

Report of the panel of ENQA coordinated review of
the Agency for Quality Assurance in the Catalan
University System (AQU)

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Executive summary

Introduction

The *Agency for Quality Assurance in the University System of Catalunya* (hereafter referred to as the 'Agency' or 'AQU') made a request to ENQA to be responsible for the external evaluation of the Agency, 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. ENQA appointed a review panel chaired by Thierry Malan to evaluate the way in which and to what extent AQU fulfils the criteria for the ENQA membership and thus the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*. Consequently, the review was also to provide information to the ENQA Board to aid its consideration of whether AQU's Full Membership in ENQA should be re-confirmed. The panel was also asked to provide feedback on AQU's role and tasks in the contexts of the Spanish national and regional Higher Education (HE) systems. AQU's teaching staff evaluation programme is unparalleled in Europe and is closely linked to the academic staff organisation of the universities. This particular dual hired and civil servant staff system is defined by the law. Therefore the review was expected also to evaluate and to comment on how effectively the staff assessment procedure is managed by AQU and whether it meets the set aims.

Review process

The process was designed in the light of the ENQA policy on "ENQA-organised external reviews of member agencies". The evaluation procedure consisted of the following steps: Nomination and appointment of the review panel members, self-evaluation by AQU including the preparation of a self-evaluation report, a site visit by the panel of reviewers to AQU and finally the preparation and completion of the final evaluation report.

The Chair and Secretary of the review panel drew up a programme of on-site meetings (see Annex 1) which was sent for further comments to the rest of the review panel and finally to AQU to inform the relevant persons. After having received the briefing package of ENQA the Chair and Secretary of the review panel participated in an ENQA organised telephone conference together with the chairs and secretaries of the other ENQA co-ordinated reviews (ANECA in Spain and AQA in Austria) as well as the President of ENQA, Peter Williams, Tine Holm (ENQA Board Member) and Emmi Helle (ENQA Acting Secretary General) on 28 May 2007. Certain points regarding the reviews (purpose, roles and responsibilities, drafting of the report etc) were clarified and opinions exchanged.

The programme of the on-site meetings involved some 30 people including: AQU's President and members of the Board of Directors, the Director of AQU and a number of his staff, representatives of the various committees and sub-committees of AQU (Quality Assessment Committee, Tenure-Track Lecturer and Collaborating Lecturer Committee and Research Assessment Committee), representatives of a range of higher education institutions (HEI) served by AQU, who are not members of AQU

and who represent HEI teaching staff and staff responsible for internal quality management, a selection of reviewers employed by AQU and student representatives.

These meetings were held in the offices of AQU in Barcelona between 18 and 19 June 2007 (a full list of all those who the review panel met is contained in Annex 1 in the "Schedule and timetable of the site-visit"). At the end of the site-visit the review panel reported its findings in the first instance to AQU's Director, members of the Board of Directors and AQU staff.

Evidence

A key document considered by the review panel was the Self-Evaluation Report (hereafter referred to as SE-report) prepared by AQU. It was made available to all review panel members in advance of the site-visit. In addition, AQU provided substantial documentation in support of its SE-report, additional documentation in response to requests by the review panel during its on-site review (a full list of the documents consulted by the review panel is attached as Annex 2; for the SE-report see Annex 7). The on-site visit provided oral evidence. Finally, the comprehensive comments by AQU on the panel's draft report provided further information and insights which usefully contributed in finalizing the present report.

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Michael G. Kraft
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1 Introduction

This is the report of the review of the *Agency for Quality Assurance in the Catalan University System* (AQU) undertaken in June 2007 for the purpose of determining whether the agency meets the criteria for Full membership of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). The criteria are listed in Annex 6 to the report.

1.1 Background and outline of the review process

ENQA's regulations require all Full member agencies to undergo an external cyclical review, at least once every five years, in order to verify that they fulfil the membership criteria.

In November 2004, the General Assembly of ENQA agreed that the third part of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG) should be incorporated into the membership provisions of its regulations. Substantial compliance with the ESG thus became the principal criterion for Full membership of ENQA. The ESG were subsequently adopted at the Bergen ministerial meeting of the Bologna Process in 2005.

The third part of the ESG covers the cyclical external review of quality assurance and accreditation agencies. In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, external cyclical reviews for ENQA membership purposes are normally conducted on a national level and initiated by national authorities in a EHEA State, but carried out independently from them. However, external reviews can also be coordinated by ENQA if they cannot be nationally organised. This may be the case, for instance, when no suitable or willing national body can be found to coordinate the review. In that event, ENQA plays an active role in the organisation of the review, being directly involved as coordinator, whereas, in the case of national reviews, it is only kept informed of progress throughout the whole process.

The ENQA-coordinated review of the *Agency for Quality Assurance in the Catalan University System* (AQU) was conducted in line with the process described in *Guidelines for national reviews of ENQA member agencies* and in accordance with the timeline set out in the Terms of Reference (see Annex 3). The review panel for the external review of AQU was composed of the following members:

Thierry Malan, Quality Assurance Expert, Honorary Inspecteur général de l'administration de l'éducation nationale et de la recherche IGAENR, France (Chairman)

Michael G. Kraft, Academic Staff Member, FH-Council, Austria (Secretary)

Maria José Lemaitre, Quality Assurance Expert, CNAP (Comisión Nacional de Acreditación), Chile

Jean-Marc Rapp, Representative of Higher Education Institutions, European University Association (EUA), Switzerland

Maher Tekaya, Student Member, European Students' Union (ESU),
France

In addition to fulfilling the periodic external review requirement of ENQA membership, the review of AQU had the following purposes: providing feedback on AQU's role and tasks in the contexts of the Spanish national and regional Higher Education systems (especially AQU's teaching staff evaluation programme).

AQU produced a self-evaluation report which provided a substantial portion of the evidence that the panel used to form its conclusions. The panel conducted a site-visit to validate fully the self-evaluation and clarify any points at issue. Finally, the review panel produced the present final report on the basis of the self-evaluation report, site-visit and its findings. In doing so it provided an opportunity for AQU to comment on the factual accuracy of the draft report. It is worth noting that this process of external peer-review based on a self-evaluation report which is a key piece for the whole process, is still in an emergent and experimental stage within the European framework. Because of this experimental character and of the timing of the SE-report elaboration, it could not be structured and fit exactly in the protocol of checking compliance with each ESG followed by the review panel. However, the initial presentation of the methodology to be followed, the successive exchanges and the feedback session together with the final comment by AQU on the draft report proved useful for clarification and improvement of the whole process.

The review panel confirms that it was given access to all documents and people it wished to consult throughout the review. It also wishes to place on record its gratitude to AQU's director and staff for the professional, practical and personal support given to panel members and in helping organise the site-visit as well as AQU's Board who met the review panel. In particular, the panel is most appreciative of the information and insights provided in the SE-report, the work done by AQU staff to ensure the availability of people to meet the panel during its on-site visit and the documentary evidence provided by AQU staff (AQU provided additional documentation and made arrangements for an additional interview with AQU staff responsible for quality assessment upon request). The review panel would also like to thank all those who met the panel during the on-site visit - their input was invaluable.

2 Background to Agency under review

2.1 Brief history of the Agency

The *Quality Assurance Agency for the University System in Catalunya* was founded on 29 October 1996 as a consortium aiming at improving the quality of the Catalan university system. The Board of Directors of the consortium was formed by the rectors and presidents of the public liaison advisory committees of the Catalan state-funded universities (the University of Barcelona, the Autonomous University of Barcelona, the Technical University of Catalunya, the University Pompeu Fabra, the University of Girona, the University of Lleida and the University Rovira i Virgili) and by the Autonomous Government of Catalunya,

represented at that time by the Committee for Universities and Research. The Agency's main instrument for achieving its mission was the institutional assessment of quality and proposing measures to improve the services provided by the Catalan public universities to society.

In 2003 the Consortium functions were transferred by law (Catalan Universities Act¹, which was embedded in the Spanish Universities Act) to AQU Catalunya. The Agency was set up as an independent organisation, whose role is the evaluation, certification and accreditation of institutions (programmes, centres, services, processes) and teaching staff in Catalonia. The Agency is funded by the Ministry of Education and Universities of the Catalan Government. The Board of the Agency currently comprises representatives from different higher education institutions, government and independent members (see Annex 4).

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 (Quality Assessment Committee), research assessment (Research Assessment Committee) and junior teaching staff and professor accreditation (Tenure-track Lecturer and Collaborating Lecturer Committee).

2.2 *Outline of the Agency's current main areas of responsibility and work*

Since the foundation of AQU Catalunya the policies adopted by the Agency have been focussed on enhancing the quality of the Catalan university system through institutional assessment and the exchange of experience between universities. Just recently AQU has started *ex ante* programme accreditation of new master degree programmes.

The focuses of AQU's external quality assessment activities are the assessment of degree standards, departments, services and processes as well as monitoring the improvements made as a result of the process of assessment. Moreover, AQU is dedicated to developing innovative models and methods of assessment.

According to the Statutes of the Agency (based on article 140 (2) of Law 1/2003, dated February 19), AQU is to undertake the following wide variety of activities:²

- a) Evaluating university programs which led to the obtaining of an official and recognized academic certifications offered by universities and higher education centres.
- b) Certifying the quality standards in degree courses, in their management and activities held in universities.
- c) Proving degree courses within the framework of the European Space of Higher Education.
- d) Assessing teaching institutions in Catalonia offering education programs linked to obtaining foreign higher education qualifications.
- e) Proving evaluating systems and procedures for assuring quality in universities, including the accreditation of the assessment on teaching functions carried out by the teaching staff.
- f) Issuing relevant reports for contracting tenure-track and collaborating lecturers.
- g) Issuing accreditations for research and advanced research.
- h) Evaluating activities developed by researchers as well as assessing individual research efforts made by teaching and research staff –working under contract or after having sat

¹ Law 1/2003 of 19 February on the Universities in Catalonia (Catalan Universities Act).

² Statutes of the Agency for Quality Assurance in the Catalan University System, p. 3f.

public examination- to designate additional salary rewards in accordance with the Articles 55 and 69 of the Organic Law of Universities 6/2001, dated December 21.

- i) Assessing research activities carried out by private universities teaching and research staff.
- j) Evaluating individual teaching and management efforts made by teaching and research staff – working under contract or after having sat public examination- to designate additional salary rewards in accordance with the Articles 55 and 69 of the Organic Law of Universities 6/2001, dated December 21, as well as assessing teaching activities carried out by the private universities' teaching and research staff.
- k) Assessing activities, programs, services and management offered by universities and higher education institutions.
- l) Promoting assessment and comparison of quality criteria within the international and European contexts.
- m) Drawing up studies aimed for improving and innovating the patterns of assessment, certification and accreditation.
- n) Issuing assessment reports for universities, for the education administration, social organs and the general public.
- o) Assessing the educative administration, universities and other institutions on their own functions.
- p) Establishing cooperation and collaboration bonds between other regional, national and international agencies with functions on assessment, accreditation and certification.
- q) Working on assignments made by the relevant department on university matters and by the universities, under agreement.
- r) Other functions conferred on the Agency by Law 1/2003, dated February 19, of Catalan Universities, these Statutes and other legislation currently in force.

2.3 Context of the review

The Catalan university system is made up of twelve universities (seven public and five private universities of which one is a distance university (*Universitat Oberta de Catalunya* (UOC)) which is totally publicly funded). Currently there are 238.000 students (182.000 at public universities and 22.000 at private universities as well as 34.000 at the distance university (UOC)). There has been a rapid development in the HE-system during the 1980ies driven by the internationalisation of societies and the growing importance of knowledge based economies. This led in the mid 1990ies to the need in Catalonia for processes involving university quality assurance and improvement to be established. The founding of the *Agency per la Qualitat del System Universitari a Catalunya* consortium in 1996 was a joint initiative between the Catalan Administration and Catalan universities.³ The aim was to promote quality improvement in the Catalan university system through its main instrument, the institutional assessment of quality, aimed mainly at university degree programmes. In 2003 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 present report is structured as follows:

According to the ToR the panel had to review AQU's compliance with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* as well as providing feedback on AQU's role and tasks in the contexts of the Spanish national and regional Higher Education systems regarding AQU's teaching staff evaluation programme.

³ Preamble to Law 1/2003 of 19 February on the Universities in Catalonia (Catalan Universities Act).

Thus the report is structured according to the eight ENQA standards and criteria (Use of external QA procedures, Official status, Activities, Resources, Mission statement, Independence, External quality assurance criteria and processes, Accountability procedures) and finally comments on AQU's teaching staff evaluation programme. Against each ENQA membership criteria/ESG the report includes a short description of the information gathered – making reference to meetings or documentation explored, an analysis of that information in reference to the criterion/ESG, and a conclusion as to how compliant the Agency is with the criterion/ESG. This structure adopted shall reveal both the evidence for and the reasoning behind the review panel's conclusions and shall enable the ENQA Board to see how and why conclusions have been reached based on the evidence available to the review panel.

3 Findings

3.1 ESG 3.1 (and section 2)/ENQA criterion 1: Use of external QA procedures

"The external quality assurance of the Agency should take into account the presence and effectiveness of the external quality assurance processes described in Part 2 of the ESG."

2.2 Development of external quality assurance processes: The aims and objectives of quality assurance processes should be determined before the processes themselves are developed, by all those responsible (including higher education institutions) and should be published with a description of the procedures to be used.

The quality assurance processes employed by AQU are stated in the Catalan Universities Act (article 140). The processes used by the Agency to achieve its objectives are drawn up by AQU's technical unit, which is then made available to the Quality Assessment Committee (CAQ). The various committees analyse the proposal and, where appropriate, request the opinion of audiences linked with the process prior to its approval.

Nevertheless, a point made by a number of people to whom the review panel spoke, was that the Agency was under pressure to perform the functions laid down for it by national/regional legislation, since there have been quite a number of changes in legislation over the last years. This has led to a stop-and-go situation in AQU's external quality assurance policies and was characterized by the frequent need for AQU to reformulate its projects because of evolutions and changes in the Spanish and Catalan as well as the European regulatory frameworks. From 1996 to the year 2003, when there was no legal framework, all external assessments were made on a voluntary basis and were promoted by AQU. The Consortium was actually the first QA agency in Spain and from the time it was set up it played a prominent leadership role in the development of QA methodology for HE. In this period the Agency drew up a long-term plan to assess all officially recognised degrees on a cyclical basis, which could not be fully implemented due to the circumstantial changes and changeable regulatory environment. This context impaired AQU to maintain continuity, to build fully on, and benefit fully from, its initiatives prior to the new laws, such as definition of benchmarks in different areas, setting up working groups to design new Bologna programmes, conducting a survey on graduate employment (in which the assessment of competences and skills and their

appropriateness to the labour market were included), and more generally setting up seminars, workshops and working groups in which professors and other members of the academic community were brought together to discuss the new approach to QA and cooperate in developing QA processes.

On balance, the review panel concludes that AQU had acted appropriately in difficult circumstances and was committed, in principle, to developing an effective and appropriate external quality assurance system. However, the response by AQU to external pressures and demands had to be mostly reactive and lacked a clear strategic plan that would have made it easier to better determine priorities and operate accordingly, as well as help to design a clear and explicit conceptual framework for its external quality assurance processes. The review panel recommends that the Agency should be more pro-active in developing its external quality assurance processes. Especially for the new bachelor degree programmes it should develop a concept for their evaluation (e.g. starting a pilot project). Moreover, the review panel recommends that AQU develops a strategic plan together with universities and the Government for better sustaining and coordinating its various quality assurance activities in order to achieve more integration, visibility of the priorities and synergy between them.

2.3 Criteria for decisions: Any formal decisions made as a result of an external quality assurance activity should be based on explicit published criteria that are applied consistently.

AQU has published a number of policies, procedures, guidelines and criteria which inform on its approach to, and procedures for review. These are all available on AQU's website (e.g. ProQU, Virtual, Pilot Plan, POP programme, certification of the teaching staff assessment manuals, etc).

2.4 Processes fit for purpose: All external quality assurance processes should be designed specifically to ensure their fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for them.

The load of compulsory activities inevitably leads to a priority given in the work of the Agency. But taking also into account the international experience, the lessons from the Bologna process, and the need for sustainability and assistance in the development of internal quality assurance processes at HEIs, AQU should develop a clearer view about reaching a better balance and dedicating enough resources between all its assigned missions (see AQU Statutes) within its future activity, including the evaluation of services and management, as has already been done for example with the libraries' evaluation programme. In the view of the review panel the drafting of a strategic plan, as mentioned above, could be a useful tool to reach more consistency and synergy between all evaluation activities and help to consider giving more room to the progressive development of cyclical institutional evaluation. It is also advisable for work to be done on the criteria for the *ex post* evaluation of master degree programmes (as this will have to begin in two years' time).

2.5 Reporting: Reports should be published and should be written in a style, which is clear and readily accessible to its intended readership. Any decisions, commendations or recommendations contained in reports should be easy for a reader to find.

AQU is committed to publishing reports. All the results of the Agency's external quality activities have been published from the time it was set up in 1996. Annual reports are published as printed documents that set out the results of evaluations carried out during the year. The annual report includes the results of the assessment of current degree programmes and of libraries. These public reports include a section with formal conclusions and specific sections with proposals for improvement for each degree programme. Individual results are made available on AQU's website as soon as they are known. A certain amount of time is needed to prepare the public reports. Prior to being published on the website, they must be presented to the university institutions and finally have to be approved by the CAQ committee. Delays incurred with the printed version of the annual report could recently be shortened (AQU is currently publishing the annual report for 2005).

There seems to be room for improvement in relation to the *ex ante* accreditations of new master degree programmes: AQU does not make the final decision in the sense that it would approve of a degree programme. Decisions to establish them are made at governmental level: there have been cases where such programmes have been started even though they were negatively assessed by AQU and did not meet quality standards as stated by the CAQ. This is due to other considerations such as, for example, the public or strategic interest of the proposal, regional development, balanced distribution between institutions, etc. While the final results of the evaluation processes were not published by AQU in the first year of *ex ante* evaluations of master programmes (2005-06), this was corrected in the second year and the results were published on the Agency's website. AQU publishes the complete list of positive assessment reports on its website. Information has also been published by certain mainstream media (newspapers and radio stations) on programmes started despite having been negatively assessed by AQU. It should be safeguarded that the relevant stakeholders are informed about AQU's quality assessment conclusions. The process will be improved in 2007 when AQU publishes the results together with the full reports on quality assessment.

2.6 Follow-up procedures: Quality assurance processes which contain recommendations for action or which require a subsequent action plan, should have a predetermined follow-up procedure which is implemented consistently.

In its interviews the review panel was made aware of the weakness detected by AQU in its SE-report, concerning the "ineffective implementation of the follow-up evaluation of improvement plans." AQU has designed a specific methodology for conducting follow-up assessments to be carried out 3 years after a positive external assessment. But since follow-up procedures are voluntary and the implemented changes are neither monitored nor published, there seems to be at present a low level of accountability on this issue. Moreover, all degree programmes assessed by AQU will from now on be in fact replaced by new Bologna programmes by 2010 at the latest. It seemed reasonable to AQU for the follow-up

assessments of discontinued programmes not to be considered a priority and to cease carrying them out, especially considering that new degrees need to be assessed prior to implementation. In 2000 and 2001, various pilot follow-ups were carried out. In 2002, AQU was strongly recommended to assess pre-Bologna existent degrees as a tool for designing new programmes.

However, it is probable that in many cases observations made in a follow-up process would have remained valid even through changes in the programme. This issue is to be addressed within the more general concern with the progressive establishment of a reasonable adequate periodicity for the evaluations.

2.7 Periodic reviews: External quality assurance of institutions and/or programmes should be undertaken on a cyclical basis. The length of the cycle and the review procedures to be used should be clearly defined and published in advance.

Concerning periodic reviews the review panel found that AQU has currently no effective procedure in place, which ensures that programmes are evaluated on a cyclical basis. The accreditation of all new Bachelor/Master programmes in Catalonia, as stated in the draft of the new Spanish regulatory framework, is to be carried out by AQU on a cyclical basis. The standards for Bachelor/Master accreditation have been developed and published by AQU. However, given the short time-frame in which changes take place in the regulatory framework, there are important limitations to cyclical implementation.

In relation to the weaknesses detected in the follow-up procedures, AQU should draw up a concept for undertaking such reviews on a cyclical basis. The review panel suggests that the strategic plan mentioned above should focus particularly on this matter in consultation with HEIs.

2.8 System-wide analyses: Quality assurance agencies should produce from time to time summary reports describing and analysing the general findings of their reviews, evaluations, assessments etc.

Several system-wide analyses have been conducted by AQU:

- The report referring to the 2000-2005 period contains a systemic analysis of the Catalan university system (see: "The public university system in Catalonia, 2000-2005: from the perspective of assessment by AQU Catalunya" (in Catalan)).
- Two surveys on graduate employment were carried out in 2001 and 2004 according to a cyclical process, with a total sample for the two years of more than 40.000 graduates (approximately 20.000 replies). The current plan includes a third survey.
- A systematic review of library services.
- A report on the results of teaching staff assessment from 2003 onwards is to be released in the near future.
- AQU also participated in an international survey in collaboration with Sweden, Finland and Ireland involving a system analysis of the views of postgraduate students regarding the quality of postgraduate programmes (1.000 replies in Catalonia).

AQU used to have cross-system reviews in place but due to the legislative changes (introduction of new bachelor degree programmes) it stopped this activity, which was given a very positive feedback by the stakeholders and which was published in its annual reports. Regarding the new bachelor and master degree programmes, the review panel suggests to draw up evaluation concepts which incorporate system-wide analyses in their methodology.

Given the evidence mentioned above: design, publication and implementation of policies, procedures, guidelines, guides and criteria in various fields of evaluation together with weaknesses in reporting, follow-up procedures, periodic reviews and system-wide analyses, the review panel concludes that AQU is **substantially compliant** with this ENQA criterion.

3.2 ESG 3.2/ENQA criterion 2: Official status

"The Agency should be formally recognised by competent public authorities in the European Higher Education Area as an Agency with responsibility for external quality assurance and should have an established legal basis. It should comply with any requirements of the legislative jurisdiction within which it operates."

AQU is formally recognised as an agency with responsibility, *inter alia*, for external quality assurance under the provisions of the Catalan Universities Act of 19 February 2003. It is a public corporation of the *Generalitat de Catalunya* that conforms to civil law, in accordance with Article 139 of the Catalan Universities Act.

"[...] to adopt the legal form of a public law body of the Government of Catalonia whose activity is adapted to private law. Attached to the department responsible for universities, it has, in order to be able to fulfil its functions, a legal personality, full legal capacity and its own resources." (Catalan Universities Act, Law 1/2003, Article 139 (1)).

AQU fulfils the criterion that it is an agency with responsibility for external quality assurance, since the Catalan Universities Act states, that AQU is the "primary instrument for promoting and evaluating university education quality." (Catalan Universities Act, Law 1/2003, Preamble, p. 7). Moreover Article 3, "Objective", of the "Statutes of the Agency for Quality Assurance in the Catalan University System" states that

"the Agency for Quality Assurance in the Catalan University System has as its prime objective the evaluation, accreditation and certification of the quality standards in Catalan universities and higher education centres, in accordance with the provisions established in Article 140 of Law 1/2003, dated February 19, of Catalan Universities." (Statutes of the Agency for Quality Assurance in the Catalan University System, p. 3)

With the decree of 93/2003 the Statutes of the *Agency for Quality Assurance in the Catalan University System* were being approved by the incumbent Minister.

It has to be added that both national and regional legislation formally assign to AQU a number of tasks, some of which are usually not carried out by an external quality assurance agency (especially teaching staff assessment). Due to this double set of laws (Catalan and Spanish Universities Act) it is sometimes not quite clear how these different activities integrate on the whole.

Given the evidence mentioned above, the review panel concludes that AQU is **fully compliant** with this ENQA criterion.

3.3 ESG 3.3/ENQA criterion 1: Activities

"The Agency undertakes external quality assurance activities (at institutional or programme level) on a regular basis."

As stressed in the SE-report, AQU has undertaken, and will continue to undertake external quality assurance activities at programme level on a regular basis. The Catalan Universities Act, Law 1/2003, Article 140 states AQU's aims and functions, which among other things, includes the evaluation of courses, the certification of the quality of courses of study, of the management and administration of universities and of the activities of universities, the accreditation of courses of study within the quality framework of the European higher education area, the evaluation of educational centres, the assessment of university teaching staff, etc. Based on this law and according to the SE-report, AQU has carried out the following activities:

- In the course of the assessment of pre-Bologna degree programmes (Pro-QU programme and Virtual (distance learning)) 290 degree programmes have been voluntarily assessed, of which 12 follow-up and 32 *ex post* assessments have been carried out (covered around 70% of this type of degree programme being offered).
- Concerning the assessment of proposals for new recognised master degree programmes (POP programme), the Agency has carried out the compulsory assessment of proposals for 373 recognised master degree programmes over the last two years.
- Evaluation of all of the one hundred proposals to adapt degree programmes to the European Higher Education Area (Pilot Plan - voluntary plan)

According to AQU's "Planning of activities 2007", the following activities will be/are carried out by the Agency in 2007:

- Development of the European standards and guidelines for quality in Catalan universities
- Adaptation of the Agency's internal procedure to the European standards
- Evaluation of institutional quality
- Adaptation of degree programmes to the new legal framework
- Design of undergraduate programmes
- Evaluation of affiliated institutions and centres
- Carrying out of studies and projects
- Teaching staff and research

According to the information gathered in the interviews, there seems, however, to be a problem with carrying out quality assurance activities on a *regular* basis since this implies periodic reviews. Due to the changing legal situation and government policy changes, the activities of AQU have been subject, as was mentioned before, out of its reach, to a "stop-and-go" context.

Thus AQU has not been able to develop a long-term strategy for external quality assurance processes. Currently AQU is mainly carrying out the *ex ante* accreditation of master degree programmes and is still working on the development of an evaluation framework for these programmes. In light of ESG 2.4.2: “The aims and objectives of quality assurance processes should be determined before the processes themselves are developed, by all those responsible (including higher education institutions) and should be published with a description of the procedures to be used”, there seems to be a need for developing a coherent and integrated system of quality assurance activities on the side of AQU.

Moreover, due to the peculiar legal context, which assigns a lot of different tasks to AQU (especially the teaching staff assessment: it is undoubtedly a quality assurance activity, nevertheless in the international perspective quite often conducted by other institutions, and a lot of resources are devoted by AQU to this activity), the Agency still seems to be in need of finding the right balance between these different kinds of activities and finds it difficult to prioritise. A certain degree of pro-activity might make it easier for AQU within the specific constraints arising from this legal framework. Moreover the Agency should work on developing a strategic and integrated picture of its activities as well as clear and effective follow-up procedures for the evaluations. This would also help to consider establishing progressively a focus on cyclical institutional evaluation procedures, in addition to its present programme evaluation activities.

The Agency has performed these core activities for more than two years. Given the evidence mentioned above and specific circumstances due to the special legal context, the review panel concludes that AQU is **substantially compliant** with this ENQA criterion.

3.4 ESG 3.4/ENQA criterion 3: Resources

“The Agency should have adequate and proportional resources, both human and financial, to enable it to organise and run its external quality assurance process(es) in an effective and efficient manner, with appropriate provision for the development of its processes and procedures.”

Concerning financial resources, the Agency draws up a preliminary draft budget that is approved by the Board of Management. The preliminary draft budget (total income in 2005: Euro 2.262.065,68) 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 (see SE-report, p. 14). After the on-site visit the Catalan Parliament approved the definitive AQU budget for 2007 on July 6 (up until this point the Agency was operating on the deferred budget of 2006 of 2.464.560 euros) of 3.184.247,08 Euros, which coincides with the amount in the Director's proposal based on the activities plan approved by the AQU Catalunya Board of Management. This increase will in particular help to offset the shortage in staff which stood out as a weak point in the self-evaluation report.

Having visited the offices of the Agency, the review panel considers the material resources (premises, inventory, computer hardware and

software, library, etc.) of AQU to be sufficient. Although there seem to be some constraints on budget management due to regulations of the Administration, but this situation has recently improved since AQU can now use its budget for two years, which makes planning easier.

Regarding human resources AQU staff consists of thirty employees, who are distributed among four sections: Administration, Institutional Assessment, Teaching Staff Assessment and Planning and Communication (see SE-report, p. 17). The review panel particularly wants to highlight that AQU has a very well trained, dedicated and motivated staff.

However, due to organisational problems there is still room for improvement of the Agency's working (especially on internal communication). The Agency's activities throughout 2007 are being reconsidered in accordance with a transversal planning model so as to improve project management. In addition, with the specific "burden" put on AQU by teaching and research assessment activities, human resources available for their core activities are further reduced.

Although resources seem to be adequate from a general quantitative point of view, the review panel finds that there seem to be organisational problems that prevents AQU from using them in a more effective manner. On the one hand, there seems to be a high degree of compartmentalisation within the Agency with the result that there is a lack of a sense of identification and ownership of especially many committee members. In the interviews, the review panel found that most of the different committee members only focus on their particular task and have no overall picture of the Agency's activities and how their activity fits into the larger picture. On the other hand, it would appear that the Board of Directors⁴ does not carry out its tasks in a very effective manner in the sense that the Board's main functions are "to approve the annual activities agenda [...] and to establish the Agency's strategic goals" (SE-report, p. 4).

Moreover, the Board appears to be fairly big (it comprises representatives from both the public and private universities, the administration of the Autonomous Government of Catalonia, as well as persons from the academic world), which might pose a difficulty for it to act effectively as a steering body. The review panel therefore recommends that AQU reflects on the role of its Board and Standing Committee.

The various special tasks assigned to AQU by legislation (especially teaching staff and research assessment⁵), are therefore to be considered part of its core business. Nevertheless, many resources are linked to activities that, in the eyes of the Agency, should not represent its core mission. The assessment of teaching staff and teaching staff research competence accounts for a large part of the budget: since this one is based on the activities plan, and each activity is accounted for independently, this does not affect the adequacy of funding allocated to AQU Catalunya's other activities, with the only exception of the detected

⁴ The makeup of the Board of Directors is laid down in Article 8 of the AQU Statutes. Currently the Board comprises some 28 people (see Annex 4).

⁵ AQU spends Euro 567.025,12 on teaching staff assessment (SE-report, p. 15).

shortage of staff. However, this is in the stage of being resolved with the new budget.

The review panel stresses here on its former recommendation that there should be at hand a clear strategic plan for at least four or five years, subsequently to be operationalised, and when appropriate actualized, providing a general framework incorporating all of the Agency's activities, reducing parallel activities, which might prove a powerful tool in the annual activities planning.

Given the evidence mentioned above, the review panel concludes, that the Agency has adequate and proportional resources, both human and financial, and due to the facts mentioned above (lack of a strategic plan integrating all activities and the relative load of some specific compulsory activities) the review panel concludes that AQU is **substantially compliant** with this ENQA criterion.

3.5 ESG 3.5/ENQA Criterion 4: Mission statement

"The Agency should have clear and explicit goals and objectives for its work, contained in a publicly available statement."

The Agency has no document titled "mission statement" but in the Catalan Universities Act (article 140), the AQU Statutes and the "Code of Ethics", some relevant topics a mission statement should contain (goals and functions of AQU) are laid down. Moreover the Statutes are published on the website and in AQU's "Services Catalogue" in Catalan, Spanish and English.

"The purpose of AQU Catalunya is to assess, accredit and certify university and higher education in Catalonia [...]" (AQU Services Catalogue, p. 25)

"The Agency for Quality Assurance in the Catalan University System has as its prime objective the evaluation, accreditation and certification of the quality standards in Catalan universities and higher education centres, in accordance with the provisions established in Article 140.1 of Law 1/2003, dated February 19, of Catalan Universities." (AQU Statutes, Article 3, "Objective")

From these documents it is made clear that the external quality assurance process is a major activity of the Agency. Moreover, the review panel found in its interviews that AQU staff also considers the Quality Assessment Committee (CAQ) to be the "heart" of AQU's activities. The division of labour between the relevant stakeholders is based on the legal jurisdiction ascribed to each one and is reflected in the corresponding agreements between those participating in a project.

However, as mentioned before, there seems to be no systematic approach by the Agency to achieve its goals and objectives. Although AQU has quite a clear mission (statement), the responsibilities imposed by law are diverse and are translated into a variety of tasks AQU is supposed to fulfil. Given this fact, AQU has yet to more systematically implement and operationalise its mission and integrate the various activities within a coherent general framework. Thus, the review panel recommends that AQU should take steps for developing a more integrated system of external quality assurance and a clear policy and management plan, including when appropriate, all necessary details on the division of labour with relevant stakeholders in higher education.

With this particular circumstance - the fact that law assigns such a wide variety of tasks to AQU without stating more precisely clear priorities between them, so that it may contribute to some blurring of AQU's missions image from some stakeholders' point of view - the review panel concludes that AQU is **substantially compliant** with this ENQA criterion.

3.6 ESG 3.6/ENQA Criterion 5/ Independence

"The Agency should be independent to the extent both that it has autonomous responsibility for its operations and that the conclusions and recommendations made in its reports cannot be influenced by third parties such as higher education institutions, ministries or other stakeholders."

In the preamble of the Catalan Universities Act it is stated that "this modification was necessary to adapt to the new responsibilities assigned to the Agency by Organic Law 6/2001, of 21 December, governing universities, and ensured that the principles of independence, professionalism and freedom to operate would be adhered to, as in equivalent European agencies." (Catalan Universities Act, Law 1/2003, Preamble) Regarding the independence of AQU's committees, it says that

"these committees, which shall operate with technical independence, will issue evaluations for their respective fields for which they will be ultimately responsible." (Catalan Universities Act, Law 1/2003, Preamble)

AQU's technical independence is specified in Article 148 of the Law 1/2003, of 19 February, governing Catalan universities relating to the "Technical independence and evaluations issued by other bodies":

"1. Evaluation committees, which shall act with technical independence, shall approve the evaluations of the Agency for their respective areas and shall ultimately be responsible for these evaluations."

2. Evaluations and accreditations issued by other evaluation agencies or bodies in matters falling within the area of responsibility of the Catalan University System Quality Agency may be taken into consideration by the latter for the purposes established by this Law."

Regarding the appointment of external experts and the determination of the outcomes of its quality assurance processes, AQU Statutes safeguard that these activities are undertaken autonomously (see AQU Statutes 5.3: "Board of Directors must approve an internal quality system and a ethical code for the Agency [...] that guarantee technical and performance independence of the commissions" and 17.5: "the different commissions, which work independently, approve the evaluations carried out by the Agency in their respective areas, and they are liable for the final results"). The review panel is satisfied that these criteria are being met by the Agency (further provisions are specified in the "Code of Ethics" and AQU's "Quality Policy") and that appointment procedures of external experts safeguard independence (they have to sign a "Conflict of interests document").

Thus, it is clear that AQU's evaluation committees take ultimate responsibility for the results of the evaluations, that AQU is formally independent and that operational independence from higher education institutions and governments is guaranteed in official documentation. However, on the basis of the information gathered in the interviews, the review panel expresses its concern, with regard to both AQU's planning activities and the stop-and-go characteristic of their external quality assurance procedures, that there may be too much room for external

influence. The imposition of certain activities on AQU to such an extent that it interrupts the planned ongoing activities would be a sign of insufficient independence and should be seen problematic. The review panel considers, however, that the procedures themselves are being autonomously developed by the Agency (see section 3.7).

Another crucial point is the nomination and appointment of the executives and members of AQU's committees in the light of operational independence from higher education institutions and governments. The chairpersons of the CAQ, CLiQ and CAR committees and some of their members in particular are appointed directly by the incumbent of the government department (Ministry) with jurisdiction over universities. The chairmanship of the CAQ is formally appointed by the Executive Council of the Catalan Government (*Generalitat de Catalunya*). However the position of the chairperson has always been held by the Director of the Agency. It has to be mentioned that a request has been made to the Government for the legislation governing these appointments to be amended. Moreover, the Board of Directors is mainly constituted by representatives from HE-institutions and the Catalan government (see Article 142 of the Law 1/2003, of 19 February, governing Catalan universities). A more balanced makeup of the Board including students or representatives from the professional world might make AQU less vulnerable to external pressures.

Given the evidence mentioned above, the review panel concludes that AQU is **substantially compliant** with this ENQA criterion.

3.7 ESG 3.7/ENQA Criterion 6 & 8: External quality assurance criteria and processes

"The processes, criteria and procedures used by the agency should be pre-defined and publicly available. These processes will normally be expected to include:

- a self-assessment or equivalent procedure by the subject of the quality assurance process;
- an external assessment by a group of experts, including, as appropriate, (a) student member(s), and site visits as decided by the member; publication of a report, including any decisions, recommendations or other formal outcomes;
- a follow-up procedure to review actions taken by the subject of the quality assurance process in the light of any recommendations contained in the report."

The processes, criteria and procedures used by AQU in undertaking its various review activities are pre-defined and publicly available. AQU's current policies and procedures are available on the AQU website, its external evaluation procedures are described in the methodology guidebooks. As already mentioned above, AQU's external quality assurance procedures were developed within a stop-and-go context. Currently AQU is carrying out external reviews for the evaluation of library services. It is also carrying out the external assessment of the UOC (Open University of Catalonia, which has 33.991 students) at institutional level. AQU is also carrying out the external assessment of various officially recognised UOC e-learning programmes (19 altogether). It has completed a proposal for the external assessment of programmes in the pilot scheme for quality certification and accreditation. AQU is currently designing the methodology for the assessment of affiliated institutions, to start before the end of 2007.

Standards for the accreditation of master degree programmes are published on the AQU website. The definition of the *ex post* evaluation

procedure has been drawn up and is pending approval of the legal framework by the Spanish Government. Methodologies for this *ex post* evaluation of master degree programmes, which are currently being accredited, are still to be developed.

Normally AQU's review processes involve a self-assessment by the institution, consideration of the self-assessment by an independent panel of experts, the publication of a report and procedures for following up the findings of such reports. "All quality assurance processes that include self-evaluation are complemented by an external evaluation carried out by a committee of experts." (SE-report).

Regarding the evaluation of library services, AQU has included student members in the review teams. Student representatives met by the review panel have expressed a great interest in and commitment to participating in such evaluations. Apart from that, the Agency is currently building up a pool of students, who get training in order to increase the degree of student participation in external evaluations. It has also appointed a postgraduate student as new member of the CAQ and is working on the constitution of a consultative committee composed of students (additional report to SE-report, see Annex 8).

As far as the appointment of external reviewers is concerned, the proportion of non-Catalan experts in AQU's external reviews for 2006 was as follows: ProQU (pre-Bologna programmes) 38%, library services 57%, new master degree programmes 25%. There are plans to improve the situation in 2007, particularly with regard to the evaluation of new master degree programmes in which the number of non-Catalan reviewers will be approximately 50%. Out of a total of thirteen members of the CAQ, seven are from outside of the Catalan university community and three of them have always been leading experts within European agencies (EVA, CNE, QAA, etc). In the most recent reorganisation of CAQ, the viewpoints of one professional and one student were added.

The review panel recommends that since Catalonia has a relatively small HE-system, the number of reviewers coming from other regions in Spain and also from other countries should still be increased.

AQU has recently formalised its procedure for recruiting people interested in participating in assessment processes by publishing a CV-model on its website and is working within the REACU (*Red Española de Agencias de Calidad Universitaria*: Network of the Spanish Agencies' Association) to share its database of experts in order to increase the number of external experts (see Annex 8).

The annual reports include the results of the assessment of current degree programmes and libraries. These evaluation results are also published on The AQU website and in its bulletin.

Concerning the follow-up procedure to review actions taken by the subject of the quality assurance process in the light of any recommendations contained in the report, there is still a considerable lack of enforcement and monitoring. This is due mostly to the pressure giving understandably priority to establishing procedures rather than organizing at the same time follow-up and *ex post* evaluations within a general cyclical evaluation and planning framework.

Regarding the interaction and synergy of the Agency's different activities there is still room for improvement: the lack of communication between the different working groups and the compartmentalization of their work mean that opportunities for shared learning and for rationalization of the work load may be missed.

Given the evidence mentioned above, the review panel concludes that AQU is **substantially compliant** with this ENQA criterion.

3.8 ESG 3.8/ENQA Criterion 7: Accountability procedures

"Agencies should have in place procedures for their own accountability."

AQU has published a policy for the assurance of the quality of the Agency itself in various documents on its website (especially the "Internal Quality System" and "Code of Ethics") and has in place an internal quality assurance system which has just recently been *ISO 9001:2000* re-certified.

AQU also has in place, and enforces, a no-conflict-of-interest mechanism in the work of its external experts. It provides a document titled "Agreement regarding confidentiality and adherence to AQU Catalunya's ethical principles and code of ethics", which has to be signed by external 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".

However, as AQU states in its SE-report, the "feedback on the processes carried out by AQU Catalunya is minimal." They occasionally employ questionnaires and meta-assessments. Thus the review panel recommends building up systematic internal and external feedback-mechanisms in order to inform its own development and improvement and to create a common evaluation culture within the entire organisation. In addition, AQU took the initiative in asking for its compliance with the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance* in a cyclical external review, which shall be carried out every five years.

Given the evidence mentioned above, the review panel concludes that AQU is **fully compliant** with this ENQA criterion.

4 Any sections relating to additional Terms of Reference of the review or additional reflections

4.1 AQU's teaching staff evaluation programme

According to the ToR the review panel was also asked to provide feedback on AQU's role and tasks in the contexts of the Spanish national and regional Higher Education systems (AQU's teaching staff evaluation programme). Therefore the review was expected also to evaluate and to comment on how effectively the staff assessment procedure is managed by AQU and whether it meets the set aims.

In the Catalan HE-system there is no full autonomy regarding the management of university teaching staff. The legal framework establishes not only teaching staff position but also the mechanisms and processes regarding eligibility and recruitment (see SE-report). Accreditation is

compulsory for an appointment to a steady position under contract and apart from this certification framework AQU also carries out evaluation in relation to certain salary bonuses. This leads to the situation that a large number of people apply for accreditation, whereas only a small proportion of them applies for/gets a job as university teaching staff. Moreover, there should be better coordination and integration between the CAR and CLIC committees, since they are carrying out similar tasks, which in certain areas overlap.

In its interviews the review panel found out that AQU itself considers this task not to be the core of its activities (“a foreign body which uses AQU staff”) and that it is imposed on AQU due to the particular Catalan legislation. Moreover, this activity consumes a lot of financial and personal resources (7.640 applications since 2003). It thus leads to some difficulties for AQU to develop fully its other core activities. Additionally this has a further drawback in the sense that, because of its importance for the teaching staff, it tends to be considered by many of them, as well as from an external perspective by some other stakeholders, as AQU’s core responsibility and image (“as an external referee rather than as a partner for quality assurance”) to the detriment of the visibility of its other broader external quality assurance and evaluation activities.

Given the present legal framework, however, there seems to be little scope for improvement in that regard. Since AQU is already hiring “temporary staff [...] in order to be able to fulfil the objectives” and the “deadlines are extremely tight for the administrative procedure” (SE-report), they should draw up a plan on how to cope with this workload in the future. Nevertheless, the review panel concludes that given the current legal situation, AQU fulfils these tasks in a good and efficient manner.

5 Conclusion

5.1 Overall findings

In the light of the documentary and oral evidence considered by it, the review panel is of the opinion that, although in the performance of its functions, AQU Catalunya is not yet fully compliant with all *ENQA Membership Regulations* and the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, the Agency is, nonetheless, sufficiently compliant to justify full membership of ENQA.

The standards and criteria where full compliance has not been achieved are:

- ESG 3.1 (and section 2)/ENQA criterion 1: Use of external QA procedures (substantially compliant)
- ESG 3.3/ENQA criterion 1: Activities (substantially compliant)
- ESG 3.4/ENQA criterion 3: Resources (substantially compliant)
- ESG 3.5/ENQA Criterion 4: Mission statement (substantially compliant)
- ESG 3.6/ENQA Criterion 5/ Independence (substantially compliant)

- ESG 3.7/ENQA Criterion 6 & 8: External quality assurance criteria and processes (substantially compliant)

and the Agency is recommended to take appropriate action, so far as it is empowered to do so, to achieve full compliance with these standards at the earliest opportunity.

6 Annexes

Annex 1	Schedule and timetable of the site-visit
Annex 2	List of the documents consulted by the Panel
Annex 3	Terms of Reference
Annex 4	Composition of AQU's Board of Management
Annex 5	Glossary of acronyms
Annex 6	Criteria for Full membership of ENQA
Annex 7	AQU Self Evaluation Report
Annex 8	Additional report to AQU's Self Evaluation Report

References

(available on: http://www.enqa.eu/files/ESG_v03.pdf)

Reference 1	ENQA theoretical model for the cyclical review of quality assurance agencies
Reference 2	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
Reference 3	Standards and guidelines for external quality assurance agencies

External Review of the Agency for Quality Assurance in the University System of Catalunya (AQU)

June 17-19, 2007, Barcelona

Schedule and timetable of the site-visit

Please note that this timetable may be amended. There is some free time built into the timetable to allow for alterations if the Review-Panel should so decide at the end of the first day.

June 17, 2007		
19:00 Venue: hotel reception, Hotel Montcada, Via Laietana, 24	Pre-meeting	Chair and Secretary
20:30 Venue: restaurant Senyor Parellada, Argenteria 37; Meet at 20:15 at the hotel reception	Working dinner at a restaurant	Review-Panel Review Panel orientation meeting

June 18, 2007		
09:00 – 09:30 Venue: AQU Meet at 8:50 at the hotel reception	Convening of Review-Panel	
09:30 – 10:00 Venue: AQU	President AQU and Director AQU	Dr. Antoni Serra Ramoneda, Dr. Javier Bará Temes
10:00 – 11:00 Venue: AQU Via Laietana, 28, 5a planta	Board of Directors / Standing Committee (4 – 5 members)	Sr. Antoni Giró (rector UPC), Sr. Lluís Ferrer (rector UAB)
11:15-12:00 Venue: AQU	President AQU and Director AQU	Dr. Antoni Serra Ramoneda, Dr. Javier Bará Temes
12:15 – 13:15 Venue: AQU	Heads and representatives of Services: (Planning and communication / Administration / Quality assessment / Teaching and research)	Maria Giné Soca, Josep Grifoll Saurí, Josep Manel Torres Solà, Carme Perez
13:15 – 14:15 Venue: AQU	<i>Lunch catering</i>	Review-Panel
14:30 – 15:10 Venue: AQU	Representatives of S.C. for Assessment of Degree Standards (ATP)	Eva Jansson, Business Economics (UAB), Joseba-Jokin Quevedo Casin, Automatic Control (UPC)

15:20 – 15:55 Venue: AQU	Representatives of S.C. for Quality Assessment of University Centres and Activities (ACAU)	Josep Carreras, Physiological Sciences (UB) ⁶
15:20 – 15:55 Venue: AQU	Tour through AQU offices and premises	AQU staff
16:00 – 16:15 Venue: AQU	<i>Coffee break</i>	Review-Panel
16:15 – 16:50 Venue: AQU	Representatives of S.C. for Assessment of Individual Merits and Activities (CEMAI)	Carmen Ansotegui, Sebastián Rodríguez
17:00 – 17:30 Venue: AQU	Heads of the Specific CAQ Committees (Assessment of Degree Standards and Programmes / Quality Assessment of University Centres and Activities / Assessment of Individual Merits and Activities)	Dr. Javier Bará Temes, Dr. Pere Botella (also in his function as methodology co-ordinator with ANECA), Ignasi Romagosa
17:40 – 18:40 Venue: AQU	Internal discussion Review-Panel	Review-Panel
21:00 - Venue: Restaurant 7 portes, Pg Isabel II, 14, Barcelona; Meet at 20:40 at the hotel reception	Dinner Review-Panel	Review-Panel

June 19, 2007		
09:00 – 09:30 Venue: AQU	Convening of Review-Panel	Review-Panel
9:30 - 11:00 Venue: AQU	Representatives of HEIs (Teaching staff and QM at the HEIs)	Jordi Riera (Vr URL) Miquel Salgot (UB) Sílvia Ruiz (UPC) Jordi Casanova (UB) Maria Taulats (UOC)
11:00 - 11:15 Venue: AQU	<i>Coffee break</i>	Review-Panel
11:15 – 12:00 Venue: AQU	Student representatives from HEIs	Magdalena Rovira (UAB) Esperanza Ramírez (UAB) Olatz López Aleix Barrera
12:00 – 12:45 Venue: AQU	Representatives of the Tenure-track Lecturers and Collaborating Lecturers Committee (CLiC) and Research Assessment Committee (CAR)	M Lluïsa Hernanz Juan F Piniella Montserrat Ponsà Àngel Cardama
13:00 – 14:00 Venue: AQU	<i>Lunch catering</i>	Review-Panel
14:15 – 15:00 Venue: AQU	2-3 members of AQU co-ordinated review-panels	Claudi Mans (UB) Juan José Perona (UAB) Claudi Alsina (UPC)
15:15 – 15:30 Venue: AQU	<i>Coffee break</i>	Review-Panel
15:30 – 16:00 Venue: AQU	Staff of the internal QA department ⁷	Monica Curieses, Josep Grifoll, Albert Basart
15:45 - Venue: AQU	Review Panel meeting	Review-Panel

⁶ Meeting was cancelled since Mr. Carreras could not take part.

⁷ Additional interview; the review panel decided to talk to AQU QA-staff for further clarifications.

18:00 Venue: AQU	Feedback session	Review-Panel and AQU representatives
19:00	End of site-visit	
21:00 Venue: restaurant tba	Dinner at restaurant	<i>Facultative; invitation of AQU's Director</i>

List of documents consulted by the review panel

- AQU Catalunya self-evaluation report (according to the ENQA European model), dated 6 March 2007
- Further evidence provided by AQU (structured according to SE-report)⁸

N	Evidence	Language	Link	Placement
Standard 3.2. Official status				
E-01	Law 1/2003 of 19 February on the Universities in Catalonia (LUC)	ENG		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-02	AQU Catalunya statutes	ENG		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-03	Decree-law 571/2006, of 19 December, on the structure of the Ministry of Innovation, Universities and Enterprise	CAT		www.gencat.cat
Standard 3.3. Activities				
E-01	Law 1/2003 of 19 February on the Universities in Catalonia (LUC)	ENG		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-02	AQU Catalunya statutes	ENG		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-04	Current Code of ethics	SPA		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-05	Draft of the new AQU Catalunya's Code of ethics	ENG		Attached
E-06	Annual activities plan	ENG		Attached
E-07	Planning of activities (Procedures for the act. plan, programming and the act. report) E.01	CAT		Attached
E-08	Annual activities report	ENG		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-09	AQU Catalunya annual report	CAT		www.aqucatalunya.cat
Standard 3.4. Resources				
E-01	Law 1/2003 of 19 February on the Universities in Catalonia (LUC)	ENG		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-10	Law 4/1985, of 29 March, concerning the regulation of public enterprise in Catalonia	CAT		Attached
E-02	AQU Catalunya statutes	ENG		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-06	Annual activities plan	ENG		Attached
E-11	Support procedures according to the ISO standard	CAT		Archived : G141
Economic Resources				
E-12	Law on annual budgets	CAT		www.gencat.cat
E-13	AQU Catalunya 2005 Budget	CAT		www.gencat.cat
E-14	Financial audit	CAT		Archived : G657
Human resources				
E-15	Functional organisation chart of AQU Catalunya by sections and professional categories	CAT		Attached
E-16	Job specifications list	CAT		Attached

⁸ Please note that evidence which is labelled „Archived“ in the column „Placement“ and where there is no explicit mention of being consulted, the review panel did not actually consult the document in question.

E-17	Employment and working conditions of regular AQU Catalunya employees	CAT		Attached
E-18	Training plan	CAT		Attached
E-19	Training annual report	CAT		Attached
E-20	Plan for the prevention of risks at work	CAT		Archived : G438
E-21	Annual goals	CAT		Archived : G462
	Material resources			
E-22	Inventory	CAT		Archived : G710
Standard 3.5. Mission statement				
E-01	Law 1/2003 of 19 February on the Universities in Catalonia (LUC)	ENG		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-02	AQU Catalunya statutes	ENG		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-23	Services catalogue	ENG		Attached
E-24	AQU Catalunya quality manual	CAT		Attached
E-25	ISO 9001:2000 certification of AQU Catalunya	ENG		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-08	Annual activities report	ENG		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-09	AQU Catalunya annual report	CAT		www.aqucatalunya.cat
Standard 3.6. Independence				
E-01	Law 1/2003 of 19 February on the Universities in Catalonia (LUC)	ENG		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-02	AQU Catalunya statutes	ENG		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-04	Current Code of ethics	SPA		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-26	AQU Catalunya quality policy	ENG		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-27	Training course for students	CAT		Archived : U1251
Standard 3.7. External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies (a. Institutional Assessment)				
	Prior definition of processes, criteria and procedures			
E-28	Minutes of the approval of the assessment methodology: ProQU, Virtual, Pilot Plan, POP programme, certification of the teaching staff assessment manuals	CAT		Archived : G119
E-29	Agreements signed with the universities	CAT		Archived : G832
E-30	General guide to carrying out pilot test runs (ATP 3 May 2004)	CAT		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-31	Minutes of the meeting between those in charge of European convergence (11/03/05)	CAT		Attached
	Inclusion, in the procedures, of the self-evaluation of the institution subject to assessment			
E-32	Assessment guides: ProQU, virtual, libraries	SPA		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-33	Self-evaluation reports ProQU and libraries	CAT		Archived : U1161
E-34	Pilot Plan agreement	CAT		Archived : G832
E-35	Guidelines for designing and implementing an institutional model for assessing the teaching activities of academic staff in public universities in Catalonia.	SPA		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-36	Standards for the certification of teaching assessment manuals	SPA		www.aqucatalunya.cat
	External evaluation by a committee of experts, which includes, where applicable, student participation and visits that the agency considers to be appropriate			

E-37	External evaluation guidebooks: ProQU, virtual, Libraries	SPA		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-38	Assessment protocols for the POP programme	CAT		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-39	Assessment protocols for the Pilot Plan programme	CAT		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-40	Assessment protocol for the university teaching staff assessment manuals	SPA		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-41	Public evaluation reports (published by the external evaluation committees)	SPA		Archived : U1161
E-42	Profile specifications proposal for the external assessment committees members DR. 08	CAT		Attached
E-43	Appointment of experts	SPA		Archived : U1161
E-44	Training course for students	CAT		Archived : U1251
E-45	CVs of the management and experts specialising in assessment	C/S/E		Archived : U1530
Publication of reports that include decisions, recommendations or other formal conclusions				
E-09	AQU Catalunya annual report	CAT		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-46	Executive report and conclusions of the assessment process: ProQU	CAT		Attached
E-47	Public Pilot Plan report	CAT		Archived : U1164
E-48	Public POP report	CAT		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-49	Copy of the Ministry's notification to the universities on the processing of the POP report and Pilot Plan	CAT		Archived
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				
E-50	Guide to the assessment of improvement plans	CAT		Archived : U1161
E-51	General framework for establishing, monitoring and reviewing improvement plans	ENG		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-09	AQU Catalunya annual report	CAT		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-52	Internal and external assessment monitoring reports	CAT		Archived : U1161
E-53	Publication of Lleida workshop "Implementing improvements"	CAT		www.aqucatalunya.cat
The resolution of a formal appeal procedure regarding formal decisions, or where conclusions have been reached that produce formal effects				
E-54	Procedure for drawing up the AQU Catalunya public report	CAT		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-55	Minutes of the POP appeal process (ATP)	CAT		Archived : G119
Professional process handling				
E-24	AQU Catalunya quality manual	CAT		Attached
E-25	ISO 9001:2000 certification of AQU Catalunya	ENG		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-42	Profile specifications proposal for the external assessment committees members DR. 08	CAT		Attached
E-56	Training programme for experts	CAT		Attached
E-57	Work experience of personnel in the technical unit	ENG		Attached
E-58	Appointment of experts	C/S/E		Archived : U1161
E-59	Assessing the activity of experts in the assessment processes	CAT		Attached
E-60	POP meta-assessment report	CAT		Attached
E-61	Workshop on recognised postgraduate degree assessment (Girona)	CAT		www.aqucatalunya.cat
Decision-making is the result of a coherent working method				
E-62	Experts trained by AQU Catalunya	CAT		GESTA (AQU)

				database)
E-54	Procedure for drawing up the AQU Catalunya public report	CAT		www.aqucatalunya.cat
Standard 3.7. External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies				
(b. Teaching Staff Assessment)				
E-63	Organic Law 6/2001 of 21 December on Universities (LOU)	SPA		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-01	Law 1/2003 of 19 February on the Universities in Catalonia (LUC)	ENG		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-64	University teaching staff assessment process OP. 03	ENG		Attached
Standard 3.8. Accountability procedures				
E-02	AQU Catalunya statutes	ENG		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-65	Website www.aqucatalunya.cat	ENG		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-04	Current Code of ethics	SPA		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-05	Draft of the new AQU Catalunya's Code of ethics	ENG		Attached
E-66	Internal rules of procedure of the assessment committee and governing body	ENG		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-67	Conflict of interests document	CAT		Attached
E-08	Annual activities report	ENG		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-24	AQU Catalunya quality manual	CAT		Attached
E-26	AQU Catalunya quality policy	ENG		www.aqucatalunya.cat
E-14	Financial audit	CAT		Archived : G657
E-10	Law 4/1985, of 29 March, concerning the regulation of public enterprise in Catalonia	CAT		Attached
E-09	AQU Catalunya annual report	CAT		www.aqucatalunya.cat

Additional information provided by AQU Catalunya:

- Organisational chart and information of AQU bodies (received 18.5.2007)
- "AQU Catalunya self-assessment report: Additional statement: Implementing improvement proposals": document which provides an overview over measures AQU has already implemented or is implementing in order to correct some of the detected weaknesses (received 1.6.2007)

External Review of the Agency for Quality Assurance in the University
System of Catalunya (AQU) by
The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
(ENQA)

Annex 1: TERMS OF REFERENCE

8 March 2007

1. Background and Context

The Quality Assurance Agency for the University System in Catalunya was founded on 29 October 1996 as a consortium aiming at improving the quality of the Catalan university system. The Board of Directors of the consortium was formed by the rectors and presidents of the public liaison advisory committees of the Catalan state-funded universities (the University of Barcelona, the Autonomous University of Barcelona, the Technical University of Catalunya, the University Pompeu Fabra, the University of Girona, the University of Lleida and the University Rovira i Virgili) and by the Autonomous Government of Catalunya, represented at that time by the Committee for Universities and Research.

In 2003 the Consortium functions were transferred, by law, to the Agency (AQU Catalunya). The Agency was set up as an independent organisation, whose role is the evaluation, certification and accreditation of institutions (programmes, centres, services, processes) and teaching staff in Catalunya. The Agency is funded by the Ministry of Education and Universities of the Catalan Government. The Board of the Agency is comprised of representatives from different institutions, government and independent members.

2. Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

The review will evaluate the way in which and to what extent AQU fulfils the criteria for the ENQA membership and thus the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*. Consequently, the review will also provide information to the ENQA Board to aid its consideration of whether AQU's Full Membership in ENQA should 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 Spanish national and regional Higher Education systems. AQU's teaching staff evaluation programme is unparalleled in Europe and is closely linked to the academic staff organisation of the universities. This particular dual hired and civil servant staff system is defined by the law. Therefore the review is expected also to evaluate and to comment on how effectively the staff

assessment procedure is managed by AQU and whether it meets the set aims.

3. The Review Process

The process will be designed in the light of the ENQA policy on “ENQA-organised external reviews of member agencies”.

The evaluation procedure will consist of the following steps:

- Nomination and appointment of the review team members;
- Self-evaluation by AQU including the preparation of a self-evaluation report;
- A site visit by the panel of reviewers to AQU;
- Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report.

3.1 Nomination and appointment of the review team members

The review panel will consist of five members: four external reviewers (two quality assurance experts, representative of higher education institutions and student member) and a review secretary. Two of the reviewers will be nominated by the ENQA Board on the basis of proposals submitted to ENQA by the national agencies, and will normally be drawn from senior serving members of staff of ENQA member agencies. The review secretary will be nominated by the ENQA Board. The fourth and possibly the fifth external reviewer will be drawn from nominations provided by the European University Association. The nomination of the student member will be asked of the National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB). Current members of the ENQA Board will not be eligible to serve as reviewers.

ENQA will provide to AQU the list of suggested experts with their respective *curricula vitae*. The experts will have to sign a non-conflict of interest statement as regards the AQU review.

3.2 Self-evaluation by AQU, including the preparation of a self-evaluation report

AQU is responsible for the execution and organisation of its own self-evaluation process and shall take into account the following guidance:

- Self-evaluation is organised as a project with a clearly defined schedule and includes all relevant internal and external stakeholders;
- The self-evaluation report is broken down by the topics of the evaluation: background description of the current situation of the Agency; analysis and appraisal of the current situation; proposals for improvement and measures already planned; a summary of perceived strengths and weaknesses;
- The report is well-structured, concise and comprehensively prepared. It clearly demonstrates the extent to which AQU fulfils its tasks of external quality assurance and meets the criteria for the ENQA membership and thus the *European Standards and Guidelines*. The

report will be submitted to the review panel a minimum of four weeks prior to the site visit.

3.3 A Site Visit by the Review Panel

The review panel will draw up and publish a schedule of the site visit. The schedule will include an indicative timetable of the meetings and other exercises to be undertaken by the review team during the site visit, the duration of which will be 2 days.

The site visit will close with an oral presentation and discussion of the main findings of the evaluation between the review panel and AQU.

3.4 Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report

On the basis of the review panel's findings, the review secretary will draft the report in consultation with the expert panel. The report will take into account the purpose and scope of the evaluation as defined under article 2. It will also provide a clear rationale for its findings. A draft will be submitted for comment to AQU within four weeks of the site visit for comment on factual accuracy. If AQU chooses to provide a statement in reference to the draft report, it will be submitted to the chairperson of the review panel within two weeks of the receipt of the draft report. Thereafter the expert panel will taking into account the statement by AQU, finalise the document and submit it to AQU and ENQA.

The final report is to be finalised within two months of the site visit and will not exceed 40 pages in length.

4. Follow-up Process and Publication of the Report

AQU will consider the expert panel's report and inform ENQA of its plans to implement any recommendations contained in the report. Subsequent to the discussion of the evaluation results and any planned implementation measures with ENQA, the review report and the follow-up plans agreed upon will be published on AQU's website.

Composition of the Board of AQU Catalunya⁹

AQU Catalunya's **president** is Dr. Antoni Serra Ramoneda

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is the highest organ of AQU Catalunya and is constituted by the universities, the administration of the autonomous government of Catalonia and persons from the academic world. The Board of Directors is the body charged with drawing up the policies and setting the strategic goals of AQU Catalunya and may meet in plenary sessions or as a standing committee. The members of the Board of Directors are as follows:

- Sr. Antoni Serra Ramoneda (AQU Catalunya's president)
- Excm. i Mgfc. Sr. Màrius Rubiralta Alcañiz (vice chancellor of Universitat de Barcelona)
- Excm. i Mgfc. Sr. Lluís Ferrer Caubet (vice chancellor of Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona)
- Excm. i Mgfc. Sr. Antoni Giró Roca (vice chancellor of Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya)
- Excm. i Mgfc. Sr. Josep Joan Moreso Mateos (vice chancellor of Universitat Pompeu Fabra)
- Excma. i Mgfc. Sra. Anna Maria Geli de Ciurana (vice chancellor of Universitat de Girona)
- Excm. i Mgfc. Sr. Joan Viñas Salas (vice chancellor of Universitat de Lleida)
- Excm. i Mgfc. Sr. Francesc Xavier Grau (vice chancellor of Universitat Rovira i Virgili)
- Excma. i Mgfc. Sra. Imma Tubella i Casadevall (vice chancellor of Universitat Oberta de Catalunya)
- Excma. i Mgfc. Sra. Esther Giménez-Salinas Colomer (vice chancellor of Universitat Ramon Llull)
- Excma. i Mgfc. Sra. Assumpta Fargas Riera (vice chancellor of Universitat de Vic)
- Excm. i Mgfc. Sr. Josep Argemí Renom (vice chancellor of Universitat Internacional de Catalunya)
- Excm. Sr. Joan Josep López Burniol (president of Social Board of Universitat de Barcelona)
- Excma. Sra. Rosa Cullell Muniesa (president of Social Board of Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona)

⁹ Source: <http://www.aqucatalunya.org/scripts/web/pagina.asp?cid=Eng&id=1093&cat=pag&tit=Governing+bodies&res=110&op=1> on 14.8.2007

- Excm. Sr. Ramon Folch Guillén (president of Social Board of Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya)
- Excma. Sra. Mercè Sala Schonorkowski (president of Social Board of Universitat Pompeu Fabra)
- Excm. Sr. Albert Bou Vilanova (president of Social Board of Universitat de Girona)
- Excm. Sr. Josep M. Pujol Gorné (president of Social Board of Universitat de Lleida)
- Excm. Sr. Àngel Cunillera Zárata (president of Social Board of Universitat Rovira i Virgili)
- Sr. Enric Argullol Murgadas (Universitat Pompeu Fabra)
- Sra. Gemma Rigau Oliver (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona)
- Sra. Victòria Salvadó Martín (Universitat de Girona)
- Sr. Josep Anton Ferré Vidal (general director of Universities)
- Sr. Xavier Testar Ymbert (general director of Research)
- Sr. Joan Rodés Teixidor (president of Research Assessment Committee)
- Sra. Maria Lluïsa Hernanz Carbó (president of Tenure-track Lecturer and Collaborating Lecturer Committee)
- Sr. Javier Bará Temes (AQU Catalunya's director)
- Sr. Joan Bravo Pijoan (AQU Catalunya's secretary)

The members of the **Standing Committee** are:

- Dr. Antoni Serra Ramoneda (AQU Catalunya's president)
- Dr. Lluís Ferrer Caubet (vice chancellor, UAB)
- Dr. Joan Viñas Salas (vice chancellor, UdL)
- Sr. Joan Josep López Burniol (president of Social Board of UB)
- Sr. Albert Bou Vilanova (president of Social Board of UdG)
- Sra. Victòria Salvadó Martín (UdG)
- Dr. Josep Anton Ferrer Vidal (general director of Universities)
- Sr. Javier Bará Temes (AQU Catalunya's director)
- Sr. Joan Bravo Pijoan (AQU Catalunya's secretary)

AQU Catalunya's **director** is Dr. Javier Bará Temes.

Glossary of acronyms

ANECA	Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación
AQA	Österreichische Qualitätssicherungsagentur (Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance)
AQU	Agency for Quality Assurance in the University System of Catalunya
CAQ	Comissió d'Avaluació de la Qualitat (Quality Assessment Committee)
CAR	Comissió d'Avaluació de la Recerca (Research Assessment Committee)
CLIQ	Comissió de Professorat Lector i Professorat Col·laborador (Tenure-track Lecturers and Collaborating Lecturers Committee)
CNE	Comité national d'évaluation
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
ESU	European Students' Union (formerly known as ESIB)
EUA	European University Association
EVA	Danish Evaluation Institute
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
QA	Quality Assurance
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (UK)
REACU	Red Española de Agencias de Calidad Universitaria
SE-report	Self-Evaluation Report
ToR	Terms of Reference
UOC	Universitat Oberta de Catalunya

REGULATIONS OF THE EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

4 MEMBERSHIP PROVISIONS

4.1 Criteria for Full membership¹⁰

4.1.1 Full membership of ENQA is open to quality assurance agencies in the field of higher education from the EHEA member states which meet the criteria contained in paragraphs 4.3 - 4.10 and thereby also meet the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area as adopted by the European Ministers in charge of higher education in Bergen in 2005. The Board may modify the details of the procedures at its discretion.

4.2 Application for membership

4.2.1 Applications for membership of ENQA will be in the form specified by the Board (details obtainable from the Secretary General), and applications for membership are considered and decided upon by the Board on the basis either of submitted documentation alone, or of submitted documentation and a visit to the applicant body.

4.2.2 Before being accepted as a Full member, an applicant agency must satisfy the Board that it meets the criteria stated in paragraphs 4.3 - 4.10 below.

4.2.3 If the Board decides, in the light of the application, that the applicant agency does not meet the criteria for Full membership stated in paragraphs 4.3 - 4.10 below, it may grant, at its discretion, Candidate membership for a maximum of two years. At the end of that period (or sooner, if the Candidate member so requests), the Board will require the submission of evidence which demonstrates that the applicant meets the criteria. If, in the opinion of the Board, and following the submission of the evidence, the criteria are still not met, the application will lapse and the applicant will, by the decision of the Board, not be allowed to reapply for membership until a further period of two years has elapsed. During this period the agency will remain on the ENQA mailing list to ensure information dissemination on the activities of ENQA. If, following the request for further evidence, the Board grants Full membership, the agency will be required to undergo an external review within five years of ENQA membership having been granted (including the period as a Candidate member). If, however, the applying organisation does not have the intention or capacity to fulfil the full

¹⁰ The following criteria correspond to the results of ENQA working group on an adequate peer review system for quality assurance agencies, established on the basis of the Berlin Communiqué of 2003.

membership criteria, it can apply to become an **Associate** or **Affiliate** of ENQA (see paragraph 4.11 below).

4.2.4 As indicated in paragraph 4.9.1 below, it is a condition of membership that all Full members of ENQA undergo an external review at least once every five years. If a member does not undergo an external review within five years, it will, by decision of the General Assembly, cease to be a member of ENQA. If, as a result of an external review, a member is judged not to meet the membership criteria by the Board, it will be given two years to conform with the criteria. A further review will be carried out by the Board, or its nominated reviewers, at the end of the two-year period (or sooner, if the member agency so requests). During this period the agency will continue to be designated as a Full member of ENQA. An agency that, in the opinion of the Board, and following the further review, remains in breach of ENQA's membership criteria will, by confirmation of the General Assembly, be debarred from ENQA. A debarred agency will be permitted to reapply for membership after a further period of two years.

4.2.5 Applicants that are not accepted for membership or which are offered Candidate membership, will be notified of the reasons by the Secretary General of ENQA and will be informed of the areas where the Board considers that further development or changes are required or advised. A body whose application for membership is not accepted by the Board, or which is granted Candidate, rather than Full membership, against its wishes, may appeal in writing to the Board, indicating why it believes the Board's decision was wrong. The Board will ask the Appeals and Complaints Committee (see paragraph 3.7) to review the decision, and the Board's decision on the appeal will be based on the Committee's report. The Board's decision on appeals is final.

4.3 Activities

4.3.1 A Full member will undertake external quality assurance activities (at institutional or programme level) on a regular basis. These may involve evaluation, review, audit, assessment, accreditation or other similar activities and should be part of the core functions of the member. In undertaking its activities, the member should take into account the presence and effectiveness of the external quality assurance processes described in the *European Standards and Guidelines for Higher Education in the European Higher Education Area*¹¹.

4.4 Official status

4.4.1 A Full member should be formally recognised by competent public authorities in the European Higher Education Area as an agency with responsibility for external quality assurance and should have an established legal basis. It should comply with

¹¹ ENQA: Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, ISBN 952-5539-04-0, Helsinki 2005.

any requirements of the legislative jurisdiction within which it operates.

4.5 Resources

- 4.5.1 A Full member should have adequate and proportional resources, both human and financial, to enable it to organise and run its external quality assurance process(es) in an effective and efficient manner, with appropriate provision for the development of its processes and procedures.

4.6 Mission statement

- 4.6.1 A Full member should have clear and explicit goals and objectives for its work, contained in a publicly available statement. This statement should describe the goals and objectives of the member's quality assurance processes, the division of labour with relevant stakeholders in higher education, especially the higher education institutions, and the cultural and historical context of its work. The statement should make clear that the external quality assurance process is a major activity of the member and that there exists a systematic approach to achieving its goals and objectives. There should also be documentation to demonstrate how the statement is translated into a clear policy and management plan.

4.7 Independence

- 4.7.1 A Full member should be independent to the extent both that it has autonomous responsibility for its operations and that the conclusions and recommendations made in its reports cannot be influenced by third parties such as higher education institutions, ministries or other stakeholders.
- 4.7.2 The member will need to demonstrate its independence through measures, such as:
- its operational independence from higher education institutions and governments is guaranteed in official documentation (e.g. instruments of governance or legislative acts);
 - the definition and operation of its procedures and methods, the nomination and appointment of external experts and the determination of the outcomes of its quality assurance processes are undertaken autonomously and independently from governments, higher education institutions, and organs of political influence;
 - while relevant stakeholders in higher education, particularly students/learners, are consulted in the course of quality assurance processes, the final outcomes of the quality assurance processes remain the responsibility of the member.

4.8 External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the members

- 4.8.1 The processes, criteria and procedures used by the member should be pre-defined and publicly available.
- 4.8.2 These processes will normally be expected to include:
- i a self-assessment or equivalent procedure by the subject of the quality assurance process;
 - ii an external assessment by a group of experts, including, as appropriate, (a) student member(s), and site visits as decided by the member;
 - iii publication of a report, including any decisions, recommendations or other formal outcomes;
 - iv a follow-up procedure to review actions taken by the subject of the quality assurance process in the light of any recommendations contained in the report.
- 4.8.3 The member may develop and use other processes and procedures for particular purposes. The member should pay careful attention to its declared principles at all times and should ensure both that its requirements and processes are managed professionally and that its conclusions and decisions are reached in a consistent manner, even though the decisions are formed by groups of different people. A member that makes formal quality assurance decisions, or conclusions which have formal consequences, should have an appeals procedure. The nature and form of the appeals procedure should be determined in the light of the constitution of each member.

4.9 Accountability procedures

- 4.9.1 The member should have in place procedures for its own accountability. These procedures are required to include the following:
- i a published policy for the assurance of its own quality, made available on its website;
 - ii documentation which demonstrates that:
 - the member's processes and results reflect its mission and goals of quality assurance;
 - the member has in place, and enforces, a no-conflict-of-interest mechanism in the work of its external experts;
 - the member has reliable mechanisms that ensure the quality of any activities and material produced by subcontractors, if some or all of the elements in its quality assurance procedure are subcontracted to other parties;
 - the member has in place internal quality assurance procedures which include an internal feedback mechanism (i.e. a means to collect feedback from its own staff and council/board); an internal reflection

mechanism (i.e. means to react to internal and external recommendations for improvement); and an external feedback mechanism (i.e. means to collect feedback from experts and reviewed institutions for future development) in order to inform and underpin its own development and improvement

- iii a mandatory cyclical external review of its activities at least once every five years which includes a report on its conformity with the membership criteria of ENQA.

4.10 Miscellaneous criteria

- 4.10.1 The member agrees to abide the regulations of ENQA.
- 4.10.2 The member may resign from ENQA membership by submitting a written indication of resignation to the President of ENQA. The resignation becomes effective at the end of the respective calendar year. The General Assembly and the Board will be notified of the decision of the member.

4.11 Associate and affiliate bodies

- 4.11.1 Bodies that do not wish to, or for whatever reason are unable to, apply to become members of ENQA may request associate or affiliate status within ENQA.
- 4.11.2 An **Associate** body will be a bona fide organisation or agency with a demonstrable interest in the quality assurance of higher education.
- 4.11.3 An **Affiliate** body will be a network of bona fide quality assurance agencies or other bona fide umbrella organisation concerned with the quality assurance of higher education.
- 4.11.4 An application for association or affiliation with ENQA should be made in the form of a letter addressed to the ENQA Board. This should include a brief introduction to the body concerned, key contact details, and a statement formally requesting either Associate or Affiliate status. A decision will then be made by the Board as to whether ENQA agrees to the request; the decision will be communicated by letter. The Board may request further information before making its decision. The Board's decision will be brought to General Assembly for final endorsement.
- 4.11.5 **Associates** and **Affiliates** will be entitled to receive ENQA publications and attend seminars and workshops, and be given access to the password protected parts of the ENQA website. They will not however, be entitled to call themselves 'members' of ENQA and will not have voting rights