

AQUIB SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT FOR ENQA REVIEW

AQUIB | Balearic Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

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Glossary of terms

ACCUE	Canarian agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation
ACSUG	Agency for Quality Assurance in the Galician University System
ACQAHE	Agency for Control and Quality Assurance of Higher Education
AENOR	Spanish Association for Standardisation and Certification
ANECA	National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation of Spain
AQU	Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency
AQUIB	Balearic Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
AVAP	Valencian Agency for Assessment and Forecasting
CAIB	Government of the Balearic Islands
CECRA	Complementary Payments Evaluation Commission
CEP	Teaching Staff Evaluation Committee
CESAG	Centro de Enseñanza Superior Alberta Giménez
CET	Commission of Study Programmes Evaluation
CRUE	Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities
EARMA	European Association of Research Managers and Administrators
EASDIB	Escola d'Art i Superior de Disseny de les Illes Balears
EQA	External Quality Assurance
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines for the EQA of Higher Education
EV	Evidence of site visit
HE	Higher Education
IA	Self-assessment report for follow-up and ex post accreditation processes
ICIO	Index of Compliance with Obligatory Information
INQAHE	International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
IQAS	Internal quality assurance system
GAIN	Global Academic Integrity Network
NAQA	National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance
QA	Quality Assurance
QF-EHEA	Qualifications Framework in the European Higher Education Area
R.D.	Royal Decree
REACU	Spanish Network of University Quality Agencies
SAR	Self-Assessment Report
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TOR	Terms of Reference
TPG	Bologna Thematic Peer Group
UIB	University of the Balearic Islands
UNED	National University of Distance Education
UNIBASQ	Agency for the Quality of the Basque University System
VLUHR-QA	Flemish Higher Education Council Quality Assurance

1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education (HE) quality assurance agencies must undergo an external review to assess their compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines for the External Quality Assurance of Higher Education (ESG) every five years.

In this context, the Balearic Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (AQUIB) serves as the official quality agency for the Autonomous Community of the Balearic Islands. Established in 2002 as a consortium, AQUIB operates as an independent public law entity. Notably, it stands as the sole quality agency within the Spanish European HE space dedicated to evaluating a single university within its regional jurisdiction.

Recognised for its commitment to quality, AQUIB has been an affiliate member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) since 2008 and it is currently applying for full membership. The outcomes of review derived from this process will not only shape AQUIB's status with ENQA, but also contribute to its application for the inclusion in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

This report serves as a comprehensive overview of AQUIB, detailing its primary purpose, activities, and providing evidence of the Agency's alignment with the ESG.

2. DEVELOPMENT OF THE SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT

This Self-Assessment Report (SAR) marks the end of a process initiated several years ago, labelled as the *Road to ENQA/EQAR*. This initiative entailed a thorough review of the Agency's organisational structure, operational procedures and protocols. The discernible outcome reveals significant progress and maturation achieved by the Agency, a testament to internal reflections and meaningful engagements with stakeholders.

The impact of these reflections formed the basis of AQUIB's first Strategic Plan. An encouraging outcome of the effectiveness of this process is the transformation of identified weaknesses into opportunities and some opportunities into strengths, showcasing the positive evolution of AQUIB.

Active participation of all technical staff played a key role in formulating this SAR. This was possible due to the Agency's modest size, which facilitates knowledge-sharing among team members. Consequently, each member contributed with their vision to every aspect, making the process dynamic and enriching. To structure this collaborative effort, three working groups were established:

- **Group 1.** It consisted of the quality technicians and the technical director of the Agency. They initiated the drafting of the SAR and coordinated its different stages. This involved harmonising feedback from Groups 2-3, until the final draft was presented to the Board of Directors.
- **Group 2.** Comprising selected experts, this group offered support during the drafting stages. It included a Criteria Commission member with vast experience in ESG and external quality assurance (QA) reviews; the president of the Advisory Commission and former director of the Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency (AQU Catalunya); and one of the presidents of AQUIB's Commission of Study Programmes Evaluation (CET).
- **Group 3.** This group included the remaining members of the Advisory Commission, along with representatives of the University and Government. They provided feedback on a refined draft.

The final version of the SAR was presented for its approval to the Board of Directors in February 2024.

2.1. Road to ENQA/EQAR

The inception of the internationalisation concept in AQUIB's 2017 Activity Plan marked the start of the process illustrated in Figure 1. Under the objective to 'Study and analyse the requirements to obtain the recognition of AQUIB under international quality standards', this journey involved multiple stages, including the establishment of new commissions, structural and procedural changes, the creation of dedicated positions (including an internationalisation technician), allocation of specific budget, and the drafting of AQUIB's first strategic plan. The ongoing process is set to conclude with AQUIB's membership in ENQA and registration in EQAR, signifying not only the achievement of a milestone but also the commencement of a new (and challenging) era.



Figure 1. Road to ENQA/EQAR most relevant milestones

2.2. Scope of this SAR

In accordance with the mutually agreed Terms of Reference (ToR)¹ among AQUIB, ENQA and EQAR, this SAR covers the following activities:

- Ex post accreditation (accreditation renewal) for study programmes in the Balearic University System.
- Follow-up of study programmes in the Balearic University system.
- Evaluation of HE institution's teaching quality assessment systems (DOCENTIA). This activity is coordinated by AQUIB, with the current execution carried out by the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation of Spain (ANECA).
- Ex ante accreditation (verification) of art study programmes, with AQUIB coordinating and AQU Catalunya executing this activity.
- Ex post accreditation of art study programmes. This activity is currently in the preliminary phase since the protocol has been defined but not implemented yet.
- Follow-up of art study programmes. This activity is currently in the preliminary phase since the protocol has been defined but not implemented.

¹ AQUIB. (2023). [Tripartite terms of reference between AQUIB, ENQA and EQAR](#).

3. HIGHER EDUCATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE AGENCY

3.1. Legal basis

The Balearic Islands is an Autonomous Community within Spain, and the legal framework in this country operates on multiple levels:

- **National legislation - Spanish Constitution and Organic Laws.** Article 27 of the Spanish Constitution acknowledges the autonomy of universities. The fundamental principles in this matter are set by Organic Laws. Organic Law 2/2023² has recently come into effect, superseding prior legislations such as Organic Law 6/2001³ and Organic Law 4/2007⁴. This new Organic Law reinforces the status, role, and competences of national and regional agencies designating them for the evaluation, certification and accreditation in HE within their respective jurisdictions.
- **National legislation - Royal Decrees (R.D.).** These decrees further elaborate on the Organic Laws ensuring that QA processes are well defined to ensure consistency among universities at a national level. Noteworthy among these is R.D. 576/2023⁵, amending R.D. 99/2011⁶, R.D. 534/2013⁷, and specially R.D. 822/2021⁸. The latter posed a challenge for both quality agencies and universities since it required adjustments in guides and procedures for agencies and modifications in study plans for universities. Additionally, within the context of artistic study programmes, there is R.D. 1614/2009⁹, amended by R.D. 21/2015¹⁰.

² [Organic Law 2/2023](#), of March 22, on the University System. Boletín Oficial del Estado, 70, March 23, 2023.

³ [Organic Law 6/2001](#), of December 21, on Universities. Boletín Oficial del Estado, 307, December 24, 2001.

⁴ [Organic Law 4/2007](#), of April 12, amending Organic Law 6/2001, of December 21st, of Universities. Boletín Oficial del Estado, 89, April 13, 2007.

⁵ [Royal Decree 576/2023](#), of July 4, amending Royal Decree 99/2011, of January 28, regulating official doctoral studies; Royal Decree 1002/2010, of 5 August, on the issuance of official university degrees; and Royal Decree 641/2021, of July 27, regulating the direct granting of subsidies to Spanish public universities for the modernisation and digitisation of the Spanish university system within the framework of the Recovery, Transformation, and Resilience Plan. Boletín Oficial del Estado, 170, December 18, 2023.

⁶ [Royal Decree 99/2011](#), of 28 January, regulating official doctoral studies. Boletín Oficial del Estado, 35, February 10, 2011.

⁷ [Royal Decree 534/2013](#), of July 12, amending Royal Decrees 1393/2007, of October 29, establishing the organisation of official university education; 99/2011, of 28 January, regulating official doctoral studies; and 1892/2008, of 14 November, regulating the conditions for access to official undergraduate university education and admission procedures to Spanish public universities. Boletín Oficial del Estado, 167, July 13, 2013.

⁸ [Royal Decree 822/2021](#), of September 28, establishing the organisation of university education and the quality assurance procedure. Boletín Oficial del Estado, 233, September 29, 2021.

⁹ [Royal Decree 1614/2009](#), of October 26, establishing the organisation of higher artistic education regulated by Organic Law 2/2006, of May 3, on Education. Boletín Oficial del Estado, 259, October 27, 2023.

¹⁰ [Royal Decree 21/2015](#), of January 23, which amends Royal Decree 1614/2009, of October 26th, which establishes the organisation of higher artistic education regulated by Organic Law 2/2006, of May 3, on Education. Boletín Oficial del Estado, 33, February 7, 2015.

- **Regional Legislation.** In accordance with the former Organic Law 2/2001, the regulation of the HE system in the Balearic Islands was established by Law 2/2003¹¹. This law, outlining the Agency's Board of Directors, was modified by AQUIB on March 22, 2023, with full government support. The amendments aimed to adapt the Agency's statutes and redefine the Board of Directors to better suit the evolving needs of the HE system. Art study programmes are regulated by the Decree 26/2014¹², Decree 43/2013 and Decree 4/2017¹³.
- **General Administrative Law.** AQUIB and the other Spanish agencies, being public bodies, are subject to various general laws, such as Law 39/2015¹⁴, Law 40/2015¹⁵, or the Regional Law 7/2010¹⁶. While these laws enhance transparency in AQUIB's processes and provide legal safeguard for individuals, they also add additional bureaucracy into the Agency's activities.

Some of these laws reinforce AQUIB's independence, status, and competences at national and regional level. However, operating in a highly regulated environment poses challenges. Recent changes, such as Organic Law 2/2023 and R.D. 822/2021, have significantly impacted on the Agency, leading to a need to adapt all evaluation guides and procedures. In addition, mandatory registration in EQAR has become a legal requirement for conducting external evaluation activities in HE, even for accrediting individual teaching staff, an area not within the scope of the ESG nor EQAR.

In the broader context of QA agencies in Spain, AQUIB stands as one of the eleven agencies operating in the country (Figure 2). Besides ANECA, there are ten regional agencies (Figure 3), each responsible for the HE system in its region, as recognised in Article 5 of Organic Law 2/2023. According to R.D. 822/2021, Article 25 specifies that ex ante accreditation and modification evaluation activities can only be performed by agencies registered in EQAR. This requirement is also applicable to AQUIB's current activities (ex post accreditation and follow-up). Agencies not included in EQAR are granted a four-year adaptation period, concluding in October 2025, to align with this.

¹¹ [Law 2/2003](#), of March 20, on the institutional organisation of the Balearic Islands university system. Butlletí Oficial de les Illes Balears, 42, March 29, 2003.

¹² [Decree 26/2014](#), of June 13, establishing the curriculum for higher artistic education leading to the degree in Dramatic Art with a specialisation in Acting, and regulating its assessment. Butlletí Oficial de les Illes Balears, 81, June 14, 2014.

¹³ [Decree 4/2017](#), of January 13, establishing the curriculum for higher artistic education leading to the Superior Title in Music with specialisations in Composition, Interpretation, Musicology, and Pedagogy, and regulating its evaluation. Butlletí Oficial de les Illes Balears, 81, January 14, 2017.

¹⁴ [Law 39/2015](#), of October 1, on Common Administrative Procedure of Public Administrations. Boletín Oficial del Estado, 236, October 2, 2015.

¹⁵ [Law 40/2015](#), of October 1, on the Legal Regime of the Public Sector. Boletín Oficial del Estado, 236, October 2, 2015.

¹⁶ [Regional Law 7/2010](#), of July 21, on the instrumental public sector of the autonomous community of the Balearic Islands. Butlletí Oficial de les Illes Balears, 42, July 29, 2010.

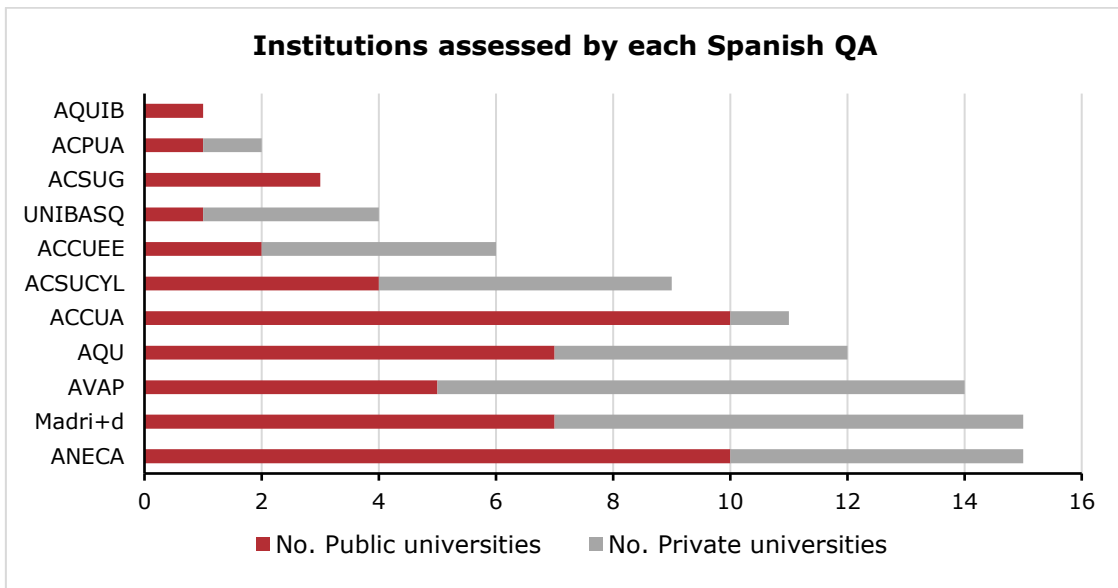


Figure 2. Institutions assessed by each Spanish regional Quality Agency



Figure 3. Map of regional Quality Agencies

3.2. The Balearic Islands University System

The Balearic Islands

The Balearic Islands, one of Spain's 17 Autonomous Regions and two autonomous cities, comprise four islands: Mallorca, Menorca, Ibiza, and Formentera. With a population of 1,197,261 (2023), and a population density of 266 inhabitants/km², is the fifth most densely populated region in Spain. Palma, located in Mallorca, serves as the capital.

However, it's not just the numerical statistics that define the Balearic Islands; it is also the cultural richness embedded in its identity. The islands proudly embrace linguistic diversity with two official languages: Catalan and Spanish. Situated in the Mediterranean Sea, the region enjoys a remarkable environment, holding five sites and intangible cultural heritage inscribed in the UNESCO'S list¹⁷. Facilitating connectivity, the region's international airport contributes to the Balearic Islands ranking as the third Spanish region with the highest influx of foreign tourists, following the Canary Islands and Catalonia. Annually hosting over 18 million tourists¹⁸, the service sector employs more than 70% of the population.

The University System

The University of the Balearic Islands (UIB), established in 1978, holds a unique position as the sole university in the region. The university's roots trace back to the Estudio General Luliano, founded in 1483, which paved the way for HE in the Balearic Islands. However, HE in the region faced a gap from 1829 until 1949, when the university was reestablished in association with the University of Barcelona under the name University of the Balearic Islands. In 1972 two modern faculties were created – the Faculty of Sciences (dependent of the University of Barcelona) and the Faculty of Philosophy (dependent of the Autonomous University of Barcelona). By 1978, these faculties gained independence from their former universities, marking the beginning of UIB's independent journey as a public university. Unique in its status, UIB is the only university with its main premises in the Balearic Islands.

UIB holds a prominent position among Spain's top five universities, being distinguished for its commitment to innovation, technological development, and high-quality research¹⁹. The university actively participates in networks such as the Vives Network of Universities²⁰ and the Group 9 of universities²¹, and it is a member of Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities (CRUE). UIB has collaboration agreements with numerous universities and research institutions across Spain, Europe, America, Africa, and Asia.

The University campus is located near Palma and spans nearly 100 hectares, with 52 hectares designated as a nature reserve in its upcoming Special Action Plan. The campus includes nine Faculties, a Polytechnic School, a Centre for Postgraduate Studies and a Doctoral School. It is connected to the city through bike lanes and it is accessible by public transport and private vehicles. UIB extends its academic influence

¹⁷ UNESCO. (s.d.). [UNESCO Human Heritage - Discover the Balearic Islands](#).

¹⁸ IBESTAT. (2024). [Balearic Islands tourist Flow for 2023](#).

¹⁹ IVIE. (2023). [Synthetic Indicators of Spanish Universities](#).

²⁰ XARXA VIVES D'UNIVERSITATS. (n.d.). [Xarxa Vives](#).

²¹ GRUPO 9 DE UNIVERSIDADES. (n.d.). [G-9](#).

beyond its main campus with two off-campus centres in Menorca and Ibiza. Menorca offers eight Bachelor's and one Master's programme for the academic year 2022-23, while Ibiza and Formentera provide seven Bachelor's degrees and one Master's degree during the same period.

In total, the university offers 35 Bachelor's, 36 Master's programmes and 25 PhD programmes; the distribution of this offer within the five main knowledge areas is shown in Figure 4. In terms of enrolment, the academic year 2022-23 welcomed 4,166 new students. This comprised 3,088 new students for Bachelor's programmes, 833 for Master's programmes, and 195 for PhD programmes. For the same academic year, UIB's total student body reached 18,500.

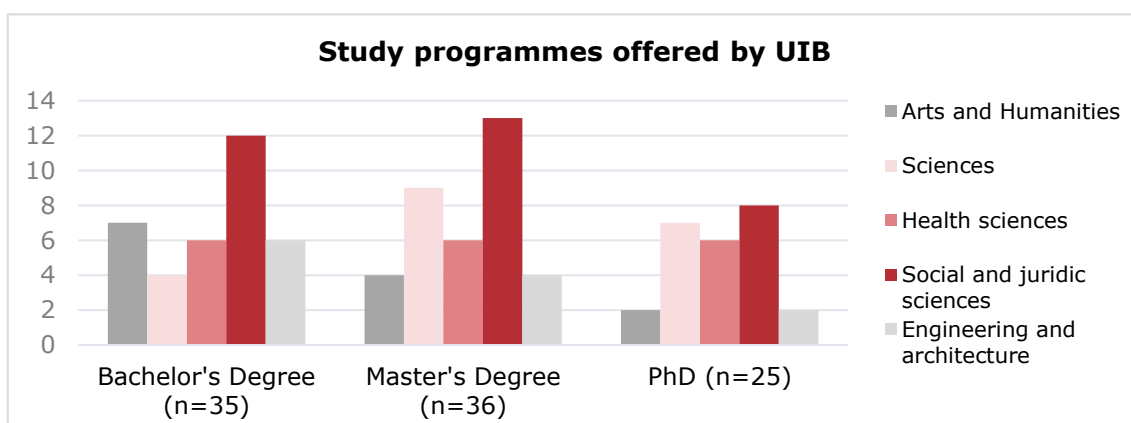


Figure 4. Study programmes offered by UIB

Moreover, UIB has established collaboration agreements with key educational institutions in the Balearic Islands, a common practice in Spain, enabling these centres to offer study programmes formally attached to the university. Currently, UIB has partnership agreements with University School ADEMA (offering three Bachelor's and one Master's study programmes), University School of Hotel Management of the Balearic Islands (offering one Bachelor's study programme) and University School of Tourism's Island Council of Ibiza and Formentera (providing one Bachelor's study programme).

As the primary university in the Balearic Islands, UIB plays a key role in providing access to HE for a part of the society that may not have the means or prefer not to leave the Islands for their studies. Additionally, it aims to attract and retain national and international talent. The University's study programmes are typically offered in Catalan, Spanish and English.

UIB offers study programmes across all academic fields covering all qualification levels within the Qualifications Framework in the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA)²², distributed as follows:

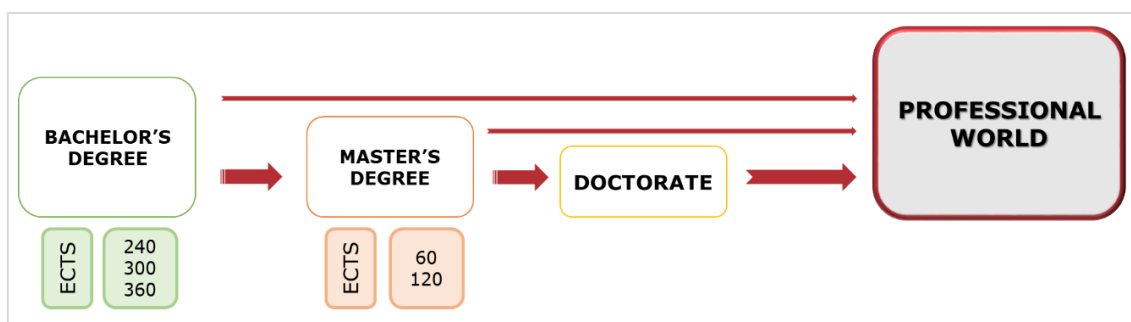


Figure 5. Distribution of the Qualifications Framework in the European Higher Education Area

Art study centres

Currently, the Escola d'Art i Superior de Disseny de les Illes Balears (EASDIB) stands as the sole institution providing official art study programmes which require external evaluation prior to their implementation. Specifically, only one of its programmes requires external evaluation²³ as all others are Bachelor programmes.

Established in 1778, EASDIB is one of the oldest schools in Spain. It was created from the Escola Gratuïta de Dibuix, established by the Societat Econòmica Mallorquina d'Amics del País and guided by the Enlightenment's ideals. Located in Palma, EASDIB is a public centre encompassing 2,235 m², easily accessible by public and private transport and within walking distance from the city centre. EASDIB's educational philosophy prioritises student-centred learning and the provision of lifelong learning programmes.

Other institutions

In addition to those affiliated with AQUIB, there are other universities operating in the Balearic Islands:

- **Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED)**. Being a national university, falls by law under the jurisdiction of ANECA for external evaluation. This includes UNED's centre in the Balearic Islands.

²² European Higher Education Area. (2018). [The Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area](#).

²³ The Master's Degree in Responsible Design in Touristic Areas is subject to external evaluation in accordance with Spanish legislation. As stipulated, only Master's and PhD programs are required to undergo external evaluation.

- **Centro de Enseñanza Superior Alberta Giménez (CESAG)**. It is affiliated to Comillas Pontifical University, a private Catholic HE institution based in Madrid. Like UNED, ANECA is responsible for its external evaluation.
- **Centro de Educación superior Felipe Moreno**. Affiliated to Nebrija University, this centre falls under the responsibility of the regional agency Fundación Madri+d for its external evaluation.

4. HISTORY, PROFILE AND ACTIVITIES OF THE AGENCY

4.1. History and profile

In 2001, the Spanish national government approved the Organic Law 6/2001, of September 21, on Universities. This legislation granted the autonomous communities the capacity to establish their own HE assessment bodies. In accordance with this directive, AQUIB was established as a consortium on December 13, 2002, through an Agreement of the Board of Directors, which also outlined its initial statutes. The official status and competences of the Agency in HE were conferred by Regional Law 2/2003. The first statutes underwent modifications on April 22, 2005, through an Agreement of the Board of Directors²⁴. Currently, AQUIB has undergone another modification of its statutes, with only a final bureaucratic step remaining. Given the assured approval (s. ESG 3.3), all references included in this SAR refer to this new version of AQUIB's statutes²⁵.

AQUIB functions as an independent entity, accountable to the department of the Balearic Islands Government responsible for universities. It is recognised by national and regional laws to conduct external QA evaluations of the Balearic Islands HE system. Over the years, the Agency's independence has been strengthened by successive laws (s. ESG 3.3), and it has earned the trust of its stakeholders during this 20-year period.

As outlined in Article 5 of its statutes, AQUIB's objectives are:

- Evaluation, accreditation, and certification of the quality of the Balearic Islands university system.
- Participation in evaluation, accreditation, and certification activities within universities, HE centres and entities related to Science, Technology and Innovation outside the Autonomous Community of the Balearic Islands, following European

²⁴ [Agreement of the Government Council](#) on April 22, 2005, approving the modification of the Statutes of the Consortium of the Balearic Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. Butlletí Oficial de les Illes Balears, 67, May 05, 2005.

²⁵ AQUIB. (2024). [AQUIB's new statutes](#).

and international academic and social quality standards through signed agreements.

- Collaboration and participation in the analysis and evaluation of research, development and innovation within universities and other stakeholders in the Science, Technology and Innovation Ecosystem of the Balearic Islands.
- Promotion of research and innovation of the Agency's fields of activity, particularly in relation to quality assessment, accreditation and certification processes.
- Collaboration and cooperation with other regional, national and international quality assessment bodies with similar competences or functions in this domain.
- Proposal and development of actions and programmes aimed at fostering collaboration between universities, companies, research centres and other public or private institutions, provided they are related to the promotion and assurance of university quality.

Code of Ethics

The values, principles, standards, and commitments that govern AQUIB's activities are articulated in the Code of Ethics²⁶. This comprehensive document not only defines the ethical framework governing the Agency but also describes the rights of all involved personnel, including both internal staff and external experts. The Code serves as a framework to guarantee the quality culture promoted by AQUIB and as a guide to nurture relationships based on mutual trust.

Members of the governing bodies, commission members, staff and external experts express their commitment to adhering to the Code of Ethics. This commitment is core to ensure that AQUIB consistently attains operational excellence. Any inquiry related to this commitment is meticulously evaluated by the Guarantees Commission.

4.2. Structure

AQUIB's organisational structure comprises governing bodies, advisory bodies, technical bodies and operational staff. Since its establishment in 2003, this structure has undergone significant changes, particularly during its adaptation to the ESG. The Board of Directors experienced substantial shifts in its composition. Moreover, new commissions, described below, were established in recent years, taking on functions initially assigned to other bodies. This intricate process, marked by amendments to Regional Laws, led to the formulation of AQUIB's updated statutes²⁷ (s. ESG 3.3).

²⁶ AQUIB. (2023). [Code of Ethics](#).

²⁷ AQUIB. (2024). [AQUIB's new statutes](#).

In parallel, AQUIB places a strong emphasis on ensuring gender equality across all its bodies and ad hoc panels. Notably, commissions and panels involved in external evaluations include members external to the Balearic Islands HE system, excluding the Complementary Payments Evaluation Commission (CECRA).

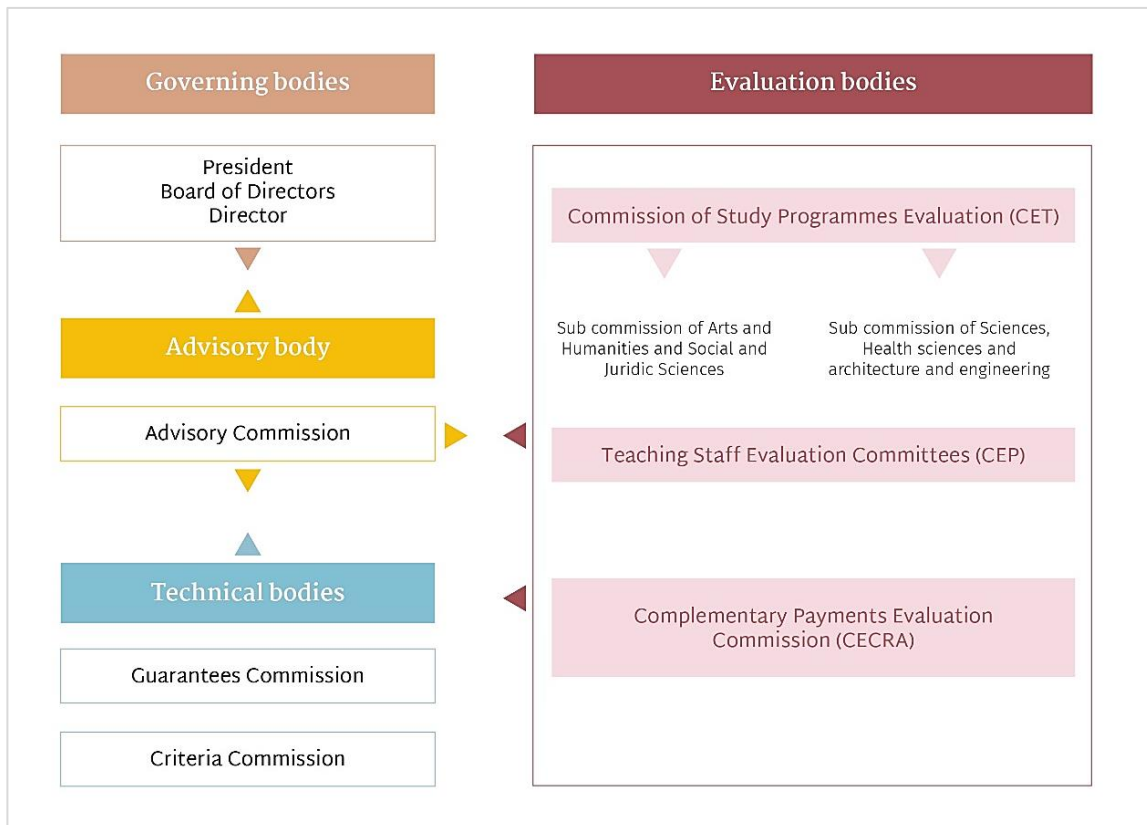


Figure 6. Organisation chart of AQUIB

Governing bodies

- **President.** The president of AQUIB is appointed by the regional minister of the Balearic Islands and is invariably the General Director of the department with powers in university. The president chairs the Board of Directors, representing the Agency, and signs agreements with other institutions.
- **Board of Directors.** The previous composition of the Board of Directors posed a significant challenge in complying with ESG 3.3. The representation of stakeholders within the Agency was incomplete, and certain responsibilities not ideally suited for this body were assigned. However, the current composition reflects a broader representation of the Agency's stakeholders and marks a notable improvement:

Government	UIB	Academics	Students	Professionals	Labour unions	International
5*	2	2	1	1**	1**	1

*Note: two positions are occupied by the General Director with powers in universities and the General Director with powers in Research. Depending on the Government structure, these competences might be attributed to the same person or different persons. In the first case, the government representatives would be four.

**Note: despite these positions are provided, according to Law 7/2010 (s. Article 20.3) the total members of the Board of Directors in consortiums are defined depending on the institution's total size. Therefore, these positions will be filled based on the expected staff's Agency growth.

Table 1. Current Board of Directors Composition

The Board of Directors now convenes at least twice a year, focusing on strategic responsibilities such as approving the annual activity plan, annual activity report, strategic plan, budget, agreements with other entities, the organisational structure of the Agency, or the ratification of the Code of Ethics and Quality Policy. The deliberations and processes leading to this revised composition are outlined in detailed in the ESG 3.3.

- **Director.** The director is tasked with the administrative and technical management of AQUIB, including the execution of the agreements made by the Board of Directors. With the implementation of the new statutes, the appointment of the Director now follows an open, competitive and freely contested process (s. article 20 of AQUIB's statutes). Currently, this position is not covered.

Advisory bodies

- **Advisory Commission.** It advises AQUIB to enhance its processes and actions plans, as well as define its strategic guidelines to ensure the quality of the Agency's activities. The Commission is required to convene at least once a year. Members, appointed by AQUIB's President upon Director's proposal, must have experience at the HE level. The Commission comprises between four and eight experts in the scientific, academic or professional field, with all but one member external to the Balearic Islands HE system. Notably, at least one expert conducts their work outside Spain. Additionally, the Commission is required to include at least one student. The composition, functions and rules of functioning are detailed in the *Advisory Commission Internal Operating Rules*²⁸.

Academics outside Balearic Islands HE system	Academics from Balearic Islands HE system	Students	Professionals	International experts
2	1	1	1	1

Table 2. Current Advisory Commission composition

²⁸ AQUIB. (2023). [Advisory Commission](#).

Technical bodies

- **Technical director.** It is responsible for coordinating and representing the different technical bodies and technical staff from AQUIB, identifying potential threats and opportunities for the Agency, among other tasks. In the event of an unoccupied position, absence or illness of the director, the technical director assumes all its functions and responsibilities. The appointment of the technical director is based on an open, competitive and freely contested process (s. article 22 of AQUIB's statutes).
- **Guarantees Commission.** It is tasked with monitoring the proper application of AQUIB's procedures. This involves handling complaints and appeals against AQUIB's decisions, ensuring compliance with the Agency's Code of Ethics, and reporting any non-compliance. Functioning as an independent body, its decisions remain uninfluenced and it convenes as necessary. It comprises two or more experts in the scientific, academic or professional field (one of whom may be an international expert) and at least one student. All members are external to the Balearic Islands HE system, refraining from participating in other AQUIB activities, and half of them must have a juridical background. They are appointed by the Director based on the Advisory Commission's proposal. Its specific composition, functions and rules of functioning are detailed in the *Internal Operating Rules of the Guarantees Commission*²⁹.

The current composition of the Commission includes four members: one Professor of Public Law, one HE QA expert with a PhD in Law, an international expert in the legal department of a renowned company, and a PhD student in Juridical and Political Sciences.

- **Criteria Commission.** It analyses, revises and approves criteria and guidelines for AQUIB programmes, and makes any revisions deemed necessary. Assessment, certification and accreditation processes conducted by the Agency's different commissions rely on these documents. The Criteria Commission, comprising only individuals from outside the Balearic Islands HE System, includes five or more experts of renowned prestige in the scientific, academic, or professional field, covering at least the five areas of knowledge, and at least one student. Members do not participate in AQUIB's programme evaluation and are appointed by the Director, after hearing the Advisory Commission. The composition, functions and rules of functioning are detailed in the *Internal Operating Rules of the Criteria Commission*³⁰.

²⁹ AQUIB. (2023). [Guarantees Commission](#).

³⁰ AQUIB. (2023). [Criteria Commission](#).

The current Criteria Commission composition is of five academic experts, one student and one expert in EQA and the ESG.

- **Commission of Study Programmes Evaluation (CET)**. This Commission is the responsible of the external evaluation of study programmes. It is divided in two sub-commissions, both composed only by experts from outside the Balearic Islands HE system. Members are appointed by the director of AQUIB, after hearing the Advisory Commission. These members are academics with proven expertise both in the academic field and in HE management; one or more QA expert, one student and one representative of the professional world. The composition, functions and rules of functioning are detailed in the *Internal Operating Rules of the CET and Panels of Experts*³¹.

Sub-commission	Academics	Students	QA Experts	Professionals
<i>Arts and Humanities, Social and Legal Sciences</i>	7	1	1	1
<i>Sciences, Health Sciences and Engineering and Architecture</i>	7	1	1	1

Table 3. Current CET composition

The following entities are briefly described as they are not directly involved in the activities falling within the scope of the ESG covered in this SAR:

- **Teaching Staff Evaluation Committees (CEP)**. There are five committees, each dedicated to a specific knowledge area, exclusively comprised of academic experts from outside the Balearic Islands HE system with accredited expertise. Their primary responsibility lies in evaluating applications for the accreditation of the different teaching figures.
- **Complementary Payments Evaluation Commission (CECRA)**. It is composed of experts with a PhD and having over 12 years of teaching and/or research experience. Its role is to assess whether the candidates presented by the university meet the requirements to receive additional retributions.

Staff

The Agency's operational staff forms a multidisciplinary team with the necessary capabilities to handle all Agency activities. The support from the Balearic Islands Government has led to a significant staff increase, including the creation of new

³¹ AQUIB. (2023). [CET and Panel of Experts](#).

positions (s. ESG 3.5). The staff benefits from a training programme integrated into the Agency's Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS) (s. ESG 3.5).

AQUIB's staff consists of the technical director, administrative manager, and four quality technicians. Half of the staff holds permanent positions, including the technical director and the administrative manager, both of whom have been working in the Agency for 20 years. The remaining positions are expected to become permanent in the coming years, and the creation of new positions is already planned. This structural stability has allowed AQUIB to maintain a solid core knowledge over time, instilling trust among stakeholders, which grows over time.

Regular coordination meetings are conducted monthly, involving the entire staff, to share and document information on all Agency activities. Despite each main area (Study programme evaluation, Internationalisation, Teaching staff accreditation and R&D&I) having a dedicated responsible technician each (Figure 7), AQUIB adopts a horizontal approach. In the first year, staff members rotate among all areas to familiarise themselves with the different procedures. Quarterly minuted meetings track progress on Strategic Plan actions, and ad hoc meetings are convened as needed, particularly before evaluation processes or to discuss critical team aspects.

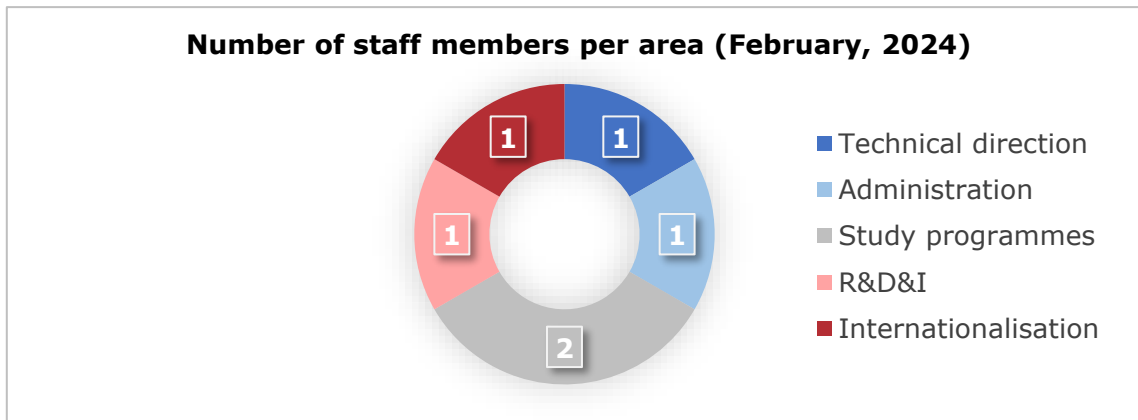


Figure 7. Number of staff members per area (February, 2024)

4.3. Activities

AQUIB follows a structured annual cycle, starting with the development of an Activity Plan and finalising with an Annual Activity Report. The Activity Plan outlines the main activities programmed for the upcoming year, detailing their objective, intended actions, monitoring indicators, and anticipated outcomes. It is approved by the Board of Directors at the end of each year. Conversely, the Annual Activity Report, approved at the beginning of the year, reflects on the fulfilment of the activities described in the

last Activity Plan. It summarises the activities performed, outcomes achieved, met and unmet indicators, and the assessment of stakeholder satisfaction for each activity.

Strategic planning

The Board of Directors approved AQUIB's first Strategic Plan³² on December 19, 2022. This Plan represented a big step forward for the Agency at a structural and operational level. Covering the period from January 2023 to December 2025, this initiative geared towards increasing AQUIB's interaction and visibility within society through six focus areas. This Plan and a detailed report on the fulfilment of 2023 strategic actions³³ are publicly accessible on the Agency's website, with a summary provided below (Figure 8):

- **SL1. Internationalisation: aligning the Agency's strategy with international standards and criteria.** Aligning AQUIB's strategy with international standards and criteria. It focuses on ESG alignment, international recognition through becoming ENQA members and registration in EQAR. It also outlines the expansion of the Agency's activities at the international level, although mainly in terms of setting the framework for the future.
- **SL2. Quality management systems: promoting continuous improvement and management excellence.** AQUIB focuses on permanent improvement despite its extensive experience in external quality assurance. This commitment drives actions such as revising existing criteria, optimising guidelines, creating new documents for external experts' evaluation, conducting training sessions for stakeholders, and enhancing transparency efforts. Finally, in the spirit of 'laying the first stone', this initiative incorporates the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) into AQUIB's activities.
- **SL3. Increasing the Agency's autonomy and independence.** Recognising the importance of ensuring complete independence in its activities and decisions, AQUIB focuses on elevating autonomy. This includes several actions such as the modification of the Agency's statutes, creation of new commissions and seeking alternative financial incomes.
- **SL4. Communication tools: improving the Agency's visibility and positioning.** This line focuses on revitalising AQUIB's public image by addressing deficiencies in its outdated website. Recognising the website's pivotal role in transparency, diffusion of activities and engaging stakeholders, a revamped site was launched in January 2023. The primary objective was to optimise the management of public

³² AQUIB. (2022). [Strategic Plan 2023-2025](#).

³³ AQUIB. (2024). [Strategic Plan annual report \(actions planned for 2023\)](#).

information, thereby improving external and internal communication. Additionally, the creation and management of social media platforms were initiated, as AQUIB had no presence on these platforms at the beginning of 2023. Finally, promoting the participation of AQUIB in events such as forums, meetings and conferences was also identified as a means to connect with stakeholders.

- **SL5. Quality promotion in HE.** This line aims to proactively engage stakeholders and ensure their involvement in all AQUIB's activities. It encompasses the inclusion of international experts in the Agency's initiatives. In addition, this line also tackles the lack of a systematic approach to thematic analysis, which is crucial for compliance with ESG 3.4.
- **SL6. Adequacy and optimisation of resources.** The final line of the Strategic Plan focuses on optimising the technological platforms used by AQUIB staff and its external experts. It also involves aligning AQUIB's organisational structure and staff profile with current and future needs.

AQUIB's technical staff conducts minuted meetings every three months to track the advancement of strategic actions and ensure compliance with the indicators outlined in the Strategic Plan.

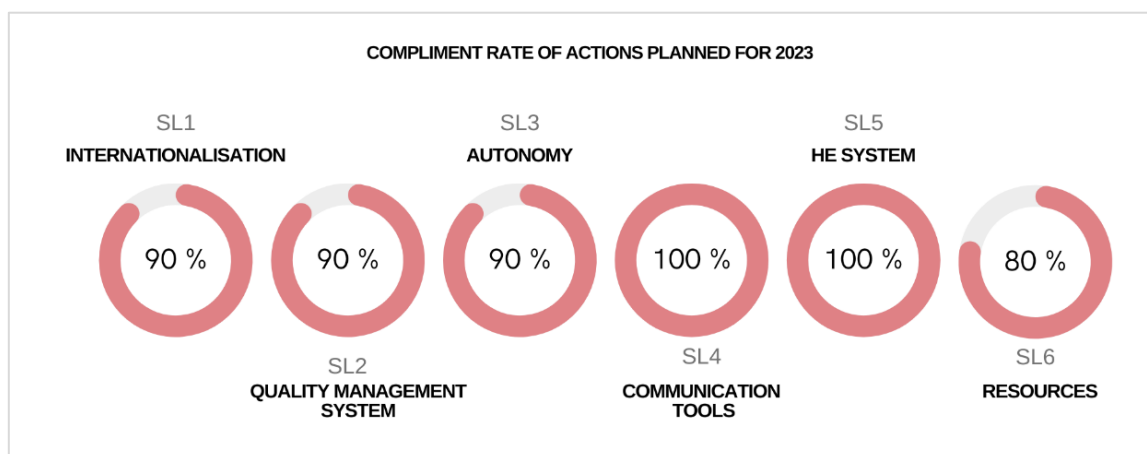


Figure 8. Strategic Lines 2023-2025 and its compliment rate of actions planned for 2023

4.4. External quality assurance activities

All external quality assurance activities conducted by AQUIB are outlined and made publicly accessible on the Agency's website. This commitment to transparency and accessibility aligns with the new national legislation, the framework set by REACU (Spanish Network of University Quality Agencies), and AQUIB's own vision, which is geared towards compliance with the ESG. In 2023, a comprehensive review of all guidelines was undertaken to ensure alignment with these standards.

AQUIB is responsible of externally evaluating university study programmes, covering Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD programmes, as well as part of the art study programmes (according to Spanish law, only Master's and PhD art study programmes are required to undergo external evaluation) within the Balearic Islands HE system. This responsibility is depicted in Figure 9, which illustrates the correlation between the life cycle phases of a study programme and the external quality evaluations performed by quality agencies in Spain.

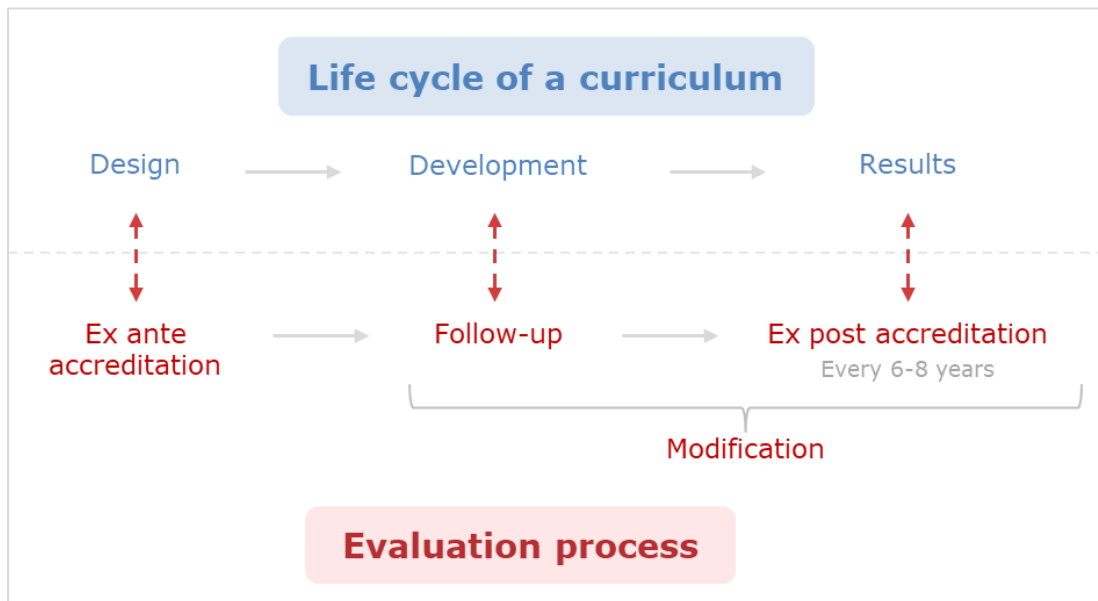


Figure 9. Study programme external evaluation cycle

Within the Balearic Islands, ex ante accreditation and potential modifications of study programmes are currently overseen by ANECA. However, with AQUIB's acceptance as a member of ENQA and registration in EQAR, the Agency will assume a more comprehensive role, gaining the capability to conduct ex ante accreditations and modifications of study programmes in the Balearic Islands, assuming responsibility throughout the entire external evaluation cycle. Currently, AQUIB has not yet begun drafting guidelines for these activities. This process will commence following the Agency's inclusion in ENQA and EQAR.

Specifically concerning art study programmes, AQUIB, under an agreement with AQU Catalunya, is authorised to perform this activity within the framework of the Spanish jurisdiction.

For a comprehensive understanding of AQUIB's external evaluation processes under the scope of the ESG, ESG 3.1 provides detailed insights into the conducted evaluations.

Other evaluation activities

AQUIB conducts external evaluations beyond HE institutions, encompassing individuals and research institutions. While these activities fall outside the scope of this SAR, it is worth mentioning them due to their substantial representation in the Agency's overall workload. A summary is also included in Annex 1.

- **Teaching staff accreditation.** For the past 19 years, the Agency has consistently undertaken the accreditation of teaching staff. However, the enactment of the new Organic Law 2/2023 has led to a temporary suspension of this activity. According to the new legislation, only agencies included in EQAR have jurisdiction for this task. Despite falling outside the scope of the ESG, AQUIB eagerly awaits inclusion in the register to restart this valuable service.

This accreditation process evaluates individual cvs, with a focus on research and teaching activity, along with other merits of the candidates. Successful applicants receive accreditation, a prerequisite for participating in UIB's recruitment calls. It is important to note that the Agency neither hires nor provides funds to teaching staff. All relevant information, including the legal framework, criteria, guidelines, and results of this activity, is publicly accessible on AQUIB's website³⁴.

- **Complementary payments evaluation.** AQUIB evaluates applications from eligible teaching staff of the university seeking three types of complementary payments established by Decree 7/2017. The Agency certifies the eligibility of the applicants to receive these complements, without providing funds to the applicants. All pertinent information, legal framework, criteria, and guidelines of this activity are publicly accessible on AQUIB's website³⁵.
- **R&D&I evaluations.** This activity focuses on achieving excellence in scientific research, development and technological innovation activities within universities and research centres. AQUIB takes on responsibility of assessing research projects and grant applications for different stakeholders who request this service in their calls. Evaluations are conducted by independent external experts with expertise in the relevant scientific field. The assessments adhere to the evaluation criteria established by the entity responsible of the call and follow general evaluation principles and standards. All pertinent information and guidelines of this activity are publicly accessible on AQUIB's website³⁶.

³⁴ AQUIB. (2023). [Teaching staff accreditation](#).

³⁵ AQUIB. (2023). [PDI complementary payments](#).

³⁶ AQUIB. (2023). [R&D&I](#).

Broadening AQUIB's reach

Within the Strategic Line 4, 'Communication tools: improving the visibility and positioning of the Agency', AQUIB set a specific strategic goal to reach a wider spectrum of society. Initially, the Agency's website was old-fashioned and complex to navigate. Recognising the importance of social media as a key tool to engage with society, the Agency established an online presence on platforms such as LinkedIn³⁷, X³⁸, and YouTube³⁹. In addition, AQUIB's revamped website now features a light and fresh style, providing easy access to all information. On top of that, the Agency's institutional video is now available in Catalan, Spanish and English⁴⁰.

These improvements have resulted in increased interactions with society, reflected in a surge of experts applying to join AQUIB's experts database. To ensure this, the Agency has set some indicators for maintaining the activity and quality of its online presence. Key metrics include tracking the number of followers and the quantity of AQUIB's publications.

International activities and networks

The Agency has been an affiliate of ENQA since 2008, regularly attending the General Assembly and Member's forum, as well as participating in other significant events such as a seminar for agencies preparing for an initial external review, notable examples being those held in Riga in 2018 and Cologne in 2022. AQUIB also actively engages in most of the webinars organised by ENQA, providing feedback and information as required.

Furthermore, AQUIB has been part of the Global Academic Integrity Network (GAIN)⁴¹ since its creation in 2022. GAIN's mission is to identify and tackle the issues posed by commercial cheating operators, safeguarding students, and national education systems from the growing threat of the AI-driven academic cheating services. Even though AQUIB may not be an expert in this area, it actively engages in the network's meetings to gain knowledge for the future and contribute insights whenever possible.

Looking forward, the *Strategic Plan 2023-25* includes a strategic action to apply for membership in various international networks. In line with this, AQUIB is already a member of INQAAHE⁴² and EARMA⁴³. Beyond these plans, AQUIB consistently attends international meetings, fostering a global exchange of knowledge, good practices,

³⁷ Agència de Qualitat Universitària de les Illes Balears, AQUIB [@AQUIB]. (2023). [LinkedIn \[LinkedIn profile\]](#).

³⁸ AQUIB [@AQUIB_Balears]. (2023). [X \[Twitter profile\]](#).

³⁹ AQUIB [@AQUIB_Balears]. (2023). [YouTube \[YouTube profile\]](#).

⁴⁰ AQUIB. (February 14, 2024). Discover AQUIB. [video]. [AQUIB's Institutional video](#).

⁴¹ GAIN. (s.d.). [Global action to protect academic integrity](#).

⁴² INQAAHE. (n.d.). [International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education](#).

⁴³ EARMA. (n.d.). [European Association of Research Managers and Administrators](#).

and valuable connections with professionals worldwide. This commitment aligns with AQUIB's aim of strengthening its internationalisation, resulting in an increased presence at events in the recent years⁴⁴.

The Spanish Network of University Quality Agencies (REACU)

REACU was established in 2006 by all Spanish quality agencies to foster collaboration between agencies and establish a common framework. The network conducts periodic meetings of different nature: director meetings address strategic decisions or legal changes, while technical meetings focus on more specific topics and are normally attended by the technical staff. The coordination of the network rotates annually among all member agencies.

In 2023, AQUIB took on the role of REACU coordinator. Apart from coordinating various director meetings, including an in-person meeting in Palma on June 5, 2023, the Agency advocated for the revival of technical meetings. These meetings were absent in 2021 and 2022, but recognising their significant value, AQUIB's proposal aimed to reintroduce them in 2024.

Cross-border activities

Currently, AQUIB does not engage in cross-border evaluations, and no initiatives have been conducted to develop this activity as of now. However, it stands as one of the planned steps, contingent on the success of the ENQA external review and inclusion in EQAR. According to the Strategic Plan, the initial steps in this direction are anticipated in the second semester of 2025.

It should be noted that while AQUIB has not proactively pursued cross-border activities, the Agency has received two external evaluation requests from international institutions. Both were regrettably declined, arguing that this specific activity is not currently under AQUIB's operational scope.

⁴⁴ AQUIB. (2023). [Events](#).

5. PROFILE, FUNCTIONING AND EXTERNAL QA ACTIVITIES OF THE AGENCY (COMPLIANCE WITH PART 3 OF THE ESG)

ESG 3.1. Activities, Policies and Processes for Quality Assurance

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis. They should have clear and explicit goals and objectives that are part of their publicly available mission statement. These should translate into the daily work of the agency. Agencies should ensure the involvement of stakeholders in their governance and work.

AQIB's activities under the scope of the ESG are established in the already mentioned Organic Law 2/2023, Regional Law 2/2003, Organic Law 4/2007, R.D. 576/2023, R.D. 21/2015, R.D. 822/2021, Decree 43/2013, R.D. 43/2015, and R.D. 534/2013.

Mission⁴⁵. AQIB actively works to improve the quality of the HE and Research Area in the Balearic Islands. This is achieved through the Agency's evaluation, certification, and accreditation processes in the areas of teaching, research, management, and knowledge transfer. The Agency's commitment is to align these processes with rigorous international quality standards.

Vision. AQIB's envisions becoming a referent in quality assurance for HE and Research, actively contributing to the ongoing enhancement of society. The realisation of this vision includes obtaining full membership in ENQA and registration in EQAR, creating opportunities for collaborations with national and international institutions. On this path, AQIB is guided by the following core values:

- **Autonomy**. Respecting the autonomy of the collaborating institutions.
- **Transparency**. Conducting activities with clarity and providing transparent information about AQIB's management.
- **Independence**. Working independently to fulfil AQIB's mission, vision, and objectives.
- **Commitment to quality, innovation, and excellence**. These are principles underpinning AQIB's culture, driving continuous improvement in all actions.
- **Integrity**. Building trust through responsible actions by the organisation and its members.
- **Stakeholder orientation**. The Agency's management focuses on meeting the needs and expectations of all stakeholders.

⁴⁵ AQIB. (2024). [Mission, vision and values](#).

- **Rigor.** Carrying out activities with precision and technical excellence.
- **Efficient management.** Achieving goals through ethical, economical, and equitable use of resources.
- **Social responsibility.** Acknowledging commitments to sustainable development and the Agency's impact on society.

The Board of Directors approved AQUIB's first Strategic Plan (s. section 4.3) which has a two-fold purpose: to fully adapt AQUIB and its activities to the ESG, and enhance stakeholder involvement in the Agency.

Activities

Annually, AQUIB elaborates the Annual Activity Plan, detailing all planned activities for the upcoming year. This document, along with the Annual Activity Report, is made publicly accessible⁴⁶. Each activity has its own guidelines and criteria, all of which are publicly available on the corresponding section of AQUIB's website.

The Agency remains committed to transparency, as exemplified by Strategic Line 2, which includes an objective to increase the public information accessible to AQUIB's stakeholders. Additionally, AQUIB is proactively engaging in a voluntary external evaluation of the Agency's transparency. Notably, the Agency has already successfully undergone two voluntary evaluations, one in 2023 and another in 2024, demonstrating its commitment to maintaining this initiative.

External evaluation of study programmes

- **Follow-up.** AQUIB conducts follow-up evaluations three years after the implementation of a successful ex ante accreditation to ensure the correct implementation of the study program according to the initial project. Traditionally, two follow-up evaluations were conducted within the initial six years (at 2 and 4 years), a practice consistently endorsed by the university in year-end meta evaluation. However, recent regulatory changes under R.D. 822/2021 have standardised the interval to three years. In case of a negative report, AQUIB retains the flexibility to perform an additional evaluation the following year. Following the first successful ex post accreditation, the CET schedules the subsequent follow-up. AQUIB's guidelines are publicly available on its website⁴⁷.

⁴⁶ AQUIB. (2023). [Plan of activities and activity reports](#).

⁴⁷ AQUIB. (2023). [Framework Document for the Evaluation of Official University Programmes](#).

AQUIB. (2023). [Self-Assessment Guide for Ex post Accreditation of Official University Bachelor's and Master's programmes](#).

The thorough follow-up process ensures the faithful implementation of the study programme as initially accredited. It serves as a comprehensive review preceding the completion of the first 6/8-year cycle, aiming to capture any identified deficiencies, and providing constructive suggestions for improvement in the resultant reports.

- **Ex post accreditation.** This involves a comprehensive evaluation before the completion of the first 6/8-year cycle or 6/8 years after the previous ex post accreditation. A successful report ensures the study programme's continuity, while a negative one may lead to programme extinction. This critical activity includes a site visit by a panel of experts to ensure that the program's quality and outcomes align with initially planned standards. It also evaluates how the institution utilised insights from the last follow-up report to enhance overall programme quality. Reports from this process reflect any deficiencies detected and include suggestions for improvement.
- **Ex ante accreditation of art study programmes.** In accordance with Spanish legislation, institutions must seek ex ante accreditation before implementation, with the program proceeding only upon a positive report. Unlike other university study programmes, art study programs do not require quality agencies to be members of ENQA and registered in EQAR to conduct this activity, as per R.D. 1614/2009 and R.D. 21/2015. Consequently, AQUIB carries out this process through an agreement with AQU Catalunya⁴⁸. Under this agreement, AQUIB coordinates the process between AQU and the institutions, but the evaluation responsibility lies with AQU. All procedures follow AQU Catalunya's framework⁴⁹.

Collaboratively, AQUIB and AQU Catalunya have conducted ex ante twice for the same master's programme, once in 2016 and again in 2022. However, despite these evaluations, the programme has not been implemented yet. AQUIB will handle its follow-up (expected three years after implementation) and ex post accreditation (six years from implementation) when the time comes. This will mark the first instance of the Agency externally evaluating an art study programme. Thus, these activities are presented in this SAR at a preliminary phase level, awaiting results.

- **Follow-up of art study programmes.** This process mirrors the principles applied to general study programmes, but with due recognition of the unique legal framework governing art studies. AQUIB has developed specific guidelines for their

⁴⁸ AQUIB. (2023). [Agreement between AQU Catalunya and AQUIB](#).

⁴⁹ AQU CATALUNYA. (2016). [Framework for the validation, monitoring, modification and accreditation of recognised university degrees \(VSMA\)](#).

evaluation⁵⁰, acknowledging the distinctive nature of these programmes. Scheduled three years after the initiation of the study programme, the follow-up process accounts for the current legal framework exempting Bachelor programmes from external quality evaluations in this field. Additionally, there are no PhD programmes in art within the Balearic Islands. As highlighted in Section 3.2, only one Master's programme has successfully undergone ex ante accreditation, although it has not been implemented yet. Consequently, AQUIB has not conducted any follow up evaluations for art study programmes to date. The Agency lacks both results and feedback from stakeholders regarding this specific programme.

- **Ex post accreditation of art study programmes.** Similarly, this programme adheres to the principles and criteria established for the ex post accreditation of general study programmes. AQUIB has developed specific guidelines⁵¹ for the ex post accreditation of art study programmes, taking into account its unique legal framework. The ex post accreditation is scheduled to take place after six years from the initiation of the Master's study programme. Given the absence of any currently implemented Master's program in the Balearic Islands, the Agency has not undertaken any evaluations for ex post accreditation in this context. Consequently, AQUIB lacks both results and feedback from stakeholders regarding this specific programme.

AQUIB collaboratively establishes an annual external review schedule with institutions, ensuring transparency by setting deadlines and estimated date of the site visits. Specific time limits for each step of the procedure are specified in our publicly available guidelines.

Given AQUIB operation within a small HE space, the quantity of external evaluations is comparatively lower than that of other Spanish agencies. The clustering of study programmes implemented in the same year results in periodic peaks in follow-ups and ex post accreditations (Figure 10). Despite this pattern, the Agency effectively plans and prepares for these activities, benefiting from clearly defined time periods between each activity outlined in both legislation and in AQUIB's guidelines.

⁵⁰ AQUIB. (2024). [External Evaluation Guide for the Follow-up of Official HAE Study Programmes.](#)

⁵¹ AQUIB. (2024). [Self-Assessment Guide for Ex Post Accreditation of Official HAE Master's Study Programmes](#) and [External Evaluation Guide for Ex Post Accreditation of Official HAE Study Programmes](#)

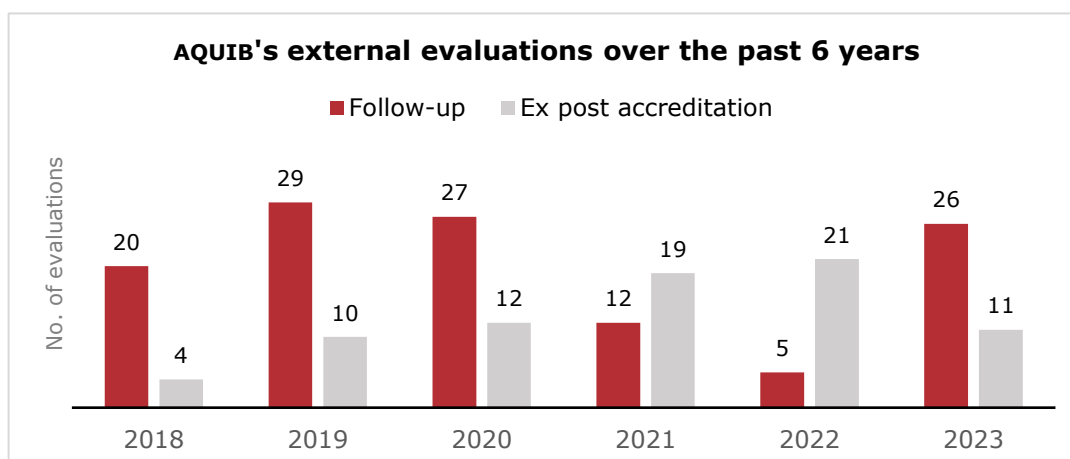


Figure 10. AQUIB's external evaluations of study programmes over the past 6 years

External evaluation of higher education institutions

- **DOCENTIA.** In Spain, universities bear the responsibility of ensuring quality, competence, and training of their teaching staff, which includes supporting their professional development and recognition. In 2007, ANECA took a significant step by initiating the Support Programme for the Evaluation of the Teaching Activities of University Teaching Staff (DOCENTIA), in collaboration with AQU and the Agency for Quality Assurance in the Galician University System (ACSUG). This programme aimed to assist universities in developing quality management mechanisms to assess and enhance the quality of their teaching staff. AQUIB engages in this initiative through an agreement with ANECA, a partnership that has been renewed in 2022⁵². The evaluation process commences with the university submitting an application to AQUIB. Then, a specific commission from ANECA undertakes the assessment, adhering to the established criteria of the organisation.

As of the elaboration of this SAR, AQUIB is awaiting progress from UIB in advancing their mechanisms and submitting application to start the process. While the Agency is prepared, it has only conducted one evaluation for a pilot study in 2009⁵³.

Activities not in the scope of the ESG

As explained in section 4.3, AQUIB also conducts activities that extend beyond the scope of the ESG. All external quality assurance activities falling within the ESG scope are included in the same section of AQUIB's webpage, excluding DOCENTIA. This programme includes a specific note clarifying its inclusion within this scope. These activities' guidelines and relevant documentation embed clear reference to the ESG.

⁵² AQUIB. (2022). [Agreement between ANECA and AQUIB for collaboration in the Support Programme for the Evaluation of Teaching Staff \(DOCENTIA\)](#).

⁵³ AQUIB. (2023). [Results](#).

Furthermore, upon acceptance as member of ENQA and registered in EQAR, both logos would be featured in the guidelines of these activities.

Stakeholder involvement and international experts

Improving and increasing stakeholder involvement is a transversal aspect of AQUIB's Strategic Plan. This focus has resulted in tangible outcomes notably seen in the broadened composition of the Board of Directors.

The participation of various stakeholder groups within AQUIB's structure is detailed in Table 4, showcasing a more inclusive representation. Stakeholders actively contributed to shaping this Strategic Plan. Notably, their involvement played a pivotal role in developing new guidelines for the external evaluation of study programmes and art study programmes. Simultaneously, a new internal and external communication protocol was instituted on December 15, 2023. This protocol serves as a guiding framework for how AQUIB interacts with its stakeholders and the broader society.

Government of the Balearic Islands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appoints the president of AQUIB who holds the position of General Director responsible for universities of the Government of the Balearic Islands. - Four representatives in the Board of Directors.
UIB	Two members in the Board of Directors and one member in Advisory Commission.
Academics (not from UIB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Two members in the Board of Directors. - Majority in all AQUIB's commissions and expert panels.
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One member in the Board of Directors. - Always present in commissions and expert panels.
Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One member in the Board of Directors (University Social Council). - One labour union representative in the Board of Directors*. - One member of the professional field in the Board of Directors*, and two in the CET.

**Note:* despite these positions are provided, according to Law 7/2010 (s. Article 20.3) the total members of the Board of Directors in consortiums are defined depending on the institution's total size. Therefore, these positions will be filled based on the expected staff's Agency growth.

Table 4. Stakeholder involvement in AQUIB's organisation

Moving to the involvement of students, their firsthand insights offer a valuable perspective. Actively incorporating student input allows the Agency to adopt a more student-centric approach, empowering students to actively shape the educational landscape, fostering a sense of ownership and accountability.

In terms of international experts, the objective 5.2 of Strategic Line 5 marked a significant milestone by initiating efforts to enhance their involvement with the Agency. This resulted in the inclusion of an international member in the Board of Directors, along with one international member each in the Advisory Commission and the Guarantees Commission, as outlined in their respective operating rules.

AQUIB has actively expanded its network by incorporating individual experts from around the globe into its database. The objective, as reflected in the Strategic Plan, is to integrate at least one international expert into a panel of experts before the year 2025, further broadening perspectives and strengthening AQUIB's global connections.

Involving students in external QA is always a challenge that all agencies face. Despite students are always present in panels, commissions and other bodies of AQUIB, they are always from outside the Balearic Islands. The Agency aims to make itself and the external QA of HE widely known in the Balearic Islands. AQUIB should shine at this, due to operating in a small HE system.

ESG 3.2. Official status

Agencies should have an established legal basis and should be formally recognized as quality assurance agencies by competent public authorities.

As explained in section 3.1, Organic Law 6/2001 conferred upon autonomous communities the capacity to establish their own HE assessment bodies. Subsequently, AQUIB materialised as a consortium on December 13, 2002, by an Agreement of the Board of Directors, which also established its firsts statutes. The formal acknowledgement of the Agency's official status and jurisdiction in HE occurred through the enactment of Regional Law 2/2003. This legislation characterises AQUIB as 'an agency that will operate independently of the University and the Government' (p. 15081). Moreover, Article 17 of this law explicitly designates AQUIB as the responsible entity for the evaluation, accreditation, and certification of the quality of the Balearic Islands HE system.

The recently enacted Organic Law 2/2023 surpasses the preceding Organic Laws 6/2001 and 4/2007, strengthening the role of quality agencies in Spain, exemplified in Article 5⁵⁴. However, it also sets higher standards, requiring quality agencies to become members of ENQA and be listed in EQAR to conduct external QA activities. A parallel directive, R.D. 822/2021, set a deadline of October 2025 for compliance with

⁵⁴ [Organic Law 2/2023](#), of March 22, of university system. *Article 5*. Boletín Oficial del Estado, 70, March 23, 2023.

this requirement. This was one of the potential threats identified in the December 2022 SWOT. In the event of an adverse outcome in the external ENQA review, AQUIB would not lose its official status but would be compelled to forge agreements with other Spanish agencies to conduct its existing external evaluation activities.

ESG 3.3. Independence

Agencies should be independent and act autonomously. They should have full responsibility for their operations and the outcomes of those operations without third party influence.

AQUIB recognises the significance of following this standard, especially given the unique circumstance of having just one university in the Balearic Islands. While this brings benefits like the University easy access to the Agency for information or clarifications, it also requires AQUIB to take additional measures to safeguard its independence. The *Strategic Plan 2023-2025* addresses this with a dedicated line on increasing the Agency's autonomy and independence (Strategic Line 3).

Organisational independence

Legally, AQUIB's independence is well established and guaranteed. National laws explicitly state that quality agencies must operate independently in their activities. In that sense, Regional Law 2/2003 describes AQUIB as 'an agency that will operate independently of the University and the Government', with Article 19 reinforcing this declaration. Additionally, being a public body, AQUIB is bound by administrative laws aimed to guarantee the objectivity, independence and transparency of its activities.

UIB, as part of the consortium, is legally required to contribute to AQUIB's budget (s. ESG 3.5), although this financial participation represents a minimal percentage of the total budget. To prevent any possible misuse of this contribution to influence AQUIB, Article 124 of Organic Law 40/2015 specifies that consortium members will lose voting privileges on AQUIB's board if they fail to meet this financial commitment. This provision is also reiterated in Article 34.3 of AQUIB's recently revised statutes.

As mentioned in previous sections, modifying AQUIB's statutes was imperative to comply with the ESG 3.3 as this derived in significative structural shifts⁵⁵. This involved a tedious and complex process with external reports from various bodies, all showing a positive result. These reports, including those from UIB's legal counsel⁵⁶,

⁵⁵ AQUIB. (2024). [AQUIB's new statutes](#).

⁵⁶ AQUIB. (2024). [UIB's legal counsel report](#).

Regional Ministry of European Funds, University and Culture⁵⁷, General Directorate Public Function⁵⁸, General Directorate Budget⁵⁹, and General secretary Economy, Finance, and Innovation⁶⁰ support the modifications. To formalise these changes, the signature of CAIB's Governing Council and AQUIB's Board of Directors is needed. At the time of this SAR submission, this step is pending. This is the final phase of this process and it is a merely bureaucratic step, since the decision of these bodies is based on the provided reports, the outcome of which is favourable.

Initially, the Board of Directors' structure was determined by Article 20 of Regional Law 2/2003 and the statutes from 2005. This setup allocated two members each to UIB, the university social council, and the Balearic Government, amounting to a total of six members. However, it was apparent that AQUIB's stakeholders were not fully represented, and this composition did not meet the subsequent requirements established in Law 7/2010 for consortium's boards of directors (7 to 13 members). Additionally, the Board held decision-making powers in crucial matters, such as approving guides and criteria or managing appeals to review reports. Thus, two parallel processes were started: the amendment of Article 20 of Law 2/2003 and the drafting of new AQUIB statutes.

On March 22, 2023, Article 20 of Law 2/2003 was modified, expanding AQUIB's Board of Directors composition to include not only UIB, the Social Council and the Regional Government but also representatives from the national and international HE community and the broader society, including a student. The revised composition is detailed in the new statutes.

The modification of AQUIB's statutes was key to achieve full organisational independence. Apart from broadening the composition of the Board of Directors, certain powers that should not reside within the Board were transferred to other bodies (Advisory Commission, Guarantees Commission, Criteria Commission).

Positions such as direction and technical direction at AQUIB are filled through public calls, as stated in AQUIB's new statutes (s. articles 20 and 22). This approach extends to all Agency staff, including the stabilisation of existing positions⁶¹. Moreover, the chairpersons of different Agency commissions are selected by their own members from within the commission.

⁵⁷ AQUIB. (2024). [Ministry of Ministry of European Funds, University and Culture report.](#)

⁵⁸ AQUIB. (2024). [General Directorate Public Function report.](#)

⁵⁹ AQUIB. (2024). [General Directorate Budget report.](#)

⁶⁰ AQUIB. (2024). [General secretary Economy, Finance and Innovation.](#)

⁶¹ AQUIB. (2023). [Personnel stabilisation process derived from Law 20/2021.](#)

Operational independence

Operational independence within the Agency encompasses two critical dimensions: the autonomy of AQUIB's bodies and the independence of individuals involved in AQUIB's evaluation activities, both as members of these bodies and as external experts participating in on-site visit panels.

To ensure a comprehensive and unbiased perspective, all members of AQUIB's technical bodies and panel participants are sourced from outside the Balearic Islands HE system. The Advisory Commission is the only exception, allowing one member from within the system, in addition to the Board of Directors. Each commission operates under its own set of regulations, outlining its composition, criteria for member selection and designated functions. In parallel, the criteria for the selection of expert panels is regulated in the *Internal functioning of Panels and CET*, which is approved by the Criteria Commission (s. section 4.2.).

As stated in their respective regulations, expert panels, commissions, and technical bodies within AQUIB are responsible for external evaluation and have full independence in their decision-making processes. Reports produced by these bodies are signed by their president and cannot be altered by other bodies. Importantly, members of the CET and panels have no relation with the Balearic Islands HE system and have no representation in the Board of Directors. The Criteria Commission, responsible for approving guidelines and criteria for external evaluation activities, does not participate in the evaluation processes nor issues evaluation reports.

Every individual involved in AQUIB's activities is bound by the Agency's Code of Ethics, which emphasises the independence of the individuals engaged, and necessitates the signing of a confidentiality agreement. Moreover, independence and autonomy are entrenched as core values of AQUIB, as underscored in its Mission, Vision and Values.

Independence of formal outcomes

The verdict of the CET remains unchanged and the president's signed report, which holds binding authority, is sent to the university and to the corresponding Ministry by AQUIB's technical director as soon as it's uploaded onto the evaluation platform. This procedure, clearly outlined in AQUIB statutes and the rules of procedure governing the commissions, emphasises the complete independence of commissions.

The Agency's staff, limited to supporting roles like secretaries and facilitating coordination, does not influence the evaluation.

In cases where the Guarantees Commission accepts an appeal, the original report remains unchanged. Instead, the CET must elaborate a new report.

In recent years, AQUIB has worked hard to restructure and ensure independence across various levels. This involved initiatives to amend certain Regional Laws, which is a complex and time-consuming process.

The Agency cannot change the fact that it evaluates only one university in the Balearic Islands, this is an inherent aspect that lies beyond the Agency's capacity to alter; thus, it must navigate and operate within this contextual constraint. Despite this limitation, there are still achievable measures still not accomplished but viable. These include the establishment of a multi-year budget and the exploration of additional funding sources such as international accreditation activities and national or international funding calls.

ESG 3.4. Thematic analysis

Agencies should regularly publish reports that describe and analyze the general findings of their external quality assurance activities.

AQUIB, guided by Law 2/2003 and its mission and statutes, is dedicated to improving the Balearic Islands HE system through the elaboration of studies and reports designed to address social demands and educational needs. In this line, the Agency annually releases its Annual Activity Report and elaborates a yearly summary of the outcomes derived from its external quality assurance activities, particularly follow-up and ex post accreditation. AQUIB actively seeks feedback through meta-evaluation meetings with the university and other stakeholders, incorporating their insights to refine AQUIB's activities and procedures, if necessary.

As part of the REACU network, AQUIB collaborates with other Spanish quality agencies to generate reports on the status of QA in Spanish universities. This initiative, ongoing since 2008, demonstrates AQUIB's commitment to transparency and social responsibility. The reports, available on AQUIB's website⁶², are of special interest for different stakeholders, and offer contrasted and comparative insights into external quality management practices across different Spanish quality agencies.

Despite these efforts, with the initiation of the 'Road to ENQA/EQAR' process, it became clear that AQUIB needed to go one step further to comply with this standard. The annual summary of AQUIB's activities was merely a result collection report, lacking

⁶² AQUIB. (2023). [Reports on the state of external quality assurance in Spanish universities](#).

analysis and public disclosure. Moreover, the Agency played a passive role in national-level studies, limited to providing results from its activities to the responsible agencies for study elaboration.

Recognising the need for more detailed engagement, AQUIB, in collaboration with ACCUEE (Canarian agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation), initiated a study on academic dropout rates in their regions. The noticeable disparity in dropout rates between the Balearic Islands and Canary Islands compared to the rest of Spain, highlighted in evaluation reports by both QA agencies, led to a comprehensive analysis of this issue. A joint webinar⁶³, organised by both agencies, shared the early findings and the final report is now available on AQUIB's website⁶⁴. This study signifies the beginning of a more proactive role for AQUIB at the national level.

To further enhance its proactive stance, AQUIB designed a Thematic Analysis Protocol, approved by the Advisory Commission in December 2023. The protocol outlines a systematic approach for thematic analysis based on the results of AQUIB's activities. It is publicly available on AQUIB's website⁶⁵ and encompasses key aspects such as:

- **Systematisation.** The protocol explains the nature of a thematic analysis, detailing the frequency of its elaboration and the criteria for theme selection.
- **Scope.** Without excluding other analysis, the protocol focuses on what makes a proper thematic analysis, based on the results of evaluations conducted by AQUIB. This analysis can be broad, using all the results, or specific, targeting a specific topic.
- **Elaboration process.** The protocol describes a five-step process for its elaboration, covering theme selection and scope, assigning a responsible person, developing the analysis, sharing it and assessing its impact.

As of the elaboration of this SAR, the first thematic analysis following this protocol is in progress. This analysis will focus on the teaching staff accreditation activity, encompassing reports spanning a period of 19 years. This timeframe is chosen due to the interruption in this activity due the implementation of Organic Law 2/2003, which mandated the Agency's membership in ENQA and registration in EQAR. The analysis aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of this period before anticipated changes expected to occur with the enactment of forthcoming regional decrees. AQUIB is aware that this activity falls outside the scope of the ESG;

⁶³ AQUIB & ACCUEE. (2023). [Webinar on academic dropout study results](#).

⁶⁴ Fernández-Mellizo, M. (2023). [¿Por qué el abandono universitario es mayor en los archipiélagos que en el resto de España?](#). AQUIB & ACCUEE.

⁶⁵ AQUIB. (2023). [Thematic analysis protocol](#).

consequently, the subsequent thematic analysis will cover the results of the Agency's external quality assurance activities from 2024.

Operating within a small HE system poses challenges as the data from AQUIB's activities is relatively limited compared to other agencies in Spain and Europe. Therefore, to enhance the depth and significance of the analysis, the Agency has sought collaboration with other agencies to pool the data resources. While thematic analysis will be elaborated using only AQUIB's data following the new procedure, this collaboration with other agencies is expected to endure, as it adds additional value to both the agencies and their stakeholders.

ESG 3.5. Resources

Agencies should have adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, to carry out their work.

Financial resources

AQUIB's budget⁶⁶ is an independent item within the total budget of the Government of the Balearic Islands (CAIB), annually approved by the Parliament of the Balearic Islands. Consequently, the Agency's budget is not commingled with other entities. The funds primarily come from the CAIB, although the UIB contributes a small amount, due to legal requirements as a member of the consortium, and to cover part of the external evaluations conducted by AQUIB. This financial arrangement does not compromise AQUIB's independence (s. ESG 3.3).

The Agency also collects an individual tax from applicants to teaching staff accreditation, generating an annual total amount of about €4,000, which is allocated to fund part of this activity.

In 2023, AQUIB's had a total budget of €481,150, marking a 28.19% rise from 2022. As depicted in Figure 11, illustrating the Agency's budget progression, AQUIB has full support from regional authorities. The budget has consistently grown, witnessing increments of about 30% in 2020 and 28% in 2023. It is noteworthy that the funding source for R&D&I evaluations varies depending on the regional ministry's jurisdiction. If the same ministry holds authority over both university and research, as was the case from 2011 to 2015 and 2019 to 2023, this expense is integrated into AQUIB's budget. However, due to recent changes in the Balearic Islands Government, since

⁶⁶ AQUIB. (2024). [AQUIB's budget \(2024\)](#) and [Budgetary evolution](#).

Note that an income and expenditures report for the last 5 years will be available during the site visit

July 2023, these two powers are divided between two ministries. Therefore, for 2024, this item is not included, and AQUIB will charge a fee for each R&D&I external evaluation conducted. Hence, when comparing budgets across different years, this factor should be considered. If R&D&I evaluations were included, the 7% increase in 2024 would be approximately 25%, a figure similar to that of 2023. This adjustment does not compromise the viability of AQUIB's activities, as the fee will fully cover the conduction of this activity. The contribution from the UIB has been the same throughout this period, amounting to €12,990, representing a 3% of the 2023 budget.

The increase of AQUIB's budget is a direct outcome of the Agency's expansion. Firstly, the budget reflects a focus on internationalisation, with the creation of a dedicated position in 2021 (filled in 2022), and the inclusion of ENQA's review fee and associated costs for 2024. Secondly, the staff number has grown over the past years, meaning increased expenditures on salaries and training costs. Lastly, AQUIB is preparing its structure and allocating resources for future actions in the event of a successful application, since the Agency will be able to perform ex ante accreditations. In 2024, the salaries of three new positions starting in September are included.

AQUIB concludes each fiscal year with a balanced budget, ensuring that expenses do not exceed incomes. From 2013 to 2022, this balance was positive, while in 2023, it was zero since all the remaining budget was used for the first instalment of the ENQA review fee. The Agency undergoes an annual accounting audit, which reports are publicly available in its website⁶⁷.

Certain aspects could potentially enhance the Agency's financial standing. Conversations have started for a multi-annual funding agreement, ensuring financial stability for several years. Finding alternative funding sources is also considered beneficial for AQUIB. Strategic Objective 1.3 aims to identify possibilities for the expansion of AQUIB's activities at the international level, while Strategic Objective 3.3 aims to initiate the identification of funding calls of potential interest for the Agency. All these efforts aim to address the threat identified in the SWOT analysis of the Strategic Plan.

⁶⁷ AQUIB. (2024). [Economic, Budgetary and Proprietary Information](#).

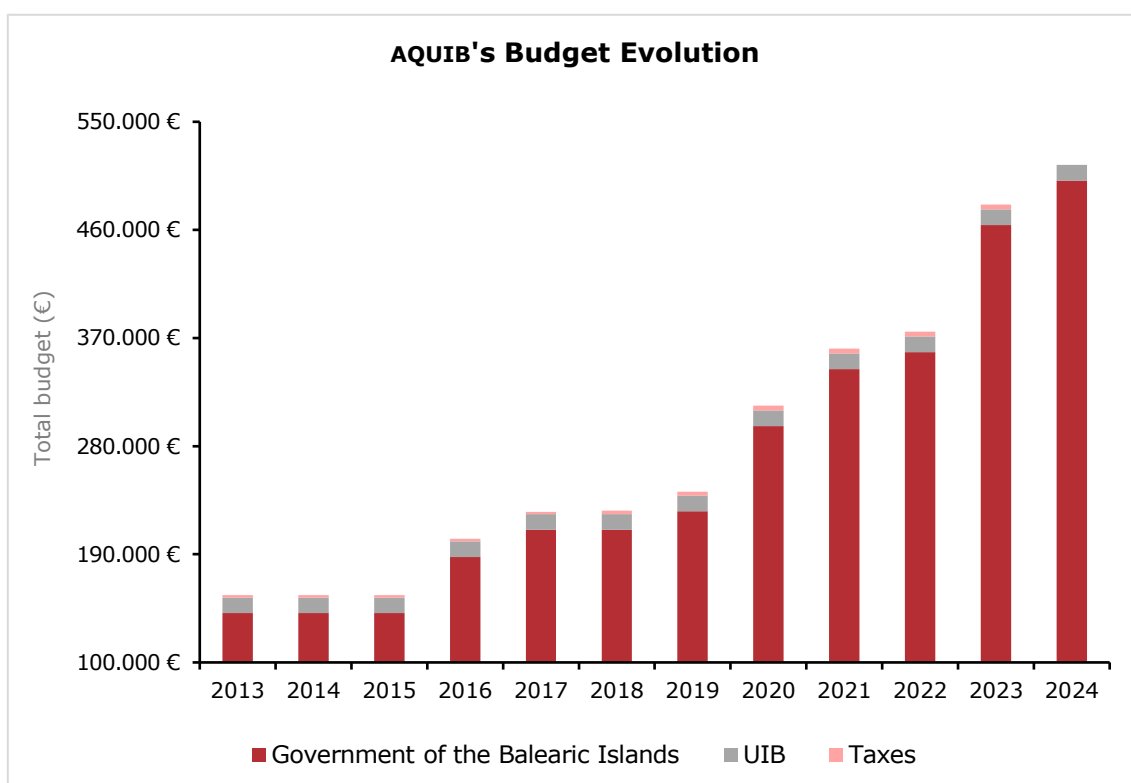


Figure 11. AQUIB's budget evolution in the last twelve years

Human resources

Legally, staff positions in public bodies like AQUIB undergo a regulated process. First, a position needs to be created, which is a complex task due to the bureaucracy implied. Then, funds are allocated to cover the position. The most recent version of AQUIB's job position list was approved by the Board of Directors in December, 20 2023⁶⁸. Currently, AQUIB has nineteen positions listed, six of which are filled (s. section 4.2) and fundings have been assigned for three more positions in 2024. At present, the existing staff can effectively manage the current workload of the Agency, and the planned positions will accommodate the increase of the workload in the coming years.

Figure 12 shows the growth of AQUIB's staff over the last decades (2013-2023), with staff counted on December 30 of each year. Despite some rotations within the same position and occasional vacancies, the number of staff has always maintained or increased each year. This is noteworthy considering the challenges public bodies face in recruiting personnel.

⁶⁸ The English version of this document will be available for the site visit.

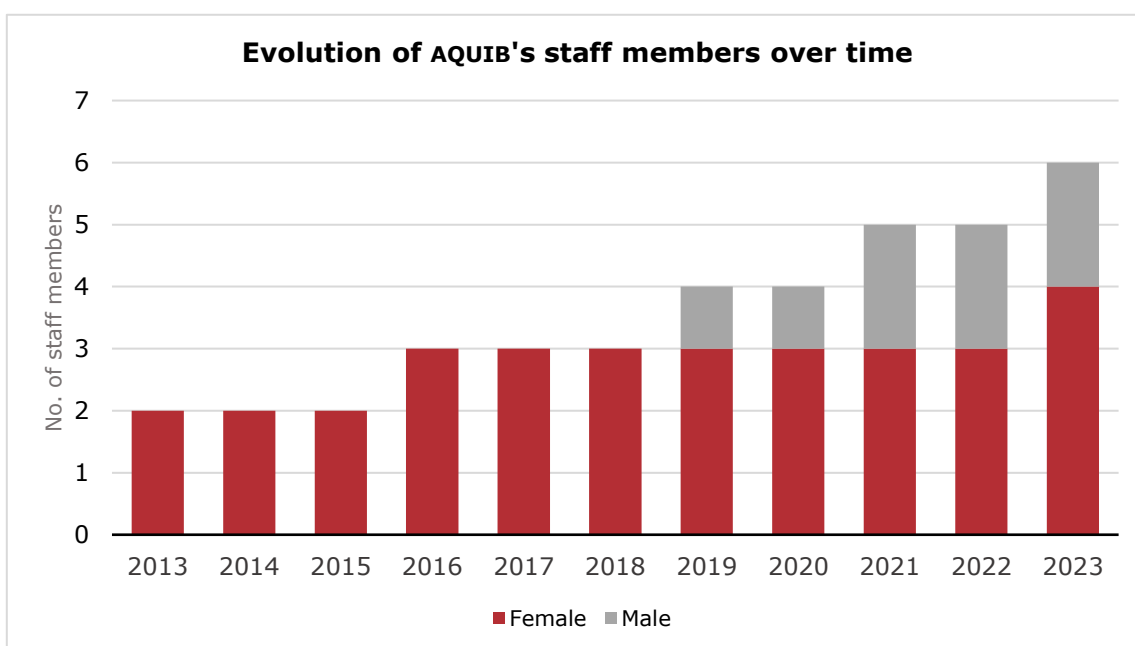


Figure 12. Evolution of AQUIB's staff members over time

Human resources had a significant presence in the SWOT analysis elaborated prior to AQUIB's *Strategic Plan 2023-2025*⁶⁹. The high expertise and adaptability of AQUIB's staff were identified as strengths. However, the high turnover of the personnel and difficulties in replacing staff were recognised as weaknesses, with staff stabilisation seen as an opportunity. Since 2019, AQUIB's staff has increased by 50% (from four to six people). Except for a short vacancy (filled by a person who later returned after winning the public stabilisation call), staff has remained the same since 2021. Permanent positions have increased from two to three in 2023, and the Agency plans to continue with stabilisation of other positions in the coming years. All processes will be conducted through public calls, and by the end of 2026, 100% of the current staff as of December 31, 2023, should have permanent positions. Moreover, salaries have increased due to both regional legislation and decisions of the Board of Directors. Additionally, there is an ongoing public call for applications to fill an administrative position⁷⁰.

As mentioned in section 4.2, each member of AQUIB's staff is responsible for a specific area, apart from study programmes, which has two persons assigned (Figure 7).

Regarding staff training opportunities, AQUIB's management system under ISO 9001 includes an annual training plan. At the end of the year, staff needs are identified and the plan for next year is elaborated accordingly, although it is a dynamic document that can change during the year. At the end of each year, the technical

⁶⁹ AQUIB. (2024). [Strategic Plan 2023-2025](#).

⁷⁰ AQUIB. (2024). [Recruitment process for permanent administrative staff](#).

director validates the document containing all training courses attended by AQUIB's staff⁷¹ (s. Annex 3 for a translated version of the Annual staff training plan). In addition, the staff participates in national and international conferences and events of interest, such as ENQA meetings or conferences covering relevant topics.

AQUIB also engages external experts in its advisory and technical bodies, as well as in evaluation panels (s. section 4.2; ESG 2.4). The Agency has expanded its expert database, with a focus on increasing international participation. Notably, international experts have been introduced into commissions for the first time, including the Advisory and Guarantees Commissions.

Technology resources

AQUIB, apart from the database of experts, relies on two specialised software applications, AVATIT and AVAPRO, both dedicated to managing external evaluations and developed by the same external IT company:

- **AVATIT.** Online platform dedicated to managing external evaluations of study programmes. The university can effortlessly upload the SAR and supporting evidence, accessible to external experts, who, in turn provide and sign evaluation reports directly on the platform. This process endures efficient management for AQUIB staff and is highly appreciated by external experts. It is worth noting that other Spanish QA agencies also use the same software, although each agency customises the application to meet its guidelines and style.
- **AVAPRO.** This application is employed for individual teaching staff accreditation, an activity beyond the scope of this SAR. Despite the differences in the activities, AVAPRO shares a commonality with AVATIT in its functioning and features. This application was specifically requested by AQUIB to the IT company, which developed this application exclusively for the Agency's use.

Premises

AQUIB's headquarters are now in Parc Bit, a science and technology park, inaugurated in 2002, and located near Palma and the UIB main campus. Accessible by public transport and private vehicles, Parc Bit serves as a dynamic hub hosting many start-ups and innovation companies. In 2022, AQUIB relocated to this space, seeking not only a larger space to accommodate the Agency's growth but also to be closer to key stakeholders. The previous space measured 90 m², while the new one spans 156 m² – corresponding to a 70% increase in size.

⁷¹ AQUIB. (2024). [Example of a finished and approved annual staff training plan \(2023\)](#).

The office is designed with a contemporary open-space concept to foster communication among team members. Simultaneously, individual offices for the Director and Technical Director are provided. Additionally, a well-equipped meeting room facilitates collaborative working sessions. The space comfortably accommodates the current team of six staff members, with ample room for future incorporations. The Agency enjoys the added benefit of utilising larger meeting rooms within Parc Bit at no extra cost.

Webpage

AQUIB recognises its website as the primary channel for quality agencies to connect with their stakeholders, publish guidelines and showcase the results of their activities. In January 2023, AQUIB launched its new website⁷², developed from scratch to replace the previous old-fashioned and difficult to navigate website (s. section 4.3). As part of this upgrade, the Agency invested in a searching engine to facilitate the organised publication of all external evaluation reports.

This significant transformation has garnered positive feedback from both AQUIB's staff and stakeholders. To ensure the ongoing functionality of the site, an external company manages its maintenance, while AQUIB staff diligently uploads, revises, and updates its content, reflecting AQUIB's commitment to transparency and effective communication.

Despite achieving several important milestones outlined in this section, AQUIB is aware of some important aspects where progress can be made. Regarding staff training, although the Agency offers and promotes training opportunities, the highly specialised nature of AQUIB's daily tasks makes finding suitable training challenging. Moreover, with the last upgrade of all staff positions the maximum possible category has been reached. This means that, in terms of salary, there are limited growth opportunities. Therefore, the Agency is working on a career plan, which is still in an early stage and will have to meet all the bureaucratic requirements.

⁷² AQUIB. (2024). [Balearic Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education](#).

ESG 3.6. Internal Quality Assurance and professional conduct

Agencies should have in place processes for internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities.

AQUIB places its well-established Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS) at the forefront of its operations. Certified under ISO 9001 by the Spanish Association for Standardisation and Certification (AENOR) since 2007, making AQUIB pioneer among Spanish quality agencies with this certification. This system, continuously refined over the years, received its fourth renewal certification from AENOR in February 2023⁷³.

Internal and external audits are conducted every year to ensure compliance and effectiveness. The scope of the IQAS includes the accreditation and assessment of teaching and research staff within the university system of the Balearic Islands, evaluation of complementary payments of teaching and research staff from UIB, follow-up to official university programmes, evaluation for accreditation of official university programmes, and external evaluation of grant applications for research training.

The core components of the IQAS are readily accessible on the Agency's website⁷⁴. These include the latest ISO 9001 certificate, the process map, and essential protocols such as the internal and external communication protocol.

The IQAS comprises three types of procedures, summarised here and in detail in Annex 2:

- **Key procedures.** These establish the framework for the Agency's main activities (s. section 4.3), including objectives, scope, responsible(s), related documents and indicators. Guidelines, forms, and templates are provided to develop this framework avoiding duplicities.
- **Strategic procedures.** Focused on transversal and general strategic aspects to AQUIB's activities. For instance, a specific procedure addressing stakeholder satisfaction.
- **Support procedures.** Associated to AQUIB's management, these procedures cover areas such as resource and documentation management and complement the key

⁷³ AQUIB. (2023). [ISO 9001 Quality Management System renewal certificate](#).

⁷⁴ AQUIB. (2023). [Public information about the IQA system](#).

procedures. The newly integrated internal and external communication protocol is included here.

The detailed structure of AQUIB's IQAS is visually summarised in the following process map (Figure 13) which is also publicly available on the Agency's website.

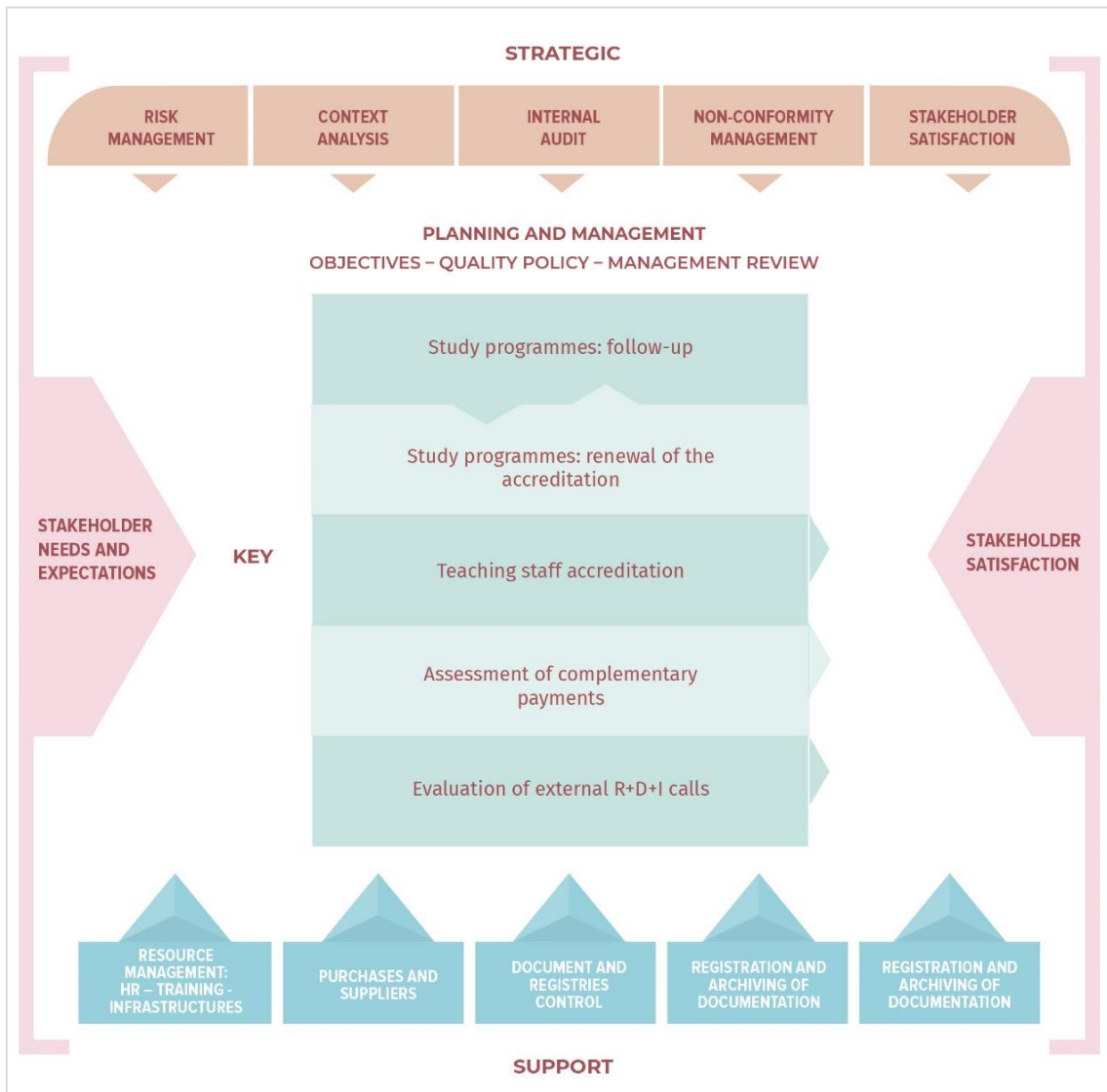


Figure 13. Process map on internal quality assurance

The communication protocol, integrated as PS12 in the Agency's IQAS, an extract of which is publicly available⁷⁵, formalises existing practices. As the Agency grows, formalising communication pathways becomes essential, encompassing both internal communication methods and interactions with stakeholders.

⁷⁵ AQUIB. (2023). [Extract of the Communication Protocol](#).

Finally, at the end of the year, AQUIB conducts meta-evaluation meetings with participating institutions in each activity. These sessions are intended to collect their feedback, concerns and suggestions for improvement. The Agency fosters open communication, providing a space for the university and government representatives to freely express their views. In addition, external experts engaged in the Agency's activities receive satisfaction surveys at the end of the year (in case of members of AQUIB's commissions) or upon completion of their evaluation (in case of members of panels of experts).

All the feedback gathered through interviews and surveys is analysed, leading to defined actions for process improvement, with a summary incorporated into the Annual Activity Report⁷⁶. Simultaneously, recognising the pivotal role of stakeholder feedback in QA, AQUIB proactively responds to surveys from ENQA and its working groups, along with those from other international associations.

In line with its commitment to ongoing improvement, one significant action identified during the last system revision in December 2023 was the creation of internal quality surveys specifically designed for AQUIB's own staff.

Code of Ethics and Confidentiality Agreement

AQUIB demands the highest standards of professionalism, honesty, integrity, impartiality, equity, and confidentiality from all personnel involved in the Agency. Whether part of a commission or an evaluation panel, individuals collaborating with AQUIB must adhere to the Agency's Code of Ethics⁷⁷ and sign a confidentiality agreement⁷⁸. This agreement includes a declaration of no conflict of interest and a commitment to uphold AQUIB's ethical standards.

Similarly, the staff of the Agency signs the confidentiality agreement along with an additional document that outlines the specific characteristics and responsibilities associated with their respective position.

Staff training

AQUIB places a significant emphasis on staff training within its IQAS. Annually, the IQAS incorporates a training plan tailored for each staff member (s. Annex 3). This training plan is created based on the identified training needs; a process overseen by the person in charge of the IQAS. This responsible also records the trainings received,

⁷⁶ AQUIB. (2023). [Plan of activities and activity reports](#).

⁷⁷ AQUIB. (2024). [Code of Ethics](#).

⁷⁸ The English version of this document will be available for the site visit.

detailing its purpose, contents and comments from the person who underwent the training.

In addition to the annual training plan, AQUIB's staff benefits from exposure to best practices of other national and international agencies. The Agency actively seeks opportunities for staff members to learn from counterparts in the field. As part of this initiative, a member of AQUIB visited the Flemish HE Council – Quality Assurance (VLUHR QA) at their office in Belgium⁷⁹. This stay was facilitated through the Staff Mobility programme promoted by the Bologna Thematic Peer Group (TPG) to which AQUIB was the only applicant from Spain. A representative of the Ukrainian National Quality Agency (NAQA) was also present during the visit, whose presence contributed to the enrichment of the overall experience and outcomes.

On the other hand, the close cooperation with Spanish agencies through REACU facilitates short visits and exchanges of experiences. For example, a member of AQUIB visited the Valencian Agency for Assessment and Forecasting (AVAP) to discuss their experience with the ENQA external review. Additionally, virtual meetings are conducted when in-person visits are not feasible. AQUIB has also hosted meetings with staff from other agencies. Noteworthy instances include a technical meeting with a member of the Agency for the Quality of the Basque University System (UNIBASQ) and a visit from a representative of Montenegro's Agency for Control and Quality Assurance of Higher Education quality agency of Montenegro (ACQAHE) to share the results of the project 'Better Academic Qualifications through Quality Assurance'.

Transparency

As a commitment to transparency towards stakeholders, AQUIB voluntarily underwent an external evaluation of its compliance with the Active Publicity obligations under national Law 19/2013, of 9 December, on transparency, access to public information and good governance. The evaluating body was the Council of Transparency and Good Governance⁸⁰. The report, available in Spanish⁸¹, unveiled an Index of Compliance with Obligatory Information (ICIO) of 23.1%. It must be noted that the aforementioned Law includes many aspects beyond AQUIB's direct responsibility, contributing to the lower ICIO qualification due to a lack of specificity.

In response to the report, AQUIB promptly implemented corrective actions to address all outlined aspects. Subsequently, a new evaluation was requested on January 23,

⁷⁹ AQUIB. (2023, February 11). AQUIB participates in the staff mobility programme. [AQUIB news](#).

⁸⁰ CTBG. (n.d.). [Council of Transparency and Good Governance](#).

⁸¹ Consejo de transparencia y buen gobierno. (2023). [Informe de evaluación sobre el cumplimiento de las obligaciones de Publicidad Activa](#).

2024, resulting in notable improvement reflected in an updated ICIO of 67.9%⁸². Despite this progress, AQUIB remains committed to further enhancements, aiming for a 100% compliance level.

Moreover, AQUIB underwent an external evaluation regarding compliance data protection regulations, with the report attesting to full compliance with current regulations⁸³.

ESG 3.7. Cyclical external review of agencies

Agencies should undergo an external review at least once every five years in order to demonstrate their compliance with the ESG.

Ensuring compliance with the ESG is of maximum priority for AQUIB. This commitment was core in the Agency's first Strategic Plan, particularly within the Strategic Line 1 titled 'Internationalisation: aligning the Agency's strategy with international standards and criteria'. The primary objective under this Strategic Line was to achieve international recognition and accreditation for the Agency. However, ESG compliance is woven throughout the entire Strategic Plan, with all Strategic Lines featuring one or more actions towards this goal.

Spanish legislation mandates that AQUIB must be a member of ENQA and registered in EQAR (and consequently be aligned with the ESG). This legal requirement is crucial, as without this recognition, AQUIB cannot perform ex ante accreditations of study programmes. After October 2025, the Agency will be unable to conduct ex post accreditations and follow-ups. This legislation extends its impact to activities not under the scope of the ESG, such as individual teaching staff accreditation.

To reinforce the Agency commitment to these standards, the new statutes explicitly include this obligation in Article 11. This demonstrates AQUIB's dedication to meeting QA standards.

Despite these requirements, AQUIB eagerly awaits its first ENQA review to continue progressing. Following the review, an action plan will be established to address any recommendations. Moreover, in the event of a positive decision from the ENQA board, AQUIB plans to request a voluntarily progress visit after two years and undergo periodical external evaluations every five years.

⁸² Consejo de transparencia y buen gobierno. (2024). [Informe sobre el cumplimiento de las obligaciones de Publicidad Activa](#).

⁸³ PRODAT. (2023). [Evaluación de cumplimiento normativo y riesgos de protección de datos de la Agència de Qualitat Universitària de les Illes Balears](#).

6. DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGENCY'S EQA ACTIVITIES (COMPLIANCE WITH PART 2 OF THE ESG)

External quality assurance should address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the ESG.

ESG 2.1. Consideration of internal quality assurance

The Spanish national regulatory framework provides the foundational guidelines for external evaluation of study programmes. Simultaneously, agencies collectively establish common standards through protocols approved by REACU. AQUIB adapts these standards into its own guidelines, considering the uniqueness of the HE system by making some additional inclusions, such as working together with the institutions in the annual planification of the different activities.

To ensure coherence, the Agency aligns all procedures with the effective evaluation of the institution's IQAS, as described in part 1 of the ESG. The correlation between AQUIB's standards for ex post accreditation and follow up of study programmes and art study programmes, and those outlined in part 1 of the ESG, is presented in Table 5, which is also included in their respective Framework Documents:

FOLLOW-UP AND EX POST ACCREDITATION		ESG CRITERIA
I. MANAGEMENT OF THE DEGREE	1. Curriculum development and deployment	1.2. Programme design and approval 1.4. Admission, development, recognition, and certification of the student body 1.3. Student-centred teaching, learning and assessment 1.6. Resources for learning and student support
	2. Information and transparency	1.8. Public information
	3. Quality assurance, review and improvement	1.1. Quality assurance policy 1.9. Continuous follow-up and regular evaluation of the programmes 1.10 Cyclical External Quality Assurance
II. RESOURCES	4. Academic and teaching support staff	1.5. Teaching staff
	5. Resources for learning	1.6. Resources for learning and student support
III. RESULTS	6. Learning results	1.2. Programme design and approval
	7. Satisfaction and graduation	1.7. Information management

Table 5. Correlation between AQUIB's standards with Part 1 of the ESG

In the same line, equivalence between AQU's Catalunya vsMA programme for ex ante accreditation of art study programmes with ESG part 1 is shown in Table 6:

AQU VSMA PROGRAMME	ESG CRITERIA
9. Internal quality assurance system	1.1. Quality assurance policy
1. Description of the title 2. Justification 3. Competences 5. Programme's planning 8. Expected results	1.2. Programme design and approval
3. Competences 5. Programme's planning 8. Expected results	1.3. Student-centred teaching, learning and assessment
4. Student access and admissions	1.4. Admission, development, recognition, and certification of the student body
6. Teaching and support staff	1.5. Teaching staff
7. Material resources and services	1.6. Resources for learning and student support
9. Internal quality assurance system	1.7. Information management
9. Internal quality assurance system	1.8. Public information
9. Internal quality assurance system	1.9. Continuous follow-up and regular evaluation of the programmes
Procedure	1.10. Cyclical External Quality Assurance

Table 6. Correlation between AQU's standards with Part 1 of the ESG

Eye into the future: institutional evaluation

In various regions of Spain, there has been a gradual shift from programme evaluation to institutional evaluation. The maturity of Spanish HE institutions allows them to take on greater responsibilities in QA. The Balearic Islands HE system is also moving in this direction, and AQUIB is preparing for this shift, having established an agreement with ANECA to conduct the DOCENTIA programme. This initiative focuses on evaluating the university's internal mechanisms to manage and enhance the quality of teaching staff's performance.

However, institutional evaluation of the centre's IQA system, which is central to institutional accreditation, is not expected to start soon. In fact, AQUIB had a previous agreement with ANECA to conduct this activity, but it expired and was not renewed due to absence of related actions or plans. Further details on the correlation between the criteria of the DOCENTIA programme and Part 1 of ESG, are provided in the following table:

ESG	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.8	1.9	1.10
DOCENTIA	Axis 1	Axis 2	Axis 2	N.A.	Axis 1,2,3	Axis 2	Axis 2,3	Axis 1,3	Axis 2,3	Once obtained, it must be renewed every 5 years

Table 7. Correlation between DOCENTIA program criteria and the Part 1 of the ESG

ESG 2.2. Designing methodologies fit for purpose

External quality assurance should be defined and designed specifically to ensure its fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for it, while taking into account relevant regulations. Stakeholders should be involved in its design and continuous improvement.

The technical staff at AQUIB takes the lead in drafting various guidelines, which are then shared with stakeholders for their valuable input. The final versions of these documents undergo thorough discussion and approval by the Criteria Commission, as detailed in section 4.2. Throughout these processes, due consideration is given to national and regional laws, as well as the framework set by REACU. However, AQUIB, customises this framework in its guidelines to the reality of the Balearic Islands HE system. All guidelines and procedures are publicly available on AQUIB's website.

In response to new legislation and the necessity for procedural updates, AQUIB recently revised all its guidelines. The aim was to create a more concise and purpose-oriented documents. To ease this transition, members of the CET received specific training, and the revised documents were discussed with the affected institutions. Beyond from involving stakeholders in guidelines development, AQUIB conducts annual meta-evaluation meetings, in which stakeholders can freely express any concerns or comments about the procedures.

The methodologies related to external evaluations undergo scrutiny through satisfaction surveys distributed to all participants in the evaluation process. An example of the impact of stakeholder input is the incorporation of an additional outcome result in the new guidelines for the follow-up of study programmes (including art study programmes). This modification was approved by the Criteria Commission.

Furthermore, each year, the director informs the Board of Directors about the results of the different activities and the meta-evaluation process, culminating in the elaboration of the Annual Activity Report.

ESG 2.3. Implementing processes

External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published. They include:

- A self-assessment or equivalent
- An external assessment normally including a site visit
- A report resulting from the external assessment
- A consistent follow-up

All activities conducted by AQUIB have their own guidelines, which are publicly available on AQUIB's website. The main steps of each activity are detailed in the corresponding guideline and summarised in Table 8:

Programme	Procedure	SAR	External review	Site visit	Final report	Appeals	Follow-up
<i>Study programmes</i>	Follow-up	X	X		X	X	X
	Ex post accreditation	X	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Art study programmes</i>	Ex ante accreditation	X	X		X	X	X
	Follow-up	X	X		X	X	X
	Ex post accreditation	X	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Institutional</i>	DOCENTIA	X	X	X	X	X	X

Table 8. Main steps of AQUIB's activities under the scope of the ESG

- **Self-assessment report from the university (IA).** All evaluations start with a IA, compelled and uploaded to AVATIT by the university. Templates for its drafting for ex post accreditation are available on AQUIB's website⁸⁴. However, templates for follow-up, ex ante accreditation of art study programmes, or DOCENTIA are currently unavailable.
- **External evaluation and site visit.** In ex post accreditation, the expert panel (Table 8) analyses the IA and its supporting evidence, provided by the institution prior to the site visit, with the exception of the standard related to the institution's IQAS, which is evaluated by a member of the CET (s. ESG 2.4). The site visit involves interviewing a diverse group of stakeholders, including management staff, programme and institution responsables, teaching and support staff, students, graduates, and employers. Its duration generally ranges from one to three days,

⁸⁴ AQUIB. (2023). [Ex post accreditation related documents](#).

depending on the number of programmes being evaluated. Following the site visit, the expert panel elaborates the Evidence of site visit (EV) using the template available in AVATIT. Throughout this process, a member of AQUIB's staff serves as a secretary to ensure the accurate application of guidelines and criteria. Regarding follow-up, it primarily involves desk-based work, since no site visit is performed, conducted by the chosen members of the CET, each contributing expertise in their respective fields of knowledge.

The principles applied in follow-up and ex post accreditation of art study programs are similar to those used in other evaluations. However, in the case of ex ante accreditation of art study programs, the proposal is assigned to a special review panel for evaluation. Finally, in the DOCENTIA programme, a specific commission coordinated by ANECA evaluates the institution's proposal.

- **Reports.** For follow-up and ex post accreditation of study programmes (and, in the future, art study programmes), the CET prepares a draft report based on the EV elaborated by the expert panel, which is forwarded to the institution to provide clarifications or report any factual errors. From 2024 onwards, ex post accreditation reports will include the EV as an annex. Following the institution's response, the CET elaborates the final report, which is signed by its president and sent to the institution, the regional government, the University Council and the Ministry responsible of universities. It is also made publicly available on AQUIB's website. A staff member from AQUIB, serving as the secretary of the CET, ensures the consistent application of guidelines and criteria.

Similarly, in the ex ante accreditation of art study programmes, AQU Catalunya's commission issues a draft report, which is sent to the universities for clarifications. Following the institution's response, the commission issues the final report. In the same line, ANECA'S DOCENTIA commission issues a draft report and, following the institution's response, a final report.

Final reports of study programme evaluations are accessible through a new search engine⁸⁵, while reports for art study programmes are uploaded to a dedicated section of AQUIB's website. Additionally, AQUIB requires the university to publish the report on its website. Currently, there are only two reports for the same art study programme, and therefore AQUIB has not yet created a specific searching engine for these reports.

- **Appeals.** The result of the reports of the CET are subject to appeal. For more details, refer to ESG 2.7.

⁸⁵ AQUIB. (2023). [Report Finder](#).

- **Follow-up.** All reports may point out requirements, aspects that will receive special attention in future evaluations, good practices, and suggestions for improvement. As stated in all guidelines, in the following external evaluation these aspects will be analysed to ensure their effective implementation and assess their impact. AQUIB's first follow-up focuses on the recommendations from ex ante reports. Then, ex post accreditation evaluates how issues raised in the previous follow-up have been addressed. The next follow-up then focuses on the recommendations made in last ex post accreditation report. This process will also apply to art study programmes.

As for the *DOCENTIA* programme, after a successful report, the institution is given two years to implement the model, which is then subject to continuous monitoring by QA agencies. At the moment, AQUIB has not conducted this monitoring yet, as UIB has yet to implement its programme.

Expert panels are selected by AQUIB's staff based on publicly available criteria and are officially nominated by the director. A member of AQUIB is always present, as secretary, in both expert panels and the CET. The AVATIT platform, used by AQUIB, integrates all documentation submitted by the institution and serves as the platform for experts to upload their evaluations. The satisfaction levels of both experts and institutions with the platform have been consistently high (87% in 2021 and 91% in 2022), although there is room for improvement, particularly in terms of administrative capabilities from AQUIB's perspective.

As a bright side of being in a small HE system, institutions are well-acquainted with AQUIB's role in the process, and there is a clear understanding that the Agency is readily available to address any queries they may have. As outlined in section 4.4, AQUIB's activities are integrated into its IQAS. These procedures include various quality indicators to assess the overall quality of the process.

For the *DOCENTIA* programme and ex ante accreditation of art study programmes, guidelines are defined by ANECA⁸⁶ and AQU⁸⁷, and the final reports are made public in a dedicated section on AQUIB's website. These reports include the evaluation results, general conclusions, recommendations and proposals for improvement.

Virtual site visits during the pandemic

Site visits are typically conducted in person; however, exceptions were made in 2020 and 2021 due to the restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Amid that time, virtual meetings replaced the traditional in-person visits. The secretary of the panel,

⁸⁶ ANECA. (2023). [DOCENTIA programme](#).

⁸⁷ AQU Catalunya. (2023). [Art study programmes](#).

an AQUIB staff member, ensured the correct coordination and quality of the process. The physical visit to the study programmes' facilities was substituted with a mandatory video prepared by the programme responsible. The return to in-person site visits has been warmly embraced by the university, experts and AQUIB.

ESG 2.4. Peer-review experts

External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include (a) student member(s).

AQUIB involves external experts in all its external quality assurance activities, engaging them in both evaluation commissions and panels. While academics and students are always included, individuals from the professional field and international experts are currently only included in commissions, not in the review panels. However, the inclusion of international experts in review panels is a step forward that AQUIB aims to take, and it is already included in the Strategic Plan 2023-25. For DOCENTIA programme and ex ante accreditation of art study programmes experts are selected following ANECA and AQU Catalunya guidelines and criteria, respectively, and communicated to AQUIB.

The process and criteria for selection of external experts for the CET and the review panels are detailed in a procedure approved by the Criteria Commission and are publicly available to all stakeholders⁸⁸. In summary, the criteria for the selection of external experts to be included in AQUIB's evaluation commissions are:

- **Quality of professional activity.** Members must hold the position of full professor. Exceptionally, individuals who do not hold the position of full professor may be included, provided there is a justified technical report. Recognised teaching and research experience is taken into account. For quality and student members, knowledge of university quality management systems is considered.
- **Suitability.** The aim is to ensure the utmost suitability of experts based on their association with the knowledge areas of the programmes to be evaluated, thereby guaranteeing representation from various fields of knowledge.
- **Experience in quality assurance in HE.** Expertise in the Spanish HE system is considered valuable (legislation, structure, university management, etc.). Proficiency in existing evaluation models, as well as evaluation procedures and

⁸⁸ AQUIB. (2024). [Internal Operating Rules of the CET and Panels of AQUIB](#).

techniques are regarded. Previous experience in evaluations for AQUIB is also given consideration.

- **Regional representation.** It is sought to include individuals from different autonomous communities, external to the HE system of the Balearic Islands.
- **Conflict of interests.** To ensure the independence of the evaluation all experts involved in external evaluations are from outside the Balearic Islands HE system and cannot have had any relationship with it in the last five years (joint projects, co-supervision of ongoing doctoral theses, etc.).
- **Student representative.** Current university student enrolled in an official programme, or someone who completed one within the last two years, ideally in the relevant knowledge area. They should preferably have engaged in improvement activities within their current university or the one where they completed their studies.

The selection of review panel members mirrors the criteria used for CET members, considering factors like regional representation, experience in QA and absence of conflict of interest. Additionally, diversity among experts from different universities is sought to enhance the breadth of perspectives.

AQUIB consistently involves students in expert panels and evaluation commissions. They are trained to focus on evaluating how institutions ensure the student-centred learning, aligning with ESG 1.3. This commitment is included in the *Internal Operating Rules of the CET and Panels of Experts of AQUIB* as one of their responsibilities.

Composition of the CET and review panels

CET's composition is diverse, as outlined in [Table 3](#), encompassing various segments of society, although lacking international experts. Noteworthy is the consistent inclusion of external academics, students and QA experts all from outside the Balearic Islands HE system. Students are treated equally and receive the same economical compensation.

Each panel for ex post accreditations is composed by two academics and a student, all from outside the Balearic Islands HE system, and a secretary from AQUIB. The detailed composition of all expert panels is accessible on the Agency's website⁸⁹, with Table 9 summarising this information:

⁸⁹ AQUIB. (2023). [Composition of all expert panels from 2017 to 2023](#).

Year	Panels	Academic/students	% Professors*	Total	% Men	% Women
2018	4	8/4	75	16	44	56
2019	5	10/5	70	20	35	65
2020	3	6/3	83	12	33	67
2021	10	20/10	75	40	30	70
2022	10	20/10	90	40	43	58
2023	5	10/5	50	20	70	30

*Among academics

Table 9. Total number of expert panels and its composition over the last six years for ex post accreditation of study programmes.

Additionally, the member serving as the Quality expert of the CET evaluates the standard related to the university's IQAS in a desk-job manner and does not physically attend the site visit. However, their evaluation is carefully reviewed by the panel before the site visit for ex post accreditations. Any inquiries are incorporated since IQAS managers are always interviewed in the site visits.

In follow-up processes, the review panel is composed by members of the CET with expertise in the field of the evaluated study programme, always including the student and the professional and QA experts. This will be also the case for follow-up of art study programmes, when the time comes.

In ex ante accreditation of art study programmes and DOCENTIA the external evaluation is conducted by specific commissions of AQU and ANECA, respectively.

Experts database, training and satisfaction

The Agency has an expert database which is constantly updated, currently comprising nearly 1,000 active experts, with 40% women and 60% men. While AQUIB's staff typically recruits candidates with a proactive search and individual communication with the potential candidate, the Agency occasionally receives voluntary applications. The cv template for submitting their application is drafted in three languages: Spanish, Catalan and English⁹⁰.

When appointing a review panel, AQUIB uses this database to select suitable profiles, following the specified criteria. In cases where no suitable candidates are found, the Agency may collaborate with other Spanish agencies or conduct a focused search for the desired profile.

All experts without prior experience in quality assurance undergo training before participating in a review panel. It must be noted that until 2021, individuals with

⁹⁰ AQUIB. (2024). CV templates in [Spanish](#), [Catalan](#) and [English](#)

previous experience with other Spanish quality agencies were not trained, except for a brief explanation of AVATIT. However, following an internal non-conformity raised by AQUIB's staff in its IQAS, since 2022, all experts are trained before participating in a review panel, regardless of their previous experience⁹¹. Upon the completion of the external review, experts receive a satisfaction survey, the results of which are included in the Annual Activity Report and managed according to the IQAS procedure PS05 (Annex 2). In the case of the CET, members are appointed for four years, with the option of renewal for the same time period (except for student representatives). However, all members must respond to the satisfaction survey each year. Additionally, CET members undergo specialised training on AQUIB's processes and their tasks within the Commission before commencing any activity.

As part of the Strategic Plan under Strategic Objective 2.1, an enhancement action is identified for the implementation of an expert performance evaluation system. Although there is already a free text field in the expert database where the panel secretary may include comments (either positive or negative), there is currently no systematic approach, and this field is often left unfilled.

Conflict of interests

Even though AQUIB carefully verifies the absence of conflicts of interest before adding an expert to the database, persons selected to be part of a review panel or any commission must sign a document declaring that they do not have any conflict of interest. This measure ensures that the Agency mitigates unforeseen conflicts. In addition, in this same document, the expert accepts AQUIB's Code of Ethics. Furthermore, the institution is given the opportunity to express any disconformity with the review panel following the publicly available procedure⁹².

In the course of developing the new guidelines, several enhancement actions were explored. For instance, there was discussion about empowering the QA expert figure within the CET to enrich the evaluation process during follow-up and ex post accreditation activities. This could be achieved by allowing the QA expert to assess all criteria, rather than solely focusing on the criterion related to internal quality (Criteria 3).

⁹¹ Training material provided to experts will be available in English during the site visit.

⁹² AQUIB. (2023). [Complaints and appeals](#).

ESG 2.5. Criteria for outcomes

Any outcomes or judgements made as the result of external quality assurance should be based on explicit and published criteria that are applied consistently, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision.

The Criteria Commission meticulously analyses, discusses and approves guidelines and criteria governing AQUIB's activities. These guidelines are publicly available on AQUIB's website, under the dedicated 'Documentation' section for each activity.

To ensure the correct and consistent application of the criteria described in these guidelines, AQUIB has implemented the following measures:

- Thoughtful selection of external experts for panels and commissions, following publicly available selection rules.
- Training sessions are conducted for experts participating in review panels and commissions (s. ESG 2.4).
- The CET operates on a collective decision basis to prevent personal biases and ensure consistency in applying evaluation criteria. In the event of differences in the application of AQUIB's criteria among panels in their respective EV, the CET intervenes to make decisions and establish consistent criteria when elaborating both draft and final review reports.
- The secretary of expert panels and evaluation commissions is a staff member from AQUIB. Apart from their task as secretaries, they bear the responsibility for maintaining consistency in the application of evaluation criteria and harmonising the EV and reports.
- The use of AVATIT, since this platform offers a template to uniform the elaboration of reports and the qualification of the different standards.

ESG 2.6. Reporting

Full reports by the experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals. If the agency takes any formal decision based on the reports, the decision should be published together with the report.

External evaluation reports are drafted by the different evaluation commissions and signed by their respective president. Subsequently, these reports are sent to the

university and published on AQUIB's website⁹³. The structure of the reports is outlined in the guideline associated with the corresponding activity and, when applicable, in templates or other associated documents. The platform used by experts to write the reports (AVATIT) facilitates uniformity through its pre-established template and word limit.

Generally, the structure of the reports includes contextual description, an overview of the external review process, analyses and evidences of the compliance with diverse criteria, aspects that will receive special attention in future evaluations and requirements, good practices identified (added in ex post accreditations from 2023 and present in follow-up reports since 2013), and the final result of the report. From September 2023, the Evidence of site visit (EV) is annexed to ex post accreditation reports when sent to the university and are also published individually. As explained in ex post accreditation and follow-up guidelines, institutions retain the right to raise complaints or appeal the result upon receipt of the report.

All external review reports, regardless of their outcome, are published on AQUIB's website. A recently introduced search engine gathers all reports on a unified platform, incorporating external review reports currently elaborated by ANECA, such as ex ante accreditations and modifications. This organisational structure ensures that all study programme's reports are accessible in one location. On the contrary, for art study programmes⁹⁴ and DOCENTIA⁹⁵, with limited outcomes – two reports of an ex-ante accreditation from AQU Catalunya in 2016 and 2022, and one report from ANECA in 2009 – a specialised search engine is currently deemed unnecessary and reports are published on the corresponding section of AQUIB's website. Additionally, the university's IQA department can access all external reports through AVATIT.

To maintain report consistency, each evaluation panel benefits from the support of an AQUIB technician who acts as the panel's secretary. This person provides guidance on style, language and other aspects during the elaboration of the EV. When crafting both draft and final reports for follow-up and ex post accreditation activities, the CET, functioning with a cross-cutting vision, ensures uniformity among all university study programmes. In this commission a member of AQUIB also acts as secretary with the same purpose. External experts, as part of their training (s. ESG 2.4), receive instructions on report composition to further enhance standardisation.

⁹³ AQUIB. (2023). [Report Finder](#).

⁹⁴ AQUIB. (2023). [Art study programmes: reports](#).

⁹⁵ AQUIB. (2023). [DOCENTIA programme: reports](#).

While AQUIB has made significant strides in aligning with this ESG, such as implementing the report finder tool and deciding to publish the EV, the Agency acknowledges that there is still room for improvement. One area of concern is the length and density of final reports in certain instances. AQUIB is actively exploring ways to simplify its reports, while also ensuring that the contributions of CET members remain unaffected. Achieving this balance poses a significant challenge that the Agency is committed to addressing.

ESG 2.7. Complaints and appeals

Complaints and appeals processes should be clearly defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and communicated to the institutions.

Complaints and appeals lodged by institutions or individuals are handled in accordance with AQUIB's IQA procedure PE04⁹⁶ for complaints and the *Procedure for processing appeals* for appeals⁹⁷. The procedure for processing appeals is publicly available. AQUIB's website hosts a specific section⁹⁸ that provide stakeholders with information on how to submit complaints or appeals. Within this section, stakeholders can find an online application form, along with a generic contact form that can be used various matters. To enhance clarity, this section also encompasses precise definitions of key terms related to these processes. In addition, the guidelines for each activity, publicly available, incorporate information about the complaints and appeals process, stating that both shall be addressed to AQUIB's director.

As detailed in section 4.2, AQUIB created the Guarantees Commission in 2023, and information regarding its composition and rules of procedure are publicly available on AQUIB's website⁹⁹. All its members have a legal background and do not participate in other Agency activities. This Commission plays a key role in:

- **Complaints.** Institutions or individuals evaluated by AQUIB can file complaints against the Agency addressing any aspect of the external review process, such as delays or anomalies. Complaints involving people who participated in the activity are also admitted. This includes their compliance with the Code of Ethics.
- **Appeals.** Institutions or individuals dissatisfied with the outcome of an evaluation report can express their disagreement with AQUIB. For an appeal to be valid, it must be sustained with sound evidence.

⁹⁶ The English version of this document will be available at the site visit.

⁹⁷ AQUIB. (2024). [Procedure for processing appeals](#).

⁹⁸ AQUIB. (2023). [Suggestions, appeals and complaints](#).

⁹⁹ AQUIB. (2023). [Internal operating Rules of the Guarantees Commission](#).

As explained in ESG 3.1, in ex post accreditation and follow-up (for both study programmes and art study programmes), two reports are issued: a draft evaluation report and a final evaluation report. After receiving the draft report, institutions have a 20-day window to submit any comments related to factual errors. The CET considers this input and issues the final evaluation report. Institutions have the option to appeal the result of this report, with the Guarantees Commission responsible for reviewing and deciding on any appeals at this point. This final evaluation report is then forwarded to the University Council who makes the formal decision. If an institution chooses to appeal this decision and it affects the external evaluation report elaborated by the CET, the University Council calls on AQUIB to analyse it, with the Guarantees Commission being responsible for this analysis. It must be noted that, as per R.D. 822/2021 (Article 34.1), the final evaluation report of AQUIB is binding to the University Council. If the appeal is successful at any step of the process, the result of the report appealed is not changed but a new evaluation report is issued. Interestingly, AQUIB has never received an appeal of an external evaluation report.

In the context of ex ante accreditation for art study programmes and the DOCENTIA programme, which are conducted through an agreement with AQU Catalunya and ANECA, respectively, any complaints or appeals are directed to AQUIB by the institution. The Guarantees Commission examines these complaints and, if necessary, seeks for clarifications from AQU or ANECA.

Furthermore, AQUIB ensures transparency by publicly disclosing the composition of all evaluation commissions on its website¹⁰⁰. Besides, when external review panels are nominated, the Agency informs the university, providing them with the opportunity to express any disagreements through the corresponding procedure¹⁰¹. The final composition of the panel is subsequently published on AQUIB's website.

Being a public entity, AQUIB adheres to national regulations on complaints and appeals (Organic Law 39/2015). Thus, if an entity or an individual is not satisfied with a resolution from AQUIB's Guarantees Commission, they can resort to the mechanisms described in this law and pursue administrative litigations. Although, as of now, there have not been instances resorting to this legal pathway, according to the law, AQUIB might be called upon by the court to issue a technical report about the appealed process. In such cases, the management of this report would fall under the purview of the Guarantees Commission.

¹⁰⁰ AQUIB. (2023). [Organisation](#).

¹⁰¹ AQUIB. (2023). [Procedure for recusal of members of external expert panels](#).

While this 'administrative way' can be chosen as the primary option for filing an appeal or complaint, it is emphasised that AQUIB's Guarantees Commission provides a faster resolution compared to alternative administrative routes.

On a different note, complaints against the lack of compliance of AQUIB's staff or external experts with the Code of Ethics are handled by the Guarantees Commission, a process regulated by the internal procedure PE04 and the Commission's internal rules of procedure. This responsibility is explicitly outlined in the Commission's regulation. Despite the recent establishment of this Commission, there has never been any complaint lodged regarding this matter.

While PE04 has been longstanding component of AQUIB's IQAS, the recently implemented structure and procedures involving the Guarantees Commission are still untested in practice. Thus, this framework has yet to undergo testing in response to a real complaint or appeal, which would allow for an evaluation of its effectiveness and the identification of areas for improvement. However, the Agency has full confidence in the members of the Guarantees Commission and considers that their multi-disciplinary backgrounds and expertise ensures that their work will be of the highest quality.

7. OPINIONS OF STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholder involvement in AQUIB's activities extends beyond their representation in commissions and governing body, encompassing active engagement in several aspects. This includes consultation during the drafting of the *Strategic Plan 2023-2025* and the recent revision of AQUIB's guidelines.

The Agency prioritises gathering stakeholder satisfaction as a core element of its IQAs. Satisfaction surveys are distributed to external experts engaged in specific activities, and the summarised results are publicly available in the Annual Activity Report¹⁰² (Figure 14). Detailed information is also published individually for each programme¹⁰³. Satisfaction from 'clients', such as UIB and future responsables for art study programmes, is assessed during meta-evaluation meetings. The outcomes are analysed and, if needed, enhancement actions are implemented. For instance, in 2022, UIB's IQA staff expressed satisfaction with the process, with no reported dissatisfaction. Furthermore, AQUIB and UIB commended each other for the outstanding execution of virtual visits during pandemic restrictions, discussing potential enhancement actions for the future.

Satisfaction surveys consist of ten and thirteen questions for all CET and panel members and external experts, respectively, who participated in external evaluation activities. Another satisfaction survey with nine questions is sent to the Advisory and Criteria commissions. Further information on the specific questions and the results of these surveys over the past five years can be found in Annex 4.

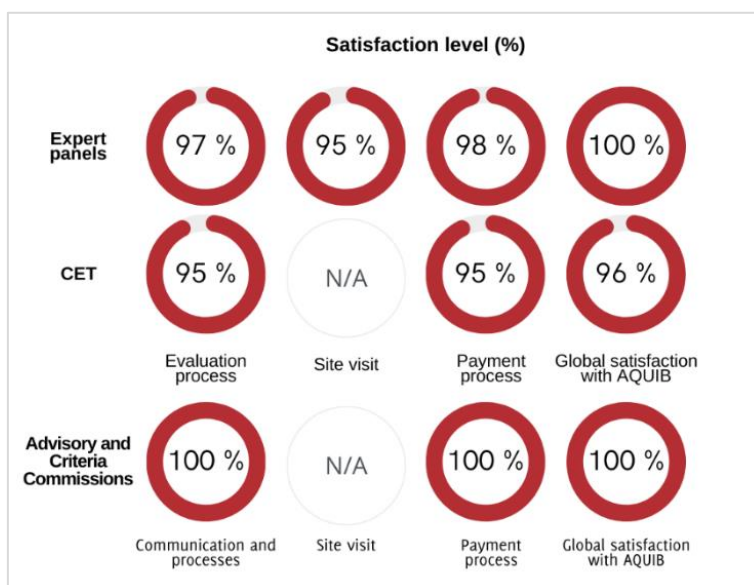


Figure 14. Expert panels, CET and Advisory and Criteria Commissions' satisfaction level

¹⁰² AQUIB. (2023). [Annual activity reports](#).

¹⁰³ AQUIB. (2024). [Stakeholder satisfaction reports](#).

8. SWOT ANALYSIS

The development of AQUIB's *Strategic Plan 2023-2025* began with a collaborative SWOT analysis involving staff, external experts, and valuable insights from stakeholders. The resultant Strategic Plan emerged as a tool strategically to address weaknesses and threats, while capitalising on opportunities and strengths. The Strategic Plan has seen progress in certain areas, although some challenges persist, driving the basis for ongoing improvement efforts.

As part of the SAR elaboration process, a new and updated SWOT has been conducted, building upon the previous one. This will serve as a pivotal foundation for shaping the forthcoming Strategic Plan 2026-2029. With two years remaining in the current plan, there is room for flexibility and refinement in response to evolving circumstances.

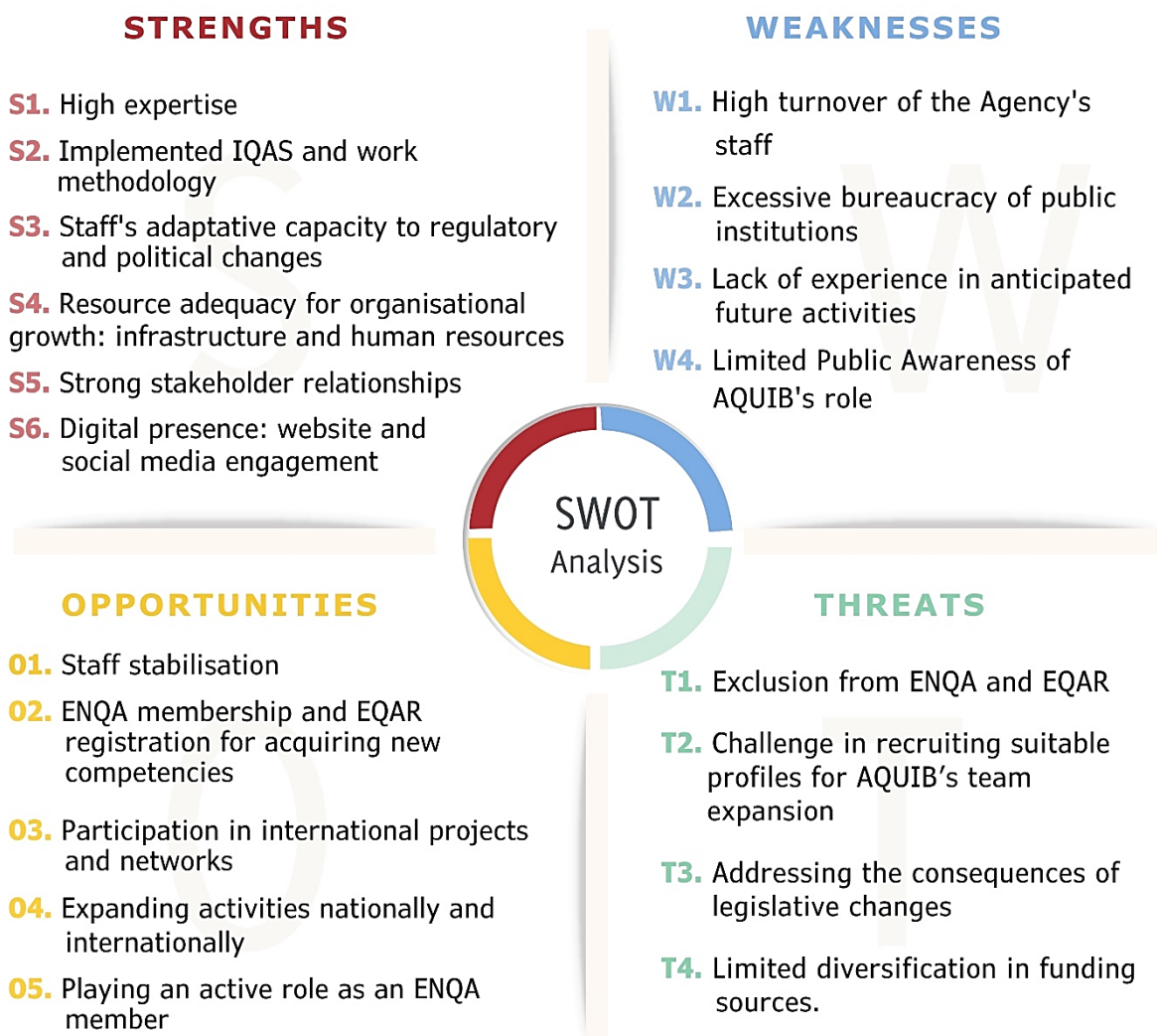


Figure 15. SWOT Analysis

9. KEY CHALLENGES & AREAS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

The SWOT analysis elaborated for this SAR enabled AQUIB to pinpoint its primary challenges and areas for future development. Additionally, this section covers other noteworthy topics.

Key challenges

In tandem with AQUIB's aspirations to undertake new activities following a successful external review, the Agency recognises the imperative need to navigate the current lack of experience in complex tasks such as ex ante accreditation, modification of study programmes, and institutional accreditation. To navigate this challenge, AQUIB is actively exploring a comprehensive training plan. Ideas such as visiting other Spanish agencies and seeking guidance from experienced individuals already involved in AQUIB's work are under consideration.

Simultaneously, the Agency considers enhancing its outreach and engagement efforts to foster collaboration with international organisations and establish partnerships for cross-border evaluations. Again, the lack of experience shall be navigated to accelerate the learning curve and ensure a smoother transition into this novel area.

Identifying alternative financial sources is viewed as advantageous, although it may increase staff workload during the identification, application, and execution phases. Striking a balance between benefits and workload is crucial for the viability of these funding sources. This connects to another key challenge: incorporating artificial intelligence (AI) and digital solutions into AQUIB's operations. Embracing new technologies can enhance efficiency, data management, and overall effectiveness. This may involve investments in technology infrastructure, staff training on new tools, and ensuring the cybersecurity of the systems used.

Reducing bureaucracy in processes is an ongoing challenge for all Spanish quality agencies. Despite the clarity provided by national and regional legislation, some agencies strive to minimise bureaucratic hurdles. AQUIB will also try to elaborate simpler procedures once it holds the responsibility for the whole accreditation cycle in the Balearic Islands.

Finally, with expected growth in the coming years, the Agency is likely to experiment a substantial grow in the next years. Thus, welcoming and training the new staff, and

managing a bigger team, needs to be addressed as a challenge, although it is a welcomed one. Balancing the dynamics of a growing team while maintaining the agility and adaptability of day-to-day operations will be crucial for AQUIB's sustained success in the face of expansion.

Areas for future development

Transitioning from a programme-oriented evaluation to an institutional oriented evaluation can take AQUIB to a new dimension, positioning the Balearic HE Space on par with other regions in Spain. This shift requires proactive collaboration with the university to effectively implement the change.

Moreover, the Agency has the potential to become an active member of ENQA. Currently, it holds membership in associations such as INQAAHE or EARMA. Plus, addressing the substantial impact of AI is imperative. In that line, AQUIB's membership in GAIN since its establishment ensures that the Agency remains at the forefront, actively contributing to HE's adaptation to this new era.

As outlined in this SAR, instituting a multi-year budgetary programme could strengthen both AQUIB's independence and stability. Discussions on this initiative have started, and the Agency is confident that, with the support of the Balearic Government, this milestone will be attained in the near future.

The expected Agency's parallel growth in staff number and the undertaking of new activities pose both challenges and opportunities for AQUIB. Effectively managing this expansion presents a chance to capitalise on growth and propel the agency to a new stage, both nationally and internationally.

ANNEXES

Annex 1. Summary of AQUIB's activities not under the scope of the ESG

R&D&I evaluations

ENTITY (PROJECTS)	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	TOTAL
GD CAIB (R&D&I) Research projects	0	0	71	0	0	71
GD CAIB (R&D&I) Biodiversity projects	0	0	0	0	25	25
GD CAIB (Education) Art study programmes	0	0	2	0	0	2
GD CAIB (Health) Research projects	0	0	0	0	29	29
IdISBa (Health research institute) Research projects	26	0	0	26	21	73
ENTITY (GRANTS)	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	TOTAL
GD CAIB (University) PhD grants	0	0	0	17	15	32
GD CAIB (R&D&I) PhD grants	0	66	69	88	0	223
GD CAIB (R&D&I) Post doc grants	0	63	61	51	0	175
UIB Post doc grants	28	0	20	0	0	48
IME research grants	0	0	0	0	17	17
Total (projects + grants)	54	129	223	182	107	695

Note that GD stands for General Directorate, a body within a regional ministry structure.

Individual teaching staff accreditation

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	TOTAL
<i>No. of evaluations</i>	90	100	114	101	105	510
<i>Positive</i>	69%	64%	65%	69%	70%	68% (mean)
<i>Negative</i>	31%	36%	35%	31%	30%	32% (mean)

Complementary payments

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	TOTAL
<i>Teaching</i>	133 (132)	86 (85)	261 (260)	63 (63)	28 (28)	571 (568)
<i>Research (activity)</i>	127 (126)	63 (63)	242 (242)	82 (82)	70 (70)	584 (583)
<i>Research (excellence)</i>	53 (48)	90 (76)	72 (59)	21 (21)	126 (118)	362 (322)
Total	313 (306)	239 (224)	575 (561)	166 (166)	224 (216)	1517 (1473)

Note: No. of applications (No. of positive)

Annex 2. List of procedures of AQUIB's IQAS

Key procedures	PC02. Individual teaching staff accreditation	Sets the framework for the activity 'individual teaching staff accreditation'
	PC04. Assessment of applications to receive complementary payments	Sets the framework for the activity 'assessment of applications to receive complementary payments'
	PC05. Follow-up of study programmes	Sets the framework, scope and responsibilities of the activity 'follow-up of study programmes in the Balearic University system'. Includes a list of the associated documents, such as the programme guidelines, registers, etc.
	PC06. R&D&I assessments	Sets the framework for the activity 'R&D&I assessments'
	PC07. Ex post accreditations of study programmes	Sets the framework, scope and responsibilities of the activity 'ex-post accreditation for study programmes in the Balearic University system'. Includes a list of the associated documents, such as the programme guidelines, registers, etc.
	PE04. Stakeholder satisfaction	Describes how AQUIB gathers and manages stakeholder satisfaction
	PE05. Nonconformities and derived actions	Describes who can identify nonconformities related to AQUIB's activities included in its IQAS, how they are managed, and when derived actions can be established
Strategic procedures	PE06. Leadership and management	Describes how AQUIB plans and conducts the management and revision of its IQA system
	PE07. Internal audit	Describes the process and requirements of the annual internal audit of the IQA system, as well as instructions for managing the identified improvement actions and their follow-up
	PE08. Context analysis	Describes how and who elaborates the context analysis of AQUIB's activities, including elaboration of a SWOT analysis
	PE09. Risk management plan	Describes how AQUIB approaches and elaborates its risk management plan
Support procedures	PS08. Resource management	Describes how AQUIB ensures that the resources available are adequate to the activities developed and that the necessary actions are taken to improve the internal quality system processes and to increase stakeholder satisfaction.
	PS09. Documentation and register control	Describes the elaboration, distribution, management and archive of IQAS documents, ensuring their traceability and correct management
	PS10. Documentation register and archive	Establishes the instructions to register and archive documents
	PS11. Management of purchases and suppliers	Defines the procedure for acquiring products and contracting services needed to conduct AQUIB's activities
	PS12. Internal and external communication (new 15/12/2023)	Describes the communication mechanisms for stakeholders and AQUIB's staff

Annex 3. Translated staff annual training plan (2023)

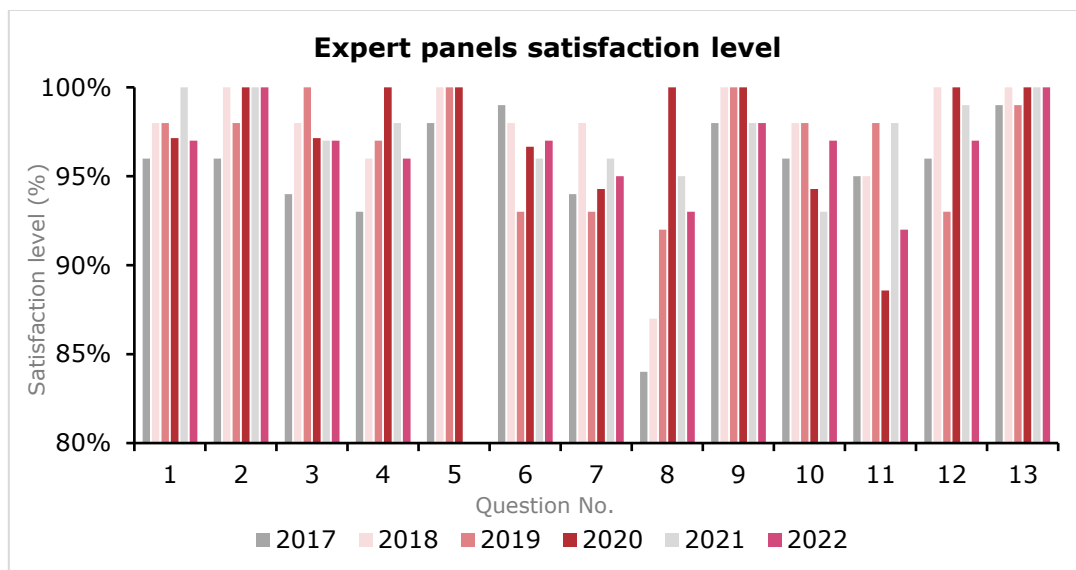
Training course	Type	Attendee	Scheduled date	Start date	Title	Efficiency rate
Advanced Excel	External	Elena	2nd semester 2023		**	**
Advanced Excel	External	Enrique	2nd semester 2023		**	**
Content Management of Social Networks and Digital Image	External	Carlos Antònia Enrique	2nd semester 2023		**	**
Team management	External	Paula	2nd semester 2023		**	**
National Forum for Research Evaluation Reform	External	Paula, Carlos	20/01/2023	20/01/2023	NO	YES
The future of Medical Faculties	External	Paula Carlos Enrique	16/03/2023	16/03/2023	NO	YES
Accreditation renewal of ex post accreditation of official University study programmes	Internal	Antònia	2nd semester 2023	June 2023	NO	YES
Merit evaluation for PDI complementary payments for teaching and research staff	Internal	Antònia	2nd semester 2023	June 2023	NO	YES
xvii MEDES Seminar	External	Carlos	10/07/2023	10/07/2023	YES	YES
External evaluation of grant applications	Internal	Antònia	2nd semester 2023	July 2023	NO	YES
Academic and scientific career in Spain	External	Carlos	September 2023	06/09- 08/09/2023	YES	YES
Course on open code	External	Carlos	Pending to find a course	**	**	**
Occupational risks prevention in the workplace	External	Antònia, Lara	September	27/09/2023	YES	Not rated
Excel 2016	External	Antònia Enrique Carlos	July	July to September	YES	YES
Preparation of administrative contracts	External	Lara	October	02- 23/10/2023	YES	YES

Annex 4. Extended stakeholder satisfaction data

Expert panels

Questions

- 1 Information received from AQUIB's accreditation renewal process
- 2 Doubt resolution regarding the evaluation process
- 3 Documentation for the evaluation (guides, evaluation templates, report templates, etc.) provided by AQUIB
- 4 Duration of the accreditation renewal process
- 5 Travel logistics
- 6 Utility of the information provided by AQUIB for the analysis of qualifications
- 7 Sufficiency of time for the individual preliminary evaluation
- 8 Utility of the virtual meeting of the Expert Panel prior to the visit
- 9 Attention received from AQUIB during the visit
- 10 Has the organisation of the visit allowed the expert to obtain sufficient information for the evaluation?
- 11 Preparation of the visit report (means and time available)
- 12 Process for payment of fees and travel expense
- 13 Overall satisfaction with AQUIB



Remarks

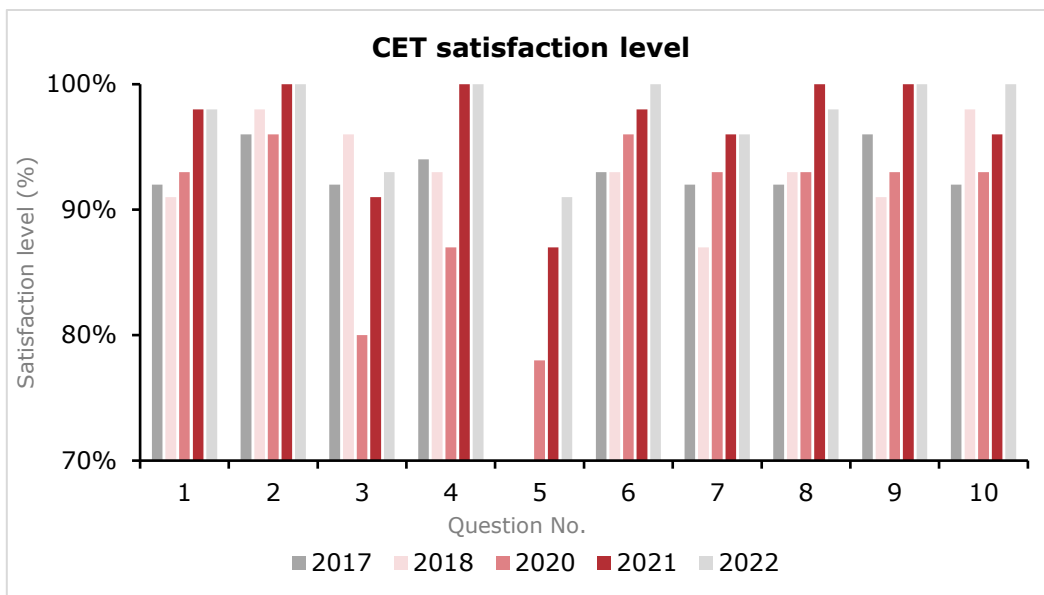
In 2021 and 2022, site visits were conducted online and, as a result, question five was not answered.

The least favourable outcome is 84%, indicating the perceived usefulness of the briefing for review panel members before the site visit. Despite being relatively high, it is considered the lowest result. Another aspect with "low values" (always above 90%; mean 94%) is the preparation of the evidence of site visit (resources and time given). In 2020, the result for this question was 89%, still high but below 90%.

CET

Questions

- 1 Information received from the AQUIB's evaluation process
- 2 Doubt resolution regarding the evaluation process
- 3 Utility of the evaluation guides
- 4 Fee payment process
- 5 Satisfaction with the functioning of the AvaTit platform
- 6 Utility of the information provided by AQUIB for the analysis of study programmes
- 7 Sufficiency of time for the preparation of reports
- 8 Satisfaction with the evaluation process (preliminary evaluation, organisation of meetings, etc.)
- 9 Satisfaction with the evaluation results
- 10 Overall satisfaction with AQUIB



Remarks

AVATIT was implemented in 2020, and thus, this question was not included in the surveys for 2017 and 2018. Satisfaction with this platform has increased thanks to the modifications made in response to feedback from both experts and AQUIB's staff.

The CET was born when the two existing commissions (one responsible of follow-up and one responsible of ex post accreditation) merged in 2019. Thus, that year the satisfaction survey was postponed.

In the upcoming year, AQUIB will particularly focus on items one, two and three as the guides have undergone changes in 2023.

General Comments

Experts are encouraged to share any comments or suggestions in the satisfaction surveys. Typically, comments are commendations about AQUIB's staff, procedures or work. The training received has been praised on several occasions, and the team-working environment is consistently seen as one of AQUIB's strengths.

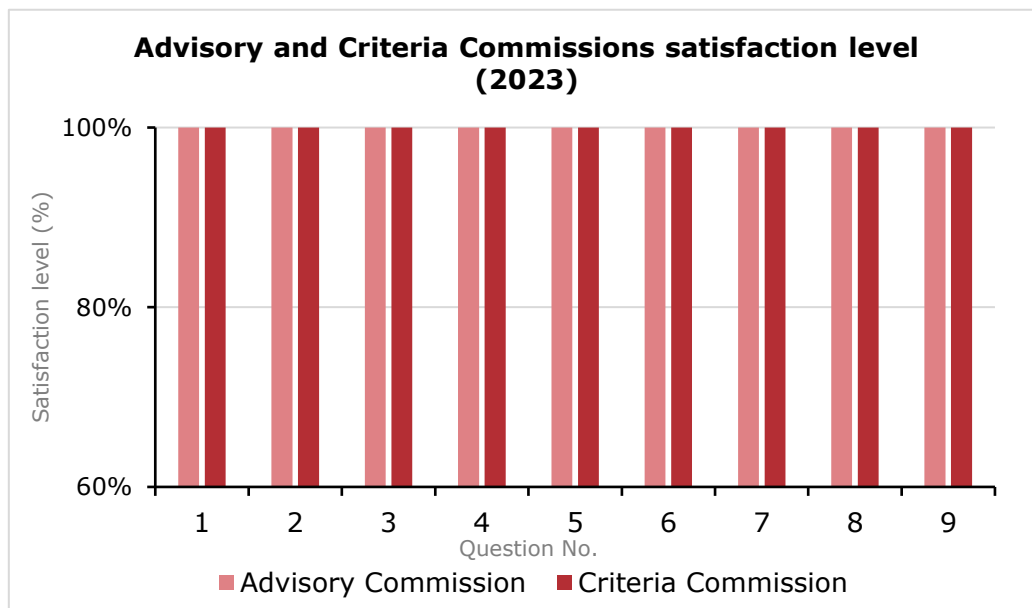
For this SAR, a few examples of other feedback have been selected:

Group	Feedback	AQUIB's response	Year
<i>Panel member</i>	It would be useful if the draft for the evidence of site visit could be downloaded in Word before its completion	This request has been consistently raised, and we will explore its implementation with the IT company responsible for maintaining AVATIT.	2022
<i>CET member</i>	The platform could benefit from implementing text editing features such as bold, underlining, etc.	We have previously discussed this matter with the IT company, and we were informed that it is challenging to implement. We will assess its feasibility for future consideration.	2020
<i>Panel member</i>	It would be preferable if the essential documents required for payment could be provided on the final day of the visit, eliminating the necessity to send them via postal service afterward.	This is a standard procedure; AQUIB prefers not to have the secretary of the panel retain these original documents and instead requests them to be sent directly to the Agency. Additionally, certain expenses may arise after the visit, such as taxi fares and airport parking fees.	2019
<i>Panel member</i>	The time given for the evaluation was rather limited	The University submitted the SAR latter than expected and, to avoid delaying the process, AQUIB adjusted its timing. This will not happen again. The evaluation time for panel members will never be shortened in the future.	2018
<i>Panel members (2)</i>	Virtual meetings occasionally extend unnecessarily beyond the planned duration. The virtual meeting did not add any significant value to the process.	AQUIB is committed to enhancing and optimising the conduct of these meetings to increase their utility. We firmly believe that these meetings are essential and valuable for panel members.	2018

Advisory and Criteria Commissions

Questions

- 1 Information received from AQUIB and the Commission's role
- 2 Doubt resolution regarding the Commission's activities
- 3 Coordination between the Commission and AQUIB
- 4 Fee payment process
- 5 Utility of the information provided by AQUIB for the analysis of the documents to be revised/approved by the Commission
- 6 Sufficiency of time for the revision of the given documents
- 7 Development of the meetings (in-person or virtual)
- 8 AQUIB takes into account the contributions of the Commission to improve its guides and processes
- 9 Overall satisfaction with AQUIB



Remarks

These commissions were both created in 2023 and, consequently, this is the first year AQUIB gathers satisfaction from its members. Survey sent to the Advisory Commission had a 100% response rate, while for Criteria Commission response rate was lower (60%). Regardless, all experts gave the maximum qualification to every item. AQUIB will ensure these outstanding results are maintained in the following years.