formal decision procedure that is required concerning quality assurance, AQU Catalunya has put together various mechanisms for units that are being assessed to send comments and proposals for corrections to AQU Catalunya reports to the CAQ and its sub-committees. This mechanism ensures that the CAQ and/or its committees either reply in support of the validity of the contents of the reports when they are made public, or accept the proposal made by the university.

In the case of the certification of teaching staff assessment manuals, the procedure includes a non-formalised process whereby the universities maintain a dialogue with AQU Catalunya with the object of facilitating certification of the manuals, in what is understood to be a pilot experience prior to their accreditation.

Documents	Section	Type
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Process for drawing up the AQU Catalunya public report. www.aqucatalunya.org/uploads/pagines/arxiu%20pdf/ProcesInforme_cat.pdf	1
Recognised postgraduate degree appeal process.	1

7. Professional process handling

The AQU Catalunya procedural manual has been assessed according to ISO 9001:2000. Compliance with the manual ensures the professional management of quality assurance processes carried out by AQU Catalunya within the framework of the Catalan university system. ISO 9001:2000 certification of the system involves 19 processes (3 strategic, 5 operational, and 11 support), 49 procedures, 25 documents or reference documents and 25 work instructions.

Professional management of the processes is also based on: a) the work experience of personnel in the AQU Catalunya technical unit, which is made up of graduates and PhD holders with appropriate experience in university quality assurance, b) the appropriate sub-contracting of experts, and c) the methodology available to AQU Catalunya. With regard to this point, mention must be made of the processes to train experts who take part in external assessment committees nominated by AQU Catalunya.

AQU Catalunya has also established meta-assessment mechanisms, which include reflection by AQU Catalunya's collegial and working bodies, the organisation of workshops for discussion, the commissioning of meta-assessment reports, and international experts, all of which contribute to continuous improvement.

Documents	Section	Type
ISO 9001:2000 certification of AQU Catalunya.		4
AQU Catalunya procedural manual.		4
Profile specifications of the experts		1
Training programme for experts		4
Work experience of personnel in the technical unit.		4
Appointment of experts.		4
Assessing the activity of experts in the assessment processes.		4
POP meta-assessment report.		4
Workshop on recognised postgraduate degree assessment (Girona).		1

1. 8. Decision-making is the result of a coherent working method

Coherency of work methods is ensured through: training of the external assessment committees and the use of draft scripts for reports available to the assessment committees. External committees also include experts in quality assurance from AQU Catalunya itself or university quality offices, which

AQU Catalunya is periodically in contact with. In relation to this, there is one AQU Catalunya working party made up of the heads of technical quality units. Moreover, the proposal for a quality report is drawn up by the AQU technical and then made public by the Agency, subject to approval by the Quality Assessment Committee (CAQ) or the sub-committees.

Documents	Section	Type
Experts trained by AQU Catalunya.		4
Experts in quality assurance nominated by AQU Catalunya.		4
Draft scripts for external reports.		4
Procedure for drawing up and approving the AQU Catalunya report		4

Standard 3.7. Standards and external quality assurance processes used by agencies (b. Teaching Staff Assessment)

Redefinition of the standards of reference

As is pointed out in the corresponding section that describes the Catalan university system, the matter of teaching staff structure and type is somewhat complex to analyse from the perspective of the different evaluation processes that are carried out (see Annex 3). Moreover, ENQA standard 3.7, under which this section comes, makes no express reference to teaching staff assessment although different aspects of this may be relevant, especially in connection with the following standards:

- 1.4. Quality assurance of teaching staff
- 2.2. Carrying out of external quality assurance processes
- 2.3. Criteria for decision-making
- 2.4. Suitability of the processes in relation to the goals

The process of teaching staff assessment carried out by AQU Catalunya undoubtedly contributes to the universities' compliance of standard 1.4. It can be said that, as a consequence of the centralised tradition in the Spanish university system, that there is co-responsibility (between an external authority and the university) in the quality assurance of teaching staff.

Furthermore, and given the particular characteristics of evaluation processes involving persons, it would seem advisable to take into consideration the complementary frame of reference proposed by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluations (USA) in its document, *Personnel Evaluation Standards*. Once again we are faced with different contextual elements (see Annex 2); therefore, given the nature, purpose and regulatory framework in which AQU Catalunya carries out teaching staff assessment processes, a description is given of the standards proposed by the Joint Committee and the level to which they are applied in the case of accreditations carried out by AQU Catalunya.

The teaching staff assessment process by AQU Catalunya

Introduction

The teaching and research staff resources of an institution or university system constitute one of the mainstays of its quality. Its structure and mechanisms regarding appointment and promotion are also key factors to be taken into consideration. Catalan universities do not have full autonomy regarding the management of university teaching staff under the current regulations (Spanish Universities Act, or LOU, and the Catalan Universities Act, or LUC, Catalonia only). This legal framework establishes not only teaching staff position but also the mechanisms and processes regarding eligibility and recruitment (Annex 1).

The evaluation of university teaching staff currently has a twofold scope of application: the present certification system (*habilitación*, which requires the candidate to pass a competitive exam for each category before applying for a position, either at a national level or in a work contract situation, see annex 1) and evaluation in relation to certain salary bonuses.

AQU Catalunya currently carries out the following activities:

- a) eligibility accreditation for employment contracts
- b) the allocation of salary bonuses (from January 2007 onwards)

Responsibility for these processes is shared between the Spanish State and the Autonomous Communities (in the case at hand, Catalonia). Teaching staff assessment activities by AQU Catalunya are as follows:

Position	Status	Ph.D.	A	B	C	Volume
Full Professor	Civil servant	Yes	State	State/University	Regional/Autonomous/University	1407
Professor (Univ.)	Civil servant	Yes	State	State/University	Regional/Autonomous/University	3864
Professor (Univ. Poly.)	Civil servant	Yes	State	State/University	Regional/Autonomous/University	274
Associate Professor (Univ. Poly.)	Civil servant	No	State	State/University	Regional/Autonomous/University	1412
Professor C.S.	Non-C.S.	Yes	Regional/Autonomous	Regional/Autonomous/Uni.	Regional/Autonomous/University	4
Ass. Prof. C.S.	Non-C.S.	Yes	Regional/Autonomous	Regional/Autonomous/Uni.	Regional/Autonomous/University	163
Tenure-track	Non-C.S.	Yes	Regional/Autonomous	Regional/Autonomous/Uni.	Regional/Autonomous/University	438
Non-PhD t. staff	Non-C.S.	No	Regional/Autonomous	Regional/Autonomous/Uni.	Regional/Autonomous/University	364

Post PhD assistant	Non-C.S.	Yes/No	University	N.A.
Part-time specialist	Non-C.S.	No	University	5587
Visiting	Non-C.S.	No	University	73
A: Appointment		B: Ordinary salary bonus		C: Additional salary bonus

Source: Catalan Ministry of Innovation, Universities and Enterprise. 2005-2006 academic year

Appointment to the body of teaching staff at Catalan public universities is either as a civil servant or under contract (non-civil servant). In the case of civil service posts, jurisdiction comes under the Spanish State, whereas in the case of contractual positions, jurisdiction is mostly regional (Autonomous Communities: in the case at hand, Catalonia). In both cases there is either a certification or accreditation system (*habilitación*) for teaching staff prior to the competitive exams organised by the universities for selection processes.

Certification, which is compulsory for appointment to a university teaching position (for civil servants), consists of three tests that are made in person: an exposition of the individual's teaching and research career, and defence of a teaching project (except for university professor); an exposition and discussion on a subject from the programme chosen by the candidate from one of three chosen at random; and an exposition and discussion of an original piece of research work.

Accreditation, which is compulsory for appointment to a steady position under contract (non-civil servant), consists of an evaluation (the person is not required for an interview) based on an assessment of merits in relation to pre-established criteria. For appointment to the posts of full professor and assistant professor, advanced research accreditation and research accreditation are also required respectively (Catalan Universities Act, art 47.1). Where applicable, teaching accreditation is also called for with these teaching posts (Catalan Universities Act, art 47.3). For non-civil servant non-PhD teaching posts, candidates must have a favourable reference report from AQU Catalunya (Catalan Universities Act, art. 48.2). For tenure-track teaching staff positions, candidates must also have a favourable reference report issued by AQU Catalunya (Catalan Universities Act, article 49.3b). The lawmakers have left it up to AQU Catalunya to establish the content, procedure and criteria for issuing non-civil servant teaching staff accreditations and reports.

The last stage, which involves teaching staff selection processes, is up to the universities although conditioned by the preliminary compliance with the certification and accreditation processes. The university may, as a last resort, establish specifically appropriate criteria according to its needs.

Mandate

The Catalan Universities Act lays down that AQU Catalunya shall be the body that grants accreditation to university teaching staff as a preliminary step to recruitment to any of the

abovementioned non-civil servant positions. Article 140 of the Catalan Universities Act stipulates the powers of AQU Catalunya regarding the accreditation of teaching staff as being:

f) The issuance of the relevant reports for the recruitment of tenure-track and teaching staff tenure-track and teaching staff.

g) The issuance of accreditation for research and advanced research.

h) Evaluation of the activity carried out by researchers, and assessment of the individual merits of civil servant and non-civil servant teaching staff, for salary bonus allocations, in accordance with articles 55 and 69 of the Spanish Organic Law 6/2001, of 21 December, on Universities.

i) The evaluation of research activity by teaching and research staff at private universities.

j) The assessment of the individual teaching and administration merits of civil servant and non-civil servant teaching and research staff, for salary bonus allocations in accordance with articles 55 and 69 of Organic Law 6/2001, of 21 December, on Universities, and the evaluation of teaching activity by teaching and research staff at private universities.

Organisation

Two committees (articles 145 and 146) deal with the accreditation processes concerning university teaching staff: the Research Assessment Committee (Catalan acronym CAR), which deals with senior teaching posts (assistant professor and full professor), and the CLiC Committee that deals with tenure-track and non-civil servant non-PhD teaching staff.

These committees establish the criteria and the procedure and carry out the evaluation of research and teaching activity by university teaching staff in Catalonia on a totally independent basis and are ultimately responsible for these processes (article 148.1).

Make-up of the committees

The committees are made up of the following members:

Research Assessment Committee (CAR):

- Chairperson: appointed by the Minister for Universities
- 4 members appointed by the Minister for Universities
- 16 members designated by the AQU Board of Management at the proposal of the CAR chairperson.

Committee that deals with tenure-track and non-civil servant non-PhD teaching staff (CLiC):

- Chairperson: appointed by the Minister for Universities
- 2 members appointed by the Minister for Universities
- 5 members designated by the AQU Board of Management at the proposal of the CAR chairperson.

Profile of the committee members

No specific profile specification for the type of university professor is given in the Catalan Universities to form part of the CLiC. Those designated on the Research Assessment Committee however are active civil servant and non-civil servant full professors in Catalonia who fulfil one of the following conditions:

- a) To have passed four positive evaluations of their research activity, in accordance with the legislation applicable to civil servant and non-civil servant teaching staff, respectively.
- b) To have been awarded either the Narcís Monturiol Medal for merit in science and technology, the Catalan Government's Award for the Promotion of University Research, or another analogous or higher award, at the Board of Management's criterion.

Processes

Setting up of the committees

The incumbent of the government department with jurisdiction over universities (Minister) appoints the chairpersons of the CLiC and the CAR, on the advice of the AQU Board of Management (article 145 and 146) and publishes its ruling in the Catalan Government's Official Journal (DOGC). The Minister also appoints 4 members of the CAR and 2 members of the CLiC.

The chairpersons of the CLiC and the CAR draw up a proposal to fill the remaining positions on their respective committees (5 members on the CLiC and 16 members on the CAR), in compliance with the profile stipulated in the Catalan Universities Act (article 146). The Board of Management ratifies the proposal, when appropriate, and designates the proposed individuals.

All of the appointed persons sign a confidentiality agreement and submit a copy of their curriculum vitae.

Following the designation of all the committee members, the dates are set for the official setting up of each committee. The committees draw up and approve the rules of procedure according to the prevailing regulations (Law on Administrative Procedure), which are submitted to the AQU Board of Management, which gives its definitive approval with any modifications it considers to be appropriate.

The CLiC and CAR set up sub-committees to cover the various different subject areas, which are responsible for carrying out the evaluation of applications for teaching staff accreditation, and also appoint the members who must comply with the profile specification and the same conditions as the members of the CLiC and CAR. Once the sub-committees that cover the different subject areas have been set up, the actual activity of evaluation can commence.

Defining the criteria and general procedure

The CLiC and CAR committees establish the general criteria to be applied in all areas to ensure that accredited persons have the appropriate merits to fulfil their functions in the university as laid down in the Catalan Universities Act. The committees can use different documentary sources to establish these criteria. Each sub-committee receives these general criteria, which are then made specific according to the respective area it deals with. The criteria approved by the sub-committees must be approved by the CLiC and CAR, and ultimately by the Board of Management. Approved criteria are made public on the AQU Catalunya website.

AQU Catalunya prepares the following procedures:

- Procedure for issuing pre-selection reports for the public university recruitment of tenure-track and non-civil servant non-PhD teaching staff
- Procedure for issuing research accreditation
- Procedure for issuing advanced research accreditation

These procedures are approved by CLiC and CAR and are published in the Official Journal (DOGC) and include at least the following:

- Qualifications to apply for evaluation
- Documentation to be provided
- Closing dates for submission
- The corresponding bodies to issue the reports and accreditations
- The general evaluation criteria
- How notification of the results is to be given

The actual carrying out of the evaluation

The evaluation process begins with the starting dates of the corresponding calls for applications. Applications are submitted within the time limits established for completion of the call, as published in the DOGC and in compliance with legislation (Law of Administrative Procedure).

The applications are checked to ensure they enclose all of the legally stipulated documentation. If this is not the case, the applicant is requested to provide the required documentation within a specific period of time in order for the evaluation to proceed.

The applications are allocated according to fields of knowledge in order for them to be allocated by the chairperson of each sub-committee to the evaluators. 189 different fields of knowledge have been established by AQU Catalunya, grouped according to 24 main fields and six sub-committees. The committees ensure that each application is evaluated by at least two evaluators in the same field as the applicant.

Staff in the Teaching Staff and Research section prepare all the documents from the different files and make them available on the extranet to the evaluators for the evaluation. A deadline is set to carry out the evaluation that will depend on the date of the corresponding committee's evaluation meeting. Each committee meets to jointly decide the result of the evaluation. Each application dossier is checked, together with the proposals made by the evaluators and the result of the evaluation is agreed by all of the committee members. The corresponding evaluation report is then drawn up.

The accreditation documents are then prepared, which are signed by the chairperson of each committee and sent to the persons concerned by post, the corresponding edict is published in the Official Journal and the economic management section is informed that it can proceed with the payment of expenses involved in the evaluation process.

An applicant has the right to appeal against the committee's decision. An appeal is settled by either the CLiC or CAR chairperson.

Meta-evaluation

When the evaluation has been completed, the chairpersons of the sub-committees draw up a report on the carrying out of the evaluation and the work of the evaluators on their respective committees.

The Head of AQU's Teaching Staff and Research section draws up a report with an analysis of the corresponding results from each call for applications and the actions undertaken in relation to the evaluation processes. The reports may also include an analysis of the processes and a proposal for corrective measures for these to be improved, where appropriate. The reports are then reviewed by the chairpersons of the CAR and CLiC and submitted to the Board of Management.

All evidence must be enclosed in a document folder.

Results

7,640 applications have been received for the four different posts accredited by AQU Catalunya since 17 April 2003. The most relevant data in relation to the accreditation processes and subsequent recruitment of university teaching staff are:

1. An average accreditation age that is higher than expected, which corresponds with the age distribution of the applicants. This high average accreditation age shows that there is still a large number of professors at university without steady long-term contracts who have still not applied for accreditation.
2. The number of formal contracts in force in Catalonia in 2005 was: 3,464 for non-civil servant non-PhD teaching staff, 438 for tenure-track staff, 163 assistant professors and 4 full professors.
3. 68% of all non-civil servant non-PhD teaching staff had a permanent contract.
4. There is currently one assistant professor to every 25 university and university polytechnic professors. The number of formal full professor contracts shows that the forecasts of the Serra Húnter plan are not being fulfilled. The causes may be due to the salary and working conditions of this category of teaching staff.
5. The percentage of persons accredited by AQU Catalunya who have obtained a contract with a Catalan public university is:
 - a. Non-civil servant non-PhD teaching staff: 18%
 - b. Tenure-track: 28.5%
 - c. Assistant professor: 20%
 - d. Full professor: 1.4%

Document	Section	Type
Organic Law on Universities	article 57 to 60	
Catalan Universities Act	article 46 to 49, 140, 145 to 148	
University teaching staff assessment process	OP. 03	
Setting up of the committees	OP.03.01	
Defining the criteria and general procedure	OP.03.02	
Carrying out the actual evaluation	OP.03.03	
Meta-evaluation	OP.03.04	
Evaluator selection	S.02.02	
Teaching staff register	S..09.04.03	
Archive	S.09.04.03	
Law on administrative procedure	S10.1	
Documents describing the evaluation procedure	Web	

Propriety Standards

Propriety Standards

The Propriety Standards are intended to ensure that a personnel evaluation will be conducted legally, ethically, and with due regard for the welfare of the evaluatee and those involved in the evaluation.

P1 Service Orientation Personnel evaluations should promote sound education, fulfilment of institutional missions, and effective performance of job responsibilities, so that the educational needs of students, community, and society are met.

P2 Appropriate Policies and Procedures Guidelines for personnel evaluations should be recorded and provided to the evaluatee in policy statements, negotiated agreements, and/or personnel evaluation manuals, so that evaluations are consistent, equitable, and fair.

P3 Access to Evaluation Information Access to evaluation information should be limited to the persons with established legitimate permission to review and use the information, so that confidentiality is maintained and privacy protected.

P4 Interactions with Evaluatees The evaluator should respect human dignity and act in a professional, considerate, and courteous manner, so that the evaluatee's self-esteem, motivation, professional reputations, performance, and attitude toward personnel evaluation are enhanced or, at least, not needlessly damaged.

P5 Balanced Evaluation Personnel evaluations should provide information that identifies both strengths and weaknesses, so that strengths can be built upon and weaknesses addressed.

P6 Conflict of Interest Existing and potential conflicts of interest should be identified and dealt with openly and honestly, so that they do not compromise the evaluation process and results.

P7 Legal Viability Personnel evaluations should meet the requirements of all federal, state, and local laws, as well

as case law, contracts, collective bargaining agreements, affirmative action policies, and local board policies and regulations or institutional statutes or bylaws, so that evaluators can successfully conduct fair, efficient, and responsible personnel evaluations.

P1. Service Orientation.

This standard is partially applied in the evaluation system as the process carried out by AQU Catalunya only partially contributes to the quality assurance of teaching staff.

P2 Appropriate Policies and Procedures. Policies for teaching staff and the requirement for evaluation are laid down in the corresponding Spanish (Spanish Universities Act, and decree-laws on teaching staff) and regional Autonomous legislation (Catalan Universities Act, and a decree-law concerning the functions of teaching staff). With regard to procedures, AQU Catalunya approves the processes, terms and criteria to be applied, which are published in the Official Journal of the Autonomous Government of Catalonia (DOGC). These procedures have the legal status of resolutions, through which legal provisions are applied to evaluation processes. All teaching staff are evaluated in the same way, and the same criteria and procedures are applied according to their academic category.

P3 Access to Evaluation Information. AQU Catalunya applies the principle of transparency to all of its evaluation processes. This means that applicants have access to all the information referring to the process, terms, and documentation to be provided, the criteria applied in the evaluation, evaluation committees, make-up of the evaluation committees and finding out about the result of the evaluation. They can also get an update at any time on the state of the evaluation process and access the documentation in their application dossier, including the assessment report.

P5 Balanced Evaluation. The evaluation of the research and teaching activity of teaching staff is partially balanced in that it identifies each person's strengths and weaknesses yet only informs on the weaknesses. Teaching staff that are unfavourably assessed can thus redress the weaknesses in their activity. Teaching staff that receive a favourable result are not informed of their strengths and shortcomings although, if individuals request this, they are allowed to review them.

P6 Conflict of Interest. Law 30/1992, of 26 November, concerning the Legal Procedural System for Public Administration and Common Administrative Procedure establishes, in articles 28 and 29, the motives for the abstention and disqualification of the members of the evaluation committees when there is a conflict of interests. These aspects are also set out in the evaluation committees' rules of procedure (documentation provided).

P7 Legal Viability. All the evaluation procedures of teaching and research staff at Catalan universities comply with Spanish and Catalan legislation with regard to the assessment of university teaching staff.

Utility Standards

Utility Standards

The Utility Standards are intended to guide evaluations so that they will be informative, timely, and influential.

U1 Constructive Orientation Personnel evaluations should be constructive, so that they not only help institutions develop human resources but encourage and assist those evaluated to provide excellent services in accordance with the institution's mission statements and goals.

U2 Defined Uses Both the users and intended uses of a personnel evaluation should be identified at the beginning of the evaluation so that the evaluation can address appropriate questions and issues.

U3 Evaluator Qualifications The evaluation system should be developed, implemented, and managed by persons with the necessary qualifications, skills, training, and authority, so that evaluation reports are properly conducted, respected and used.

U4 Explicit Criteria Evaluators should identify and justify the criteria used to interpret and judge evaluatee performance, so that the basis for interpretation and judgment provide a clear and defensible rationale for results.

U5 Functional Reporting Reports should be clear, timely, accurate, and relevant, so that they are of practical value to the evaluatee and other appropriate audiences.

U6 Professional Development Personnel evaluations should inform users and evaluatees of areas in need of professional development, so that all educational personnel can better address the institution's missions and goals, fulfil their roles and responsibilities, and meet the needs of students.

U1 Constructive Orientation. This principle does not strictly apply to the evaluation of university teaching staff carried out by AQU Catalunya. The evaluation processes are independent of the recruitment and specific policies regarding teaching staff at each university. In this respect, the purpose of the accreditation of teaching staff by AQU Catalunya is to ensure the minimum teaching and research standards for university teaching staff according to each category.

U2 Defined uses. The evaluation is aligned according to its purpose and the group that it is directed at. The purpose of each evaluation process and the persons that it applies to are clearly defined in the procedures that AQU Catalunya publishes on a regular basis.

U3 Evaluator Qualifications. The Catalan Universities Act and the evaluation committees' rules of procedure establish the qualifications required of the evaluators. This ensures that they are sufficiently qualified to appropriately assess all levels. It also ensures the respect of the academic community.

U4 Explicit Criteria. The evaluation committees identify the scope for evaluation and the required levels. Each committee draws up a criteria document in which these aspects are identified and which enables the evaluatee to see the degree to which his/her situation corresponds to the optimum result for the evaluation. These criteria are public and can be accessed on the AQU website.

U5 Functional Reporting. A report is issued for each evaluatee. This is included in his/her dossier and clearly and neatly shows the assessment of each facet and appropriate observations by the evaluators. The reports are issued within the time limits stipulated according to the prevailing regulations. Only those in charge of recruitment have full access to these reports. Evaluatees only have partial access to them, while the rest of the academic community has no access at all.

U6 Professional Development. Evaluations of teaching and research staff by AQU Catalunya do not have this purpose.

Feasibility Standards

Feasibility Standards

The Feasibility Standards are intended to guide personnel evaluation systems so that they are as easy to implement as possible, efficient in their use of time and resources, adequately funded, and viable from a political standpoint.

F1 Practical Procedures Personnel evaluation procedures should be practical, so that they produce the needed information in efficient, non-disruptive ways.

F2 Political Viability Personnel evaluations should be planned and conducted with the anticipation of questions from evaluatees and others with a legitimate right to know, so that their questions can be addressed and their cooperation obtained.

F3 Fiscal Viability Adequate time and resources should be provided for personnel evaluation activities, so that evaluation can be effectively implemented, the results fully communicated, and appropriate follow-up activities identified.

F1 Practical Procedures. The evaluation procedures are indeed practical. They efficiently and effectively compile the information required for the evaluation and discontinuities in the process are prevented because all of the information is gathered prior to the evaluation.

F2 Political Viability. Evaluatees are aware of the evaluation procedure and the criteria beforehand. The procedure is available on the AQU website, together with FAQs. Enquiries can be made to the staff of AQU's Teaching Staff and Research section and also the evaluation committee chairpersons. The committees may request any appropriate information from the evaluatees.

F3 Fiscal Viability. The maximum time limits for completion (resolution) are laid down by legislation. Although the deadlines are complied with in all cases, those set in relation to certain procedures are extremely tight for the administrative procedure to be carried out with the utmost care. The number of staff is also inadequate and temporary staff are taken on in order to be able to fulfil the objectives.

Accuracy Standards

Accuracy Standards

The accuracy standards determine whether an evaluation has produced sound information. Personnel evaluations must be technically adequate and as complete as possible to allow sound judgments and decisions to be made. The evaluation methodology should be appropriate for the purpose of the evaluation and the evaluatees being evaluated and the context in which they work.

A1 Validity Orientation The selection, development, and implementation of personnel evaluations should ensure that the interpretations made about the performance of the evaluatee are valid and not open to misinterpretation.

A2 Defined Expectations The qualifications, role, and performance expectations of the evaluatee should be clearly defined, so that the evaluator can determine the evaluation data and information needed to ensure validity.

A3 Analysis of Context Contextual variables that influence performance should be identified, described, and recorded, so that they can be considered when interpreting an evaluatee's performance.

A4 Documented Purposes and Procedures The evaluation purposes and procedures, both planned and actual, should be documented, so that they can be clearly explained and justified.

A5 Defensible Information The information collected for personnel evaluations should be defensible, so that the information can be reliably and validly interpreted.

A6 Reliable Information Personnel evaluation procedures should be chosen or developed and implemented to assure reliability, so that the information obtained will provide consistent indications of the evaluatee's performance.

A7 Systematic Data Control The information collected, processed, and reported about evaluatees should be systematically reviewed, corrected as appropriate, and kept secure, so that accurate judgments about the evaluatee's performance can be made and appropriate levels of confidentiality maintained.

A8 Bias Identification and Management Personnel evaluations should be free of bias, so that interpretations of the evaluatee's qualifications or performance are valid.

A9 Analysis of Information The information collected for personnel evaluations should be systematically and accurately analysed, so that the purposes of the evaluation are effectively achieved.

A10 Justified Conclusions The evaluative conclusions about the evaluatee's performance should be explicitly justified, so that evaluatees and others with a legitimate right to know can have confidence in them.

A11 Meta-evaluation Personnel evaluation systems should be examined periodically using these and other appropriate standards, so that mistakes are prevented or detected and promptly corrected, and sound personnel evaluation practices are developed and maintained over time.

A1 Validity Orientation. This standard only partially applies as it is the universities that use the accreditations issued by AQU Catalunya. The purpose of AQU accreditations may be modified when the universities actually implement their staff selection processes. Moreover, AQU accreditations only apply to part of the roles and functions of university teaching staff.

A2 Defined Expectations. The functions del university teaching staff and the qualifications and requirements to be eligible for a post are stipulated in the prevailing regulations. The evaluation carried out by AQU Catalunya only includes part of these roles and functions however, the rest being in the hands of the universities.

A3 Analysis of Context. The evaluation carried out by AQU Catalunya does not include as a variable the context in which the research and teaching activity is carried out.

A4 Documental Purposes and Procedures. The purposes and procedures of the evaluation are documented, together with any possible deviations that may occur relative to the purposes initially set out.

A5 Defensible Information. All the information that the evaluatee provides and is requested by AQU Catalunya is justified in documentary form. This documentation shall be univocally interpretable and in many cases it is standard in Catalan university system as a whole.

A6 Reliable Information. All the information and documentation requested and provided by the evaluatee permits a reliable evaluation to be made of each of the facets for which evaluation criteria are established. This information shall be totally non-ambiguous and univocally interpretable.

A7 Systematic Data Control. AQU Catalunya relies on a management system for the evaluation processes in which the evaluatee is registered, together with his/her personal and professional details, the evaluation committee, the documentation provided and the assessment reports, amongst other data that is relevant to the evaluation. All of this data is covered by Organic Law 15/1999, of 13 December, concerning the Protection of Personal Data, and the files appropriately registered.

A8 Bias Identification and Management. Personnel evaluations are free of bias, so that interpretations of the evaluatee's qualifications or performance are valid. The legal system nevertheless allows for an appeal of the committee's decision if the evaluatee considers that there has been any kind of error or bias in the committee.

A9 Analysis of Information. A report is drawn up at the end of each evaluation period, with the main results and procedural deviations that have been observed. It also includes and analyses the results of the evaluations, which are sent to the corresponding government department with jurisdiction over the universities so that appropriate decisions can be made.

A10 Justified Conclusions. Evaluations carried out by AQU Catalunya are appropriately motivated, as laid down in Law 30/1992, of 26 November, concerning the Legal Procedural System for Public Administration and Common Administrative Procedure.

A11 Meta-evaluation. All evaluation periods come to a close with a report on the development of the procedure and a report by the chairpersons of the evaluation committees on the carrying out of the evaluation of the teaching and research activity of university teaching staff. On the basis of these reports, appropriate corrective measures can be implemented.

Standard 3.8. Accountability procedures

Documentation

Document	Section	Type
AQU Catalunya quality policy	5.4, 5.6, 9.1 b), 7.1.c)	2

		and 27
Current code of ethics		1
Principles and guidelines for drawing up the code of ethics		1
Internal rules of procedure of the assessment committee and governing body	5.3.	1
Conflict of interests document		1
Website www.aqucatalunya.cat		3
Annual economic and financial audit		
Annual report		4
Law 4/1985, of 29 March, concerning the regulation of public enterprise in Catalonia		1
AQU Catalunya quality policy		4

Standard and guideline application

Existence of public policy for the quality assurance of AQU Catalunya. Available on the website.

The Board of Management is responsible for approving the Agency's internal quality system and code of ethics. Both instruments must be respected by those providing services or collaborating with the Agency.

On 1 April 1998, the consortium-agency's Standing Committee approved the implementation of an ISO 9002:1994-based internal quality system, which was certified in June 2000. AQU Catalunya was the first agency in Europe to achieve this distinction.

Following this precedent, the AQU Board of Management approved the adaptation of the former internal quality system to the new agency set-up and the new requirements of ISO 9001:2000. The quality management system, which was certified on 22 May 2006, assures AQU Catalunya's compliance with the requirements of the standard and that it carries out its activities according to how they have been defined internally. The AQU Catalunya code of ethics, which was originally approved by the Board of Management, is currently being reviewed, and the Board of Management has approved the principles and standards for the new code of ethics to be drawn up.

Existence of documentation that demonstrates:

- a) ...the processes and results obtained reflect the mission and aims of quality assurance.

The AQU Catalunya statutes state that the Agency must act on the basis of rigorousness, quality and objectiveness in its processes, and in accordance with the principles of effectiveness and efficiency in management. The statutes also establish that the Agency's activities must be governed by the principle of transparency with regard to methods, standards and results, in reference to its accountability to society, by carrying out an objective and responsible communication and information policy (article 5.4.).

The statutes also establish that AQU Catalunya must give an account of its actions in three ways:

- the President shall inform the Executive Council and the Parliament of Catalonia of the Agency's activity (article 7.2.)
- the drawing up and approval of the annual activities report approved by the Board of Management (articles 5 and 9)
- the economic and financial audit carried out each year by the financial control section (*Subdirecció General de Control Financer*) of the Generalitat de Catalunya's Ministry of Economy and Finance (article 27)

Annual reports on the process of assessing the quality of the university system in Catalonia are another instrument whereby the Agency is answerable to the university community and society in general. All of the reports can be consulted (in Catalan) on the AQU website.

AQU Catalunya is accountable to various different official bodies:

- The government department with jurisdiction over universities:
 - Information on administrative procurement by the Agency.
 - Remittance of the preliminary draft budget, and of the accounting period closure and annual budgeting
- The government department with jurisdiction over economics and finance:
 - In addition to the annual auditing of accounts, submission of the preliminary draft budget, the accounting period closure and annual budgeting, and quarterly and annual closures of the financial and budgetary accounting.
 - Monthly cash balance.
- Public audit office:
 - Submission of the accounting period closure and annual budgeting.

Out of all the activities that are carried out in relation to their impact on the rendering of accounts, the preparation and annual publication of the report on the process of quality assessment in the university system in Catalonia stands out in particular. Eight annual reports have been published since the Agency was established,¹⁴ all of which, in addition to being distributed throughout the Catalan university community, can be consulted on the AQU Catalunya website (Catalan version). The reports contain the results of the institutional assessment processes carried out in Catalonia over the previous year.

¹⁴ The latest report (2005) is currently being edited.

b) ...AQU Catalunya has established, and reinforces, a system to prevent the conflict of interests in the work of its experts.

All in-house staff and experts who participate in the Agency's quality assurance processes must abide by the AQU Catalunya Code of Ethics, and they sign a document to the effect that their work complies with the code. In recent postgraduate programme assessments, experts have signed a document undertaking to state the existence of any possible conflict of interest.

The universities also have the right to state the existence of a conflict of interest in relation to the make-up of external assessment committees in institutional assessment processes. The universities consult with AQU Catalunya on this aspect prior to the nomination of the external committees.

The fact that the make-up of the teams of advisers is public enables third parties to inform AQU Catalunya of any conflict of interest.

c) ...AQU Catalunya has effective mechanisms to assure the quality of any activity and material produced by subcontracted persons (in the field of external quality assurance)

In all procedures concerning its quality management system, AQU Catalunya establishes control over the quality of the activities commissioned to third parties. The assessment of suppliers and the work carried out by them for the Agency is officially stated in all procedures.

ISO 9001:2000 certification specifies an annual internal audit, and an external audit once every three years, which certifies that AQU Catalunya complies with all requirements of the ISO standard, which also includes the satisfaction of those assessed and users of the service provided by AQU Catalunya.

With the aim of complying with the standards and guidelines of the ENQA, AQU Catalunya intends to submit itself to a cyclical audit every five years to comply with the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the EHEA.

d) ...the Agency has internal quality mechanisms including internal feedback (for example, from staff, the Board of Management, etc.), and feedback from outside (for example, from experts, institutions that have been assessed, etc.), so the information can be used for improvement and development.

AQU Catalunya employs a meta-assessment questionnaire in institutional assessment processes which is included in the protocol for drawing up external reports. The Agency also periodically conducts an opinion poll of the members of internal and external committees. AQU Catalunya also makes satisfaction questionnaires available in activities involving methodology design and training in committee work.

In the evaluation of proposals for postgraduate programmes, one external expert interviews the main stakeholders to obtain their impressions and formulate a meta-assessment report.

The current internal mechanism for receiving feedback from employees works through the union representative (shop steward). The Quality Assessment section however is developing a tool to obtain the staff's opinions and satisfaction in relation to projects that have been developed, which shall soon be available for use. There is still considerable room for improvement, however, in this respect.

e) ...a clear statement of the Agency's obligation to be assessed every five years is fulfilled.

AQU Catalunya's membership to the ENQA Association implies the Agency's commitment to be assessed as frequently as required and with the methodology established by the Association. It also requires that this commitment is clearly stated.

5. Final self-evaluation assessment

3.2 Official status

Strengths

- Legal recognition of AQU Catalunya and its statutes.
- Recognized as a key player for quality improvement by the Catalan Universities and the rest of the Spanish Quality Assurance Agencies.

Weaknesses

- None detected.

3.3 Activities

Strengths

- A wide range of functions in quality assurance are conferred on AQU Catalunya by legislation.
- Commitment to innovation, and design of the evaluation methodology.

Weaknesses

- Ineffective implementation of the follow-up evaluation of improvement plans.

3.4 Resources

Strengths

- Sufficient funding has so far been available for AQU Catalunya to carry out its functions and develop as an agency.
- Human resources with experience in quality assurance and QA support processes, and an effective training plan.
- Restraint on direct and indirect costs associated with external evaluation.
- Intensive use of the Web page to list news, activities and services (including all quality assessment processes, criteria and protocols).
- Available software to manage external evaluation processes.
- Economic management control submitted for external audit.

Weaknesses

- Budget management subject to the budgetary rigidity of the Administration.
- Inadequate number of staff in relation to the functions allocated to AQU Catalunya under the Catalan Universities Act (Catalan Universities Act) and the volume of evaluations in the different

programmes (in recent times particularly the evaluation of Masters degree programmes and teaching staff).

- Failings in internal communication policy and development, which requires greater coordination in all sections.
- There is a need for appropriate software for both budget and human resources management.

3.5 Mission statement

Strengths

- AQU Catalunya has clearly defined objectives

Weaknesses

- None detected.

3.6 Independence

Strengths

- Far-reaching technical independence of AQU Catalunya
- A strong leadership in AQU's executive board (president and director) has favoured the achievement of AQU's independence. Other elements such as the separate location of AQU's headquarters from those ones of the Ministry helped, too.

Weaknesses

- The imbalanced make-up of the Board of Management between those in charge of the institutions evaluated and the representatives from other sectors associated with higher education (employers, students, etc.).
- Existence of factors that reduce the Agency's degree of independence as a result of intervention by the Administration (budget, appointment of committee chairpersons, etc.).

3.7 Quality assurance criteria and processes

Strengths

- Available methodologies to carry out external quality assurance activities.
- Well-defined evaluation processes.
- Transparency of the methodology and evaluation results.
- Across-the-board application of the criteria of independence and objectivity in the evaluation of teaching staff.

- Appointment of experts from outside the Catalan university system, although their increased presence in various programmes is recommended.
- Writing up of reports with the results of the external quality assurance processes.
- Training seminars about evaluation and quality assurance are addressed to the students in order to facilitate their participation as members of external review panels.

Weaknesses

- The direct participation of AQU Catalunya staff with technical qualifications is not always possible in institutional assessments (external visits).
- Very short deadlines in the public calls for application made by the Administration.
- The evaluation of teaching staff does not cover all of the abilities and aspects regarding teacher training. Moreover, in certain cases quantitative criteria prevail over qualitative ones.
- Student participation in institutional assessment processes is still at a very low level.
- Evaluation criteria are insufficiently defined in several teaching staff assessment committees, which complicates the justification for resources requested in these evaluations.
- Insufficient rules of procedure for coordination between the committees CAR and CLIC.
- For certain individual evaluation processes delegated to the Universities through an accreditation process, such as the Assessment of Individual Merits and Activities, AQU may be seen by some university officials more as an external referee than as a partner for quality assurance.

3.8 Accountability procedures

Strengths

- Existence of meta-evaluation processes.
- Existence of an internal quality system with defined evaluation procedures and processes that enabled AQU Catalunya to obtain ISO certification.
- Deployment of external communication strategies through the website, newsletters, workshops, etc.

Weaknesses

- Feedback on the processes carried out by AQU Catalunya is minimal.
- Lack of meta-evaluation processes in certain activities by AQU Catalunya.

Proposals for improvement:

1. To promote, within the framework of the EHEA, internal mechanisms for quality assurance in the universities through evaluation, certification and institutional assessment programmes.
2. To recommend that, in the forthcoming reform of legislation, AQU Catalunya be given greater financial independence. In this respect, AQU Catalunya needs to be able to deal with: a) programmes approved by the Board of Management at the beginning of the year, which have quantifiable costs, b) lines of action with uncertain costs due to the open number of candidates applying to a call for applications (evaluation), and c) its acceptance, once the schedule of events has begun, of mandatory commissions on the Agency by the institutions.
3. To adjust the Agency's manpower service resources to improve the quality assurance services that it provides.
4. To recommend that, in the forthcoming reform of legislation, there is a change in the make-up of the Board of Management, so that there is a better balance between representatives from the universities and those from other sectors associated with higher education (employers and students).
5. To recommend that, in the forthcoming reform of legislation, there is a change in the way that the senior management positions in AQU Catalunya are appointed in line with the agency's independence.
6. To increase the presence of external evaluators involved in external quality assurance processes in the Catalan university system.
7. To study how the Information and Communication Technologies could be used in order to improve the evaluation processes.
8. To increase student participation in external quality assurance processes in the universities.
9. 9.- To study, together with the corresponding government department with jurisdiction over the universities, the possibility of extending the deadlines for the completion of calls for applications for teaching staff assessment.
10. To improve the methodology for evaluating teaching staff so that it is more inclusive.
11. To establish mechanisms for coordination between the committees CAR and CLIC.
12. To study the possibility of establishing set periods of validity in the evaluations of permanent teaching staff posts (tenured and senior teaching staff).
13. To improve the meta-evaluation processes and obtain the points of view of stakeholders linked to services provided by AQU Catalunya.
14. To improve the policy for internal communication.

15. To improve the software package that deals with the Agency's administrative management in general.

6. Make-up of the internal committees and the bodies that approved and ratified the report

Internal evaluation committee

This committee analyses and evaluates the report produced by the working groups that brings together all the proposals into one document. The committee is made up of:

- Dr. Antoni Serra, President of AQU Catalunya
- Dr. Javier Bará, Director of AQU Catalunya
- Dr. M. Lluïsa Hernanz, Chairwoman of the Committee that deals with tenure-track and non-civil servant non-PhD teaching staff (CLiC)
- Dr. Joan Rodés, Chairman of the Research Assessment Committee
- Dr. Sebastián Rodríguez, R+D coordinator and representative of the Quality Assessment Committee
- Josep Grifoll, Head of Quality Assessment
- Dr. Josep Manel Torres, Head of Teaching Staff and Research
- Maria Giné, Head of Planning and Communication

Quality Assessment Committee (the body that approves the report)

The Quality Assessment Committee, which approves the evaluation report, is made up of:

- Dr. Javier Bará Temes, *Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, Chairman*
- Dr. Jaume Torras Elías, *Universitat Pompeu Fabra*
- Dr. Sebastián Rodríguez, *Universitat de Barcelona*
- Dr. Ton I. Vroeijenstijn, *quality assurance expert*
- Dr. Christian Thune, *The Danish Evaluation Institute*
- Dr. Jean Loup Jolivet, *Committee National d' Evaluation (France)*
- Dr. Dario Villanueva Prieto, *Universidad de Santiago de Compostela*
- Dr. Pere Botella López, *Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya*
- Dr. Ignasi Romagosa Clariana, *Universitat de Lleida*
- Dr. Maria Lluïsa Molinas de Ferrer, *Universitat de Girona*
- Dr. Margarita Barón Maldonado, *Universidad de Alcalá de Henares*
- Dr. Julia González Ferreras, *Universidad de Deusto*
- Josep Grifoll Saurí, *AQU Catalunya, Secretary*

Board of Management (the body that ratifies the report)

The AQU Board of Management is responsible for ratifying the report prior to it being sent to the ENQA for the Agency's external evaluation. The Board of Management is made up of:

- Dr. Antoni Serra Ramoneda, *Chairman*
- Dr. Màrius Rubiralta Alcañiz, *Rector of the Universitat de Barcelona*
- Dr. Lluís Ferrer Caubet, *Rector of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona*
- Dr. Antoni Giró Roca, *Rector of the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya*
- Dr. Josep Joan Moreso Mateos, *Rector of the Universitat Pompeu Fabra*
- Dr. Anna Maria Geli de Ciurana, *Rector of the Universitat de Girona*
- Dr. Joan Viñas Salas, *Rector of the Universitat de Lleida*
- Dr. Francesc Xavier Grau, *Rector of the Universitat Rovira i Virgili*
- Dr. Imma Tubella Casadevall, *Rector of the Open University of Catalonia (UOC)*
- Dr. Esther Giménez-Salinas Colomer, *Rector of the Universitat Ramon Llull*
- Dr. Assumpta Fargas Riera, *Rector of the Universitat de Vic*
- Dr. Josep Argemí Renom, *Rector of the International University of Catalonia*
- Joan Josep López Burniol, *Chairman of the Social Council of the Universitat de Barcelona*
- Rosa Cullell Muniesa, *Chairman of the Social Council, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona*
- Ramon Folch Guillén, *Chairman of the Social Council, Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya*
- Mercè Sala Schonorkowski, *Chairman of the Social Council, Universitat Pompeu Fabra*
- Albert Bou Vilanova, *Chairman of the Social Council, Universitat de Girona*
- Josep M. Pujol Gorné, *Chairman of the Social Council, Universitat de Lleida*
- Àngel Cunillera Zárata, *Chairman of the Social Council, Universitat Rovira i Virgili*
- Dr. Enric Argullol Murgadas, *Universitat Pompeu Fabra*
- Dr. Gemma Rigau Oliver, *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona*
- Dr. Victòria Salvadó Martín, *Universitat de Girona*
- Dr. Josep Anton Ferré Vidal, *Director General for Universities*
- Dr. Xavier Testar Ymbert, *Director General for Research*
- Dr. Joan Rodés Teixidor, *Chairman of the Research Assessment Committee*
- Dr. Maria Lluïsa Hernanz Carbó, *Chairwoman of the Committee that deals with tenure-track and non-civil servant non-PhD teaching staff*
- Dr. Javier Bará Temes, *Director of AQU Catalunya*
- Joan Bravo Pijoan, *Secretary of AQU Catalunya*

7. Summary of attached documentation

Documentation

Document	Section	Type
Financial audit		4
Agency's job specifications list		4
Services catalogue		3
Current code of ethics 1		2
Decree-law 212/2006, of 23 May, on the structure of the Ministry of Education and Universities	article 2.3.a)	2
E.01. Planning of activities (Procedures for the activities plan, programming and the activities report)		3
AQU Catalunya statutes	article 1	2
AQU Catalunya statutes	articles, 3, 4, 5, 9.1 and 11	2
AQU Catalunya statutes	articles 24 and 27	2
AQU Catalunya statutes	article 23	2
AQU Catalunya statutes	article 3, 4, 5	2
AQU Catalunya annual report		2
Reports on the process of university quality evaluation		2
Inventory		4
Law 1/2003, of 19 February: Catalan Universities Act	article 139	2
Law 1/2003, of 19 February: Catalan Universities Act	article 140	2
Law 1/2003, of 19 February: Catalan Universities Act	article 153	2
Law 1/2003, of 19 February: Catalan Universities Act	article 151	2
Law 1/2003, of 19 February: Catalan Universities Act	article 140	2
Law 4/1985, of 29 March, concerning the regulation of public enterprise in Catalonia	articles 2, 16, 29, 30	4
Law 4/1985, of 29 March, concerning the regulation of public enterprise in Catalonia	article 24	4
Annual finance act	Annex	4
AQU Catalunya quality manual		3
Activities report		2
Annual activities report		2
Annual goals		4
Functional organisation chart of AQU Catalunya according to sections and professional categories		4
Annual activities plan		2
Annual activities plan		2



Training scheme and annual report		4
Plan for the prevention of risks at work		4
AQU Catalunya 2005 budget		4
Principles and criteria for drawing up the code of ethics		4
Employment and working conditions of regular AQU Catalunya employees		4
Law 1/2003, of 19 February: Catalan Universities Act	article 140	2
AQU Catalunya statutes	article 3, 4, 5	2
Services catalogue		3
AQU Catalunya quality manual		3
Activities report		2
Reports on the process of university quality evaluation		2