STRATEGY FOR ACTION OF AQU CATALUNYA IN THE EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES RESULTING FROM THE EFFECTS OF SARS-COV-2 CORONAVIRUS

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Agència per a la Qualitat del Sistema Universitari de Catalunya

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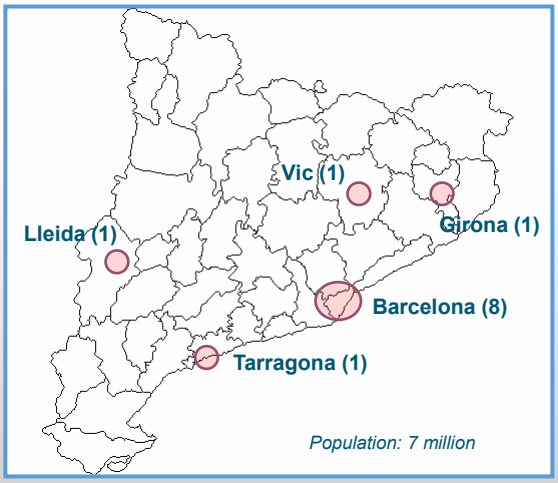
AQU Catalunya

12 UNIVERSITIES: 7 public + 5 private



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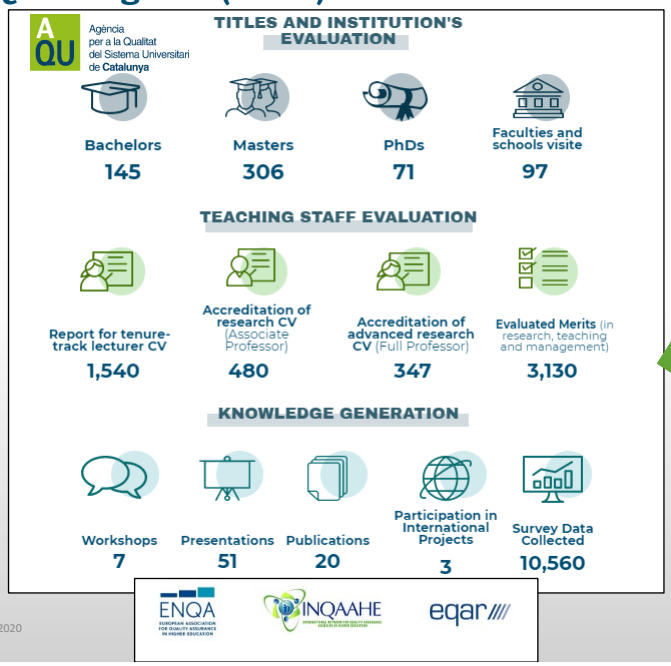
AQU in figures (2019)



INQAAHE GGP's Aligned Agency

7/15/2020 3

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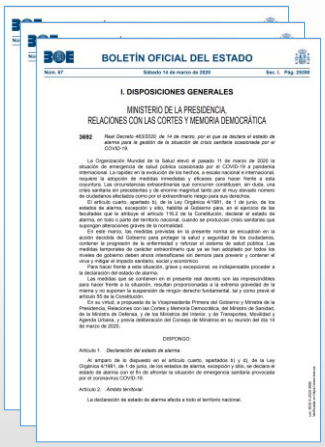
AQU and State of Emergency I



RD 463/2020 – 14 March 2020

Suspension of administrative deadlines for the handling of procedures by public sector entities in Spain
14 March 2020 (incl.)

RD 537/2020 – 22 May 2020

End of suspension of administrative deadlines
31 May 2020 (incl.)

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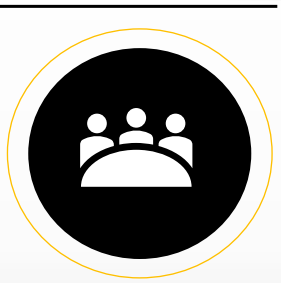
AQU and State of Emergency II



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Contingency plan

- Protect health of AQU staff.
- Activities continue to operate (100%).
- Comply with instructions issued by the Government.

Higher Education System

- **Support and guidance**
- **Safeguarding students' rights**

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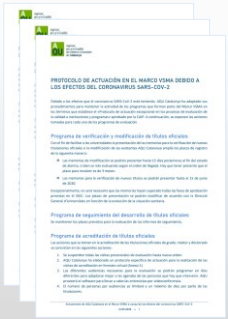
Timeline – Activities AQU

2020 | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | 2021

Normal period — *State of emergency* — *Exceptional period*

16 site visits done
68 site visits pending



01	02	03	04
Review procedures	**Time limits**	**Meetings**	**Remote procedures**
Continue normal	*Defer the time limits for submission and resolution*	*Review committee meetings are to be held online.*	*Adaptation of procedures that can be undertaken remotely with full safeguards for institutions and quality assurance*

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Acreditation's adaptation (I)

Challenges

- Management of uncertainty.
- Preserve students' rights.
- HEI concerns (teaching and learning process; review procedures).
- Mitigating impact on reviews (ensure the same quality of the assessment procedure).
- Overload of teaching staff.

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Acreditation's adaptation (II)

2 Main Principles:

- Higher education institutions are primarily **responsible for the quality** of its academic offer
- The ultimate goal should be **to ensure the acquisition of learning outcomes** by students as well in a period of alarm/exceptionality

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Acreditation's adaptation (III)

Standard's adaptation:

- Access
- Teaching methodology and evaluation
- Public information
- Resources and student's support
- External practices
- Final project

- How to communicate the adaptations to the agency for the future review procedures

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Acreditation's adaptation (IV)

"On site" visits :

- Just for centres that have been visited before (other similar programs) and under a certain conditions
- Avoid work sessions of a full day, split in sessions of ½ day.
- Interviews. Participants:
  - 5-8 people from HEI
  - Peers
- Peers should distribute their direct participation during the interviews.
- 15 min break in between each session.
- No recording.

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Conclusions: AQU point of view

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- Fast and accurate responses to HE system demands.
- Effective communication with HEI.
- Design of an effective review procedure (avoid overload).
- Re-planning (very fast) – agreement HEI.
- Organising visit to facilities.

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Conclusions: AQU point of view

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Lessons learned:

- Elaborate clear instructions for online site visits (peers and HEI).
- Training of experts.
- HEI demands more assistance (new elements).
- Select a robust and easy-use system for teleconferences with a waiting room.
- Begin with an “easy” site visit (re-accreditation…).
- HEI can present further evidences, when required by peers, through email.
- Agenda should be adapted.

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Conclusions: Feedback from Universities

BEGINNING
TO END

Universities were a little bit sceptical with the new format and worried about the possible impact of the procedure on the result of the programme accreditation.

This perception has changed after having the experience and **they show their satisfaction** to AQU Catalunya through informal channels.

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Thank you!

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