

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.

#### 5. Budget

5.1 AQU shall pay the following review related fees:

- Chair 5.000 EUR
- Review secretary 5.000 EUR
- Other panel members 3.000 EUR
- Administrative overhead for ENQA Secretariat 5.000 EUR
- Travel and subsistence expenses (approximate) 6.000 EUR

This gives a total indicative cost of 30.000 EUR for the review. In the case the allowance for travel and subsistence expenses are exceeded, AQU will cover any additional costs after the completion of the review. However, the ENQA Secretariat will endeavour to keep the travel and subsistence expenses in the limits of the planned budget.

#### 6. Indicative Schedule of the Review

The duration of the evaluation is scheduled to take about 9 months, from January 2007 to October 2007:

Agreement on terms of reference and protocol for review	End Jan 2007
Appointment of review team members by ENQA	Early Feb 2007
AQU starts self-evaluation	Early Feb 2007
Preparation of site visit schedule and indicative timetable	Mid-Mar 2007
AQU self-evaluation completed	End Apr 2007



Briefing of review team members	May 2007
Expert panel site visit	2 <sup>nd</sup> half of June 2007
Draft of evaluation report to AQU	2 <sup>nd</sup> half of July 2007
Statement of AQU to review team if necessary	Beginning of Aug 2007
Submission of final report to AQU and ENQA	Mid-Aug 2007
Consideration of report by AQU	Aug/Sept 2007
Consideration of the report and response of AQU by ENQA	Sept 2007
Publication of report and implementation plan	Oct 2007

