

# CODE OF ETHICS



## INTRODUCTION

### Preamble

The Balearic Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (AQUIB) serves as the external evaluation body responsible for assessing higher education (HE) within the Autonomous Community of the Balearic Islands in Spain. Established in 2003 through Law 2/2003, of March 20, on Institutional Organization of the University System of the Balearic Islands, AQUIB is responsible for the evaluation, accreditation and certification of the quality of various system components. This process aligns with internationally recognized standards for quality assurance.

This Code of Ethics establishes the foundational framework of values, principles, standards and commitments that are integral to guiding AQUIB's activities. It also outlines the rights of all personnel involved, aiming to facilitate the attainment of AQUIB's objectives and steer their professional conduct. Serving as a supportive structure, the Code of Ethics guarantees the establishment of a culture of quality, in regards of established rules and AQUIB's reputation. It also plays a crucial role in promoting continual advancement of relationships based on mutual trust.

AQUIB demands the highest standards of professionalism, honesty, integrity, impartiality, equity and confidentiality from all personnel involved. In the execution of their respective roles, individuals are expected to be guided by the values and principles articulated in this Code of Ethics.

### Object

The primary aim of the AQUIB Code of Ethics is to provide the Agency's personnel with a clear framework of corporate values and principles that should guide their tasks and functions. It emphasizes the importance of cultivating mutual trust, collaborative work and a sense of responsibility in their professional duties.

### Scope

The Code of Ethics applies to all interactions between AQUIB and the university system of the Balearic Islands, as well as with other institutions or interest groups with which establishes contact. This Code governs the conduct of governing bodies of the Agency, its personnel, collaborators and evaluators engaged in the Agency. Each individual within these roles reaffirm their commitment to the Code, collectively contributing to the assurance that AQUIB operates at the highest levels of excellence.

## VALUES

AQUIB conducts its tasks guided by a value-based system that serves as a fundamental pillar for the Agency. The following values are articulated to provide a guiding framework for the conduct of all employees:

**Independence.** AQUIB pursues its mission, vision, and objectives in an independent manner.

No external pressure, influence or interventions are permitted to compromise AQUIB's integrity of criteria, opinions, and principles in its actions.

**Stakeholder-oriented.** AQUIB is focused on covering their necessities and expectations.

AQUIB is dedicated to addressing the needs and expectations of stakeholders within the university system and society as a whole. In this regard, the Agency advocates for a personalized approach and the provision of clear and specific information regarding its services to comply with the highest quality standards.

**Transparency.** AQUIB's tasks and activities are developed in a transparent and accountable manner by providing information on its management system.

AQUIB is committed to transparent communication by providing advance notice of essential information related to its evaluation processes, procedures, criteria, forms and any other means used in its tasks and evaluations. The Agency is also dedicated to providing all information to which any user is entitled and pledges to communicate AQUIB's activities and results to any interested group through the Agency's website, social networks and other available channels.

**Integrity.** AQUIB's is committed to a responsible-focused work of the Agency relying on the sense of responsibility of its executives, employees and other members involved in task-related competencies.

AQUIB personnel are required to fulfil their activities within a framework based on the Agency's principles of justice and consistency in decision-making, adhering to established standards. This approach, rooted in integrity, provides cultivates a trustworthy and credible image for AQUIB, which is pivotal in fostering positive relationships for the Agency.

**Rigour.** AQUIB is determined to foster its rigour and accuracy in all its tasks.

AQUIB employees, reviewers and collaborators shall conduct their activities adhering to the principles of accuracy and technical rigour, without any preceding value judgement. Discrimination based on factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, language, or religion is strictly prohibited. Every individual involved in the Agency's tasks must align their actions, assessments, and opinions with established regulations and procedures, as well as with the guidelines outlined in this Code of Ethics.

**Social responsibility.** The Agency assumes its social impact by following a philosophy based on the development of environmental awareness.

AQUIB is committed to advancing sustainable development in its activities. By incorporating environmentally sound practices, the Agency demonstrates its respect and commitment to the protection and conservation of the environment. These practices encompass the efficient utilization of resources, reduction of waste, and the proper management of generated waste. Additionally, the Agency acknowledges the social impact of its activities and recognizes the value they contribute to society.

**Impartiality and neutrality.** AQUIB conducts all activities with full impartiality and neutrality.

Anyone delivering services for AQUIB must maintain neutrality and impartiality in their judgements. Pre-judgements in favour of or against any user involved in the services provided by the Agency are strictly prohibited. In instances of conflicts of interest, the service provider must abstain from participating in any related activity.

**Respect for the autonomy.** The Agency takes into consideration the autonomy of each collaborating institution.

AQUIB's activities are governed by a profound respect for the autonomy and diversity inherent of the university system of the Balearic Islands and its collaborating entities. Core to the Agency's services is the commitment to collaborate and communicate effectively with administrations and quality agencies.

## MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

The Agency sets some basic principles which guide and regulate its way of acting and organizing.

**Quality, innovation, and excellence.** AQUIB work is grounded on a culture that fosters a permanent improvement in all its activities.

AQUIB embraces the principles of quality and service grounded in a culture of excellence and innovation in management, with a constant pursuit of improvement the services it provides. AQUIB'S commitment to quality is steadfast in all tasks and actions undertaken by its personnel. Likewise, the Agency undergoes external evaluation and certification, contributing to the continuous improvement of its results and fostering trust among its users, society and the university community. In support of its commitment to innovation, AQUIB adopts an open innovation approach in its activities and processes.

**Efficiency.** AQUIB is committed to guide the actions towards the objectives proposed, by making an efficient use of the resources available.

The proper and ethical use of public resources implies their efficient, effective, economic and equitable allocation. AQUIB strategically manages both its material and human resources in the execution of its functions, adhering to principles of austerity and economic rationality to ensure the most efficient and effective use possible.

### Cooperation

AQUIB'S cooperative teamworking philosophy, coupled with and its ongoing exchange of ideas among evaluators and Agency personnel, underscores its dedication to permanent improvement. Establishing strong relationships with collaborators is a fundamental pillar of the Agency, as it fosters the exchange of experiences, ideas, and suggestions related to AQUIB'S services.

### Internationalisation

AQUIB and its members embrace a proactive stance towards new initiatives, standards and processes arising from the evolution of the European and international higher education system. The Agency seeks international cooperation as a means to enhance its knowledge and experience of quality assessment.

## Work environment

AQUIB'S Management is committed to ensuring a positive and motivating work environment, facilitating the effective development of all personnel in carrying out their functions and tasks. The Agency will also ensure that all staff members receive suitable training to maintain and increase their knowledge and professionalism. This will in turn augment the added value that each individual contributes to AQUIB, benefiting both society and the university system of the Balearic Islands.

## RIGHTS OF COLLABORATING MEMBERS

All members of AQUIB'S committees and commissions, as well as any expert collaborating with the Agency, are entitled to:

1. Be respected for his/her independence of judgment in the decisions to be taken and to safeguard them against possible interference.
2. Receive assistance and technical support of Aquib for the exercise of his/her functions, as well as to receive the appropriate training.
3. Receive beforehand all necessary information for the development of the entrusted.
4. State any discrepancy with the collegiate decisions by casting a particular vote.
5. Recognition and certification for collaborating with the Agency.
6. Remuneration for his/her work at an adequate rate.

## RESPONSABILITIES AND COMMITMENTS OF EMPLOYEES AND COLLABORATING MEMBERS

All members of AQUIB's committees and commissions, as well as any expert collaborating with the Agency, is committed to:

1. Respect and act under the values and principles detailed in this Code of Ethics.
2. Act with appropriate dedication to correctly fulfil any of the entrusted tasks.
3. Comply with the procedures established in the evaluation of the files, participate in decision-making and collegiate agreements, and duly motivate the decisions taken.
4. Warn AQUIB about any situation that could generate a conflict of interest.
5. Perform strict confidentiality on personal data of applicants of which they may have knowledge in the evaluation process, in accordance with current regulations on the protection of personal data.
6. Keep commissions and committees' deliberations, and the criteria or positions of their members strictly confidential. This is of particular importance regarding the applicants and resolutions that have not yet been formally notified.
7. Not give to third parties access to computer applications and databases available to evaluators for the exercise of their task.
8. Implement the agreements and meet the requirements of the Guarantees Commission.
9. Identify, avoid, and report any risk factor or behaviour that could lead to situations of harassment for whatever reason (sexual, social, labour, based on sex or gender, race, beliefs, disability, etc.).
10. Collaborate with evaluations and audits, whether internal or external, as well as request information enabling control, verification, and supervision of the degree of compliance with the different procedures and regulations to which the Aquib is subject.
11. Follow and observe health and safety standards in the workplace, with the aim of achieving a healthy work environment.

## **GUARANTEE COMPLIANCE OF THE CODE OF ETHICS**

### **Drafting**

The Advisory Commission is the responsible body for drafting and amending the Agency's Code of Ethics.

### **Guarantee compliance**

AQUIB's employees, evaluators and collaborators are required to adhere to this Code of Ethics. Furthermore, they will provide documentary evidence of their commitment by signing the confidentiality and ethical commitment agreement of AQUIB. The Guarantees Commission will oversee the enforcement of this Code of Ethics, and in case of any non-compliance, it will follow the internal procedure for the Satisfaction of Interested Parties of AQUIB.

### **Code of Ethics distribution**

AQUIB is committed to ensuring accessibility to the Code of Ethics for all Agency staff and collaborating members. Moreover, this information is made publicly available, with open access provided through the Agency's official website<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.aquib.es/en](http://www.aquib.es/en)