

Quality principles

The AAQ views itself as a learning organisation with a corporate culture marked by respect, mutual support and loyalty.

The AAQ places the same high demands for quality on the outcomes of its own work and on its processes as those placed on the procedures conducted at the higher education institutions. Competent and motivated employees are values of central importance to the AAQ.

- The work done by the AAQ is efficient, reliable and of high quality. It respects both the aims of AAQ strategy and the legal requirements.

- The outcomes of the work done by the AAQ are meaningful and transparent. In this way, the AAQ gains the trust of external stakeholders.
- External and internal feedback channels, together with external evaluations, underpin quality development in all the fields of work covered by the AAQ.
- All employees are involved in internal quality development and assurance.
- All procedures are subject to a process of continuous improvement.

Quality is of the utmost priority for the AAQ. Internal quality development and assurance (iQS) ensures that the AAQ attains its quality targets. The iQS system is based on principles that are implemented systematically and it uses feedback loops for all processes. The iQS system regulates day-to-day work, covers all

activities and forms the basis for all stages of work. Responsibilities are clearly defined and communicated in a transparent fashion. As a learning organisation, the AAQ adapts the mechanisms when necessary and improves them on the basis of the regular team meeting and external or internal feedback.

Approaches for the implementation and safeguarding of the quality principles

The director sees quality development and assurance as a central task of management and duly performs this role. He sets out the following approaches in order to establish the quality culture at the AAQ:

1. The employees are committed to internal quality development and assurance and they identify with the quality culture at the AAQ.
2. The processes to assure the quality of procedures and the centralised transversal functions of the AAQ are defined in the organisation handbook.
3. The AAQ keeps a database of all planned, ongoing and completed procedures (procedure database) for the purposes of planning and reporting.
4. The dual-control principle is observed in order to maintain the quality of workflows: at least two employees examine the outcomes of the processes.
5. Specific criteria are used to collect data on the quality of work done by the AAQ. The Agency also gathers feedback from expert groups and from the evaluated institutions.
6. The Accreditation Council scrutinises the composition of expert groups for external evaluations, the applications for accreditation and the award of the AAQ quality seal.
7. The AAQ gives details of the impact of internal quality development and assurance in the annual report, AAQ informs and the synthesis reports.
8. If appointed to do so, a working group will draw up and duly submit proposals for quality development at the AAQ. The transversal centralised "Internal Quality Assurance" function is in charge of this working group.
9. The AAQ is part of a national and international network. It puts forward its mechanisms for quality development and assurance to be discussed by expert committees, thus ensuring their continuous improvement.
10. Every five years, the AAQ undergoes an external review to ascertain whether it meets the "European Standards and Guidelines ESG".

Components for internal quality development and assurance

Explanation: The seven components of internal quality development and assurance, represented in the inner circle of the graph below, are supported by the AAQ working instruments (bottom), and refer to the requirements and results of the activity of AAQ (outside).

