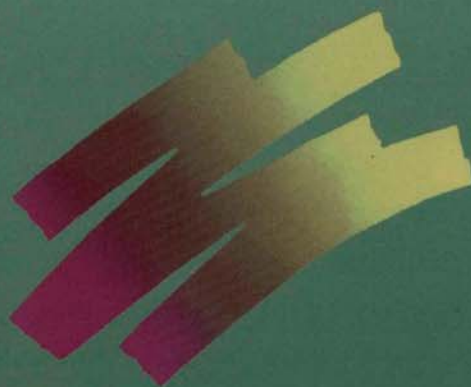




**REPORT ON THE ASSESSMENT
OF THE QUALITY
OF UNIVERSITIES IN SPAIN**



CONSEJO DE UNIVERSIDADES
Secretaría General



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REPORT ON THE FIRST RESULTS OF THE NATIONAL PLAN FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF THE QUALITY OF UNIVERSITIES

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GENERAL SECRETARIAT
UNIVERSITIES COUNCIL

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Castilla-León, Cataluña and Madrid have received grants for the...

DECEMBER 1997

SUMMARY

The aim of the Plan is to promote the assessment of universities, so that they adopt specific initiatives directed towards improving their quality. It also aims to provide information on the quality of universities for the general public and for public administration. The characteristics of the Plan correspond to the recommendations of the European Commission (1996).

The experiences of the Experimental Program of the Council of Universities (1992-1994) and the Pilot Project of the European Union (1994-1995) have permitted the adoption of a model of assessment equivalent to that employed in countries with more experience of university assessment. The European Commission stresses that the use of common method does not lead to a *hierarchical* classification, but rather considers that "quality assessment methods are rules of procedure, but not of content. This means that they define the quality assessment procedure (who participates in it, in what conditions, the aspects to be examined, etc)", but without establishing which criteria determine the quality of an institution.

The Plan does not previously establish which universities, nor which courses or departments are to be assessed in each study; it leaves the study in question to decide on its specific brief when funding is applied for. Assessment is carried out in accordance with the prescriptions established in the Assessment Guide, which is designed as a common method, and not as a questionnaire, for a general review of the characteristics of the university system.

The assessment process begins with an internal review phase, followed by an external review phase (review by *peers*), and concludes with the writing of a report, which the university should make public, and which indicates objectives, situation, strong and weak points, and points to initiatives for improving quality that should be adopted by the institution as a result of the assessment carried out.

1. Appraisal of the first study

46 public and private universities participated. 80.5% of the activities programmed for the study have been carried out, and this figure is expected to rise to 95 or 97% by the end of the year.

The Ministry of Education and Culture and the Autonomous Communities of Andalusia, Castilla-León, Cataluña and Madrid gave specific grants for the co-financing of the assessment with the Universities.

The development of the assessment process is satisfactory, though it could be improved in further studies. The most significant weakness has been the inadequacy of data available, which has led to considerable imbalances in the time distribution of the phases of the process. On occasions, the search for information necessary for the development of the assessment has taken up much of the time that should have been dedicated to the assessment itself.

The reports correspond to the recommendations of the assessment guide and adequately reflect the information available, even though the External Assessment Committees have found cases where significant aspects indicated in the Guide are omitted. The lack of information has not prevented the description of the processes of teaching, research and management. However, this information does not appear to have been taken sufficient advantage of, given that few reports carry out an assessment of the data.

The External Assessment Committees consider, on the basis of the information obtained in the audiences and in direct observation, that the majority of the self-studies adequately reflect the strong and weak points of the course or department. In some cases, though, it has been found that these analyses are incomplete, unclear, make unjustified assessments, and even do not make specific proposals for improving quality.

2. Results of the study

The situation of a university can be summarised by highlighting its strong points and its weak points. Among the former are: increase in quality and quantity of scientific output or the capacity to attend to a growing teaching demand, ever more diversified. Among the latter are: insufficient definition of objectives or the continuity of traditional didactic methods. To these can be added structural difficulties, resulting from organisational changes, and advantages derived from curricular diversity and flexibility. Strengths and weaknesses that permit the proposal of alternatives and the identification of opportunities to improve quality, which are, specifically, the following:

• Defining objectives

One of the most significant shortcomings, demonstrated by the majority of assessment reports, is the lack of specification and formalisation of the aims and objectives of teaching and research. It is generally stressed that identifying with precision, in the university environment, the purpose of research, is a basic requirement for improving teaching programmes and research activity.

- **Establishing a strategic plan**

Another inconsistency, pointed out in the majority of the reports, is the non-existence of strategic plans that permit the assurance of efficacy and effectiveness of teaching and research processes. Thus, in a large number of reports, it is proposed that each university draws up a strategic plan that considers short and medium-term objectives, resources, and the processes necessary for carrying out the activities proposed by the plan.

- **Rationalising study plans**

A third relevant aspect concerns the dysfunctionalities observed in the study plans. Practically all of the reports propose a rationalisation of study plans for correcting the principal deficiencies detected, such as number of teaching hours, organisation of itineraries, fragmentation of subjects, scarcity of real options for the student, narrowness, in practical terms, of the teaching programme, etc.

- **Organisational modification**

In order to strengthen the elements of internal cohesion of teaching programmes, rectifying many of the weak points detected in the teaching processes, which derive from problems of fragmentation in decisions and in the dissolution of decisions, it is suggested that there be created an organ directly responsible for the management and results of each course, with the capacity for effective decision on all didactic and organisational aspects of each programme.

- **Improving information systems**

A considerable improvement of the information systems available to universities in Spain would permit an increase in the quality of decisions at all levels of the university system.

3. Proposals for improving the National Assessment Plan

The method adopted allows the faithful adherence to the objectives of the National Plan, which are to promote institutional assessment and to provide universities and educational administrations with a homogeneous and common procedure for carrying out assessment.

The assessment method is also suitable for providing relevant information about the quality of a university to its immediate environment, and to provide objective information to the educational administrations of the Autonomous Communities.

Nevertheless, with respect to the objective of providing relevant and objective information about the quality of universities for Spanish society in general, for the Ministry of Education and Culture, and for the Universities Council, the method established in the 1996 study and outlined in the Assessment Guide does not appear to be ideal.

The university system needs to offer society a rapid and sufficiently precise diagnosis of its quality. To do this, it should consider the possibility of incorporating in the National Plan an orientation that would permit an immediate check on the principal elements making up the structure, processes and results of the system.

In addition, we should mention the following proposals for improving the National Plan.

- **Organisation and management of the assessment process**

It appears necessary to reformulate the participation of educational administrations in the Autonomous Communities in the assessment Plan, so that they are able to take on a decisive role in the development of the Plan. The activities of the Universities Council would ensure the coordination and adequate homogeneity of the assessment procedures.

It is equally important to strengthen the organisational structure of the General Secretariat of the Council, setting up the Office of assessment management proposed by the National Plan and providing the Universities Council with the human and material resources indicated in the Decree 1947/1995 of December 1st.

- **Simplification and adjustment of the assessment guide**

The assessment guide should be simplified and adapted to the peculiarities of the disciplinary branches, it being necessary at the same time to establish formulas for reducing organisational complexity and costs of the assessment process. It is important to clearly define the articulation of the assessment of research with the rest of the process, especially the assessment of teaching, making clear the relationships between the different assessment levels and units.

I N D E X

	<u>Página</u>
1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT PLAN	5
2.1. Assessment procedure	7
2.2. Appraisal of the first application	9
2.2.1. Universities participating, types of project and schedule.	9
2.2.2. Activities carried out by the General Secretariat of the Universities Council	9
2.2.3. Tasks remaining	13
2.3. Evaluation of the development of the first application	13
2.3.1. Development of the internal assessment process	14
2.3.2. Development of the external assessment process	19
3. RESULTS OF THE FIRST APPLICATION OF THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT PLAN	25
3.1. Teaching	26
3.1.1. Aims and objectives of courses	26
3.1.2. Study plans	27
3.1.3. Teaching development	29
3.1.4. Academic results	30
3.1.5. Students	31
3.1.6. Teaching staff	32
3.1.7. Facilities	33
3.1.8. External relations	34
3.2. Research	34
3.2.1. Objectives	35
3.2.2. Resources	36
3.2.3. Structure	36
3.2.4. Results	37
3.3. University organisation	37
4. PROPOSALS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF QUALITY	41
4.1. Proposal for the improvement of teaching processes	41
4.1.1. Internal measures in the university	41

4.1.2	General measures	43
4.2	Proposals for the improvement of research	44
4.2.1	Internal measures in the department	44
4.2.2	Internal measures in the university	44
4.2.3	General measures	45
4.3	Proposals for the improvement of university organisation	45
4.3.1	Internal measures in the university	45
4.3.2	General measures	45
5.	PROPOSALS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT PLAN	47
APPENDIX I.	List of universities participating in the 1st application of the National Plan for the Assessment of the Quality of Universities	51
APPENDIX II.	List of courses assessed	53

1. INTRODUCTION

At the initiative of the Universities Council¹, and proposed by the Ministry of Education, the Government established, through the Royal Decree of December 1st, 1995 the National Plan for the Assessment of the Quality of Universities², which will be implemented in annual applications.

The first application, proposed by the Universities Council³, was carried out by the Ministry of Education through the Order of February 21st, 1996⁴ and, at the proposal of the General Secretariat of the Universities Council, according to the recommendations of the Technical Committee of the Plan⁵, it was approved by Order of the Minister of Education and Culture on October 30th, 1996⁶.

Article 5 of the above-mentioned Royal Decree establishes that the Universities Council should draw up an annual report, whose proposal, according to Article 7, corresponds to the General Secretariat of the Universities Council.

Paragraph Twelve of the Order for the first application of the Plan stipulates that the organisational structure necessary for its execution should develop in accordance with that which was proposed in the Plenum of the Universities Council, in its session of September 25th, 1995.

It was agreed the Plenum of the Universities Council, among other responsibilities relating to the National Plan, should be responsible for the control and follow-up of its execution, and the approval of an annual report on the quality of universities which would reflect in a global way the results of the Assessment Programme⁷.

¹ Programme of Institutional Assessment of the Quality of Universities. Agreement of the Plenum of the Universities Council, 25th September, 1995.

² Royal Decree 1947/1995, of 1st December, establishing the National Plan for the Assessment of the Quality of Universities. (BOE núm. 294 de 9 de diciembre de 1995).

³ Agreement to propose to the Ministry of Education the characteristics and conditions of the first application of the National Assessment Plan. Agreement of the Plenum of the Universities Council, 14th December, 1995.

⁴ Order of 21st February, 1996, of the application for 1996 of the National Plan for the Assessment of the Quality of Universities (BOE núm.. 51 de 28 de febrero de 1996).

⁵ Second session of the Technical Committee, 24th May, 1996.

⁶ Order of 30th October, 1996, approving financing for the assessment projects presented in the National Plan for the Assessment of the Quality of Universities (BOE núm. 270 de 8 de noviembre de 1996).

⁷ The content of this report refers only to the aspects carried out with reference to 8th November, 1997.

The Universities Council, in its session of July 4th, 1996, in Alicante, set up the Executive Commission of the National Assessment Plan⁸, which is responsible for the follow-up of the Plan and for informing the Plenum of the resolutions it must approve.

Paragraph Eight of the 1996 Order of application indicates that the duration of the annual assessment projects is of one year from the concession of the financing of the project

One year after the concession of the financing of the assessment projects, the General Secretariat of the Universities Council, in collaboration with the Technical Committee of the Plan, and in accordance with the members of the Executive Committee, submits this REPORT ON THE NATIONAL PLAN FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF THE QUALITY OF UNIVERSITIES for consideration by the Plenum of the Universities Council.

⁸ By agreement at the Plenum of the Universities Council, Alicante, 4th July, 1996, the Executive Commission of the Plan, chaired by the Secretary of State for Universities, Research and Development, is composed of the council members of all the Autonomous Communities with powers in matters of university education, by the Vice-Presidents of the Coordination and Planning Commission and of Academic Affairs, by the members of the Plenum Committee of the Universities Council elected by the Autonomous Communities and by the Universities, by the spokespersons of the four Subcommissions of Assessment of Humanities, Experimental and Health Sciences, Social and Juridical Sciences, Technicians and Students, Centres and General Norms of the Universities Council, by the Director General of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education and Culture and by the General Secretariat of the Universities Council.

2. THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT PLAN

This chapter describes the objectives of the National Plan for the Assessment of the Quality of Universities and the principal features of the assessment method, it makes an appraisal of the activities carried out, and it formulates an evaluation of the process developed in the first application.

The National Plan for the Assessment of the Quality of Universities, after the experience of the Experimental Programme of Assessment of the Quality of the University System⁹ and the Pilot Project for the Assessment of Higher Education in the European Union¹⁰, aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To promote the institutional assessment of the quality of universities in the areas of teaching, research and services provided to society.
2. To provide universities and educational administrations with a homogeneous method and some basic common criteria for assessment, compatible with current practice in the European Union.
3. To provide society, and especially actual or potential university students, with relevant and objective information on the quality of Spanish universities.
4. To provide educational administrations and the Universities Council with objective information on the level of quality attained, which may serve as the basis for the making of decisions with regard to their respective responsibilities.

In order to achieve these objectives, the National Plan adopted the following criteria

⁹ The Plenum of the Universities Council agreed in Cádiz, September 1992, to develop an Experimental Programme of Assessment of the Quality of the University System. The results of the Experimental Programme can be seen in document nº 13 Final Report from the Technical Committee of the General Secretariat of the Universities Council, July 1994, which was debated in the meeting on Assessment of Universities in Spain, held in the *Universidad Internacional Menéndez Pelayo*, September 1994.

¹⁰ The European Pilot Project was developed between 1994 and 1995. Its results were presented at the Final Conference held at the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, December 1995.

• Orientation and quality improvement

The assessment process aims to facilitate the development of specific actions for improving the quality of universities, and is not linked directly either to consequences related to financing or to administrative accreditation processes.

This orientation justifies the fact that the course and department are chosen as the institutional objects assessment, given that for the *user* (student or employer) the only reference is the course, while for the teacher, the department is the most direct organisational reference.

The diffusion of the results of assessment will also serve to provide society with greater knowledge of the quality levels attained by each university.

Similarly, educational administrations will be able to consider the results of the assessment projects when making their plans with regard to university matters.

• Voluntary participation in universities

Given that many universities are in a period of consolidation, it does not seem possible to foment a culture of assessment and quality improvement under the direct pressure of obligatory participation and, in accordance with university autonomy as recognised in the Constitution, a mechanism of voluntary participation was established, which allows, moreover, for the possibility of different levels of complexity and schedules of implementation.

In order to favour the necessary homogeneity of assessment processes, accelerate their application and above all guarantee the elements of external assessment, the Plan incorporates a subsidy linked to the quality of the assessment projects presented by the universities.

• Coordination of the Plan

The plan aims to unify the powers of the Autonomous Communities in matters of higher education with the adoption of a common frame of reference for the university system as a whole, establishing organisational instruments that guarantee both the presence of Autonomous Communities in the collegiate organs of the plan's supervision and the possibility of establishing supervision formulas led by the Autonomous Communities through cooperative techniques.

The need to have access to common methodological instruments makes it advisable that responsibility for the coordination of the plan be given to General Secretariat of the Universities Council, supported by a Management Office and a Technical Committee.

• Scope of the assessment

The assessment extends, in a comprehensive way, to teaching, research and university organisation, on the lines rehearsed in the Experimental Assessment Programme carried out between 1992 and 1994.

The Plan has a duration of five years, which should allow the majority of courses and departments of Spanish universities to be included in the assessment process.

2.1. The assessment process

The experiences of the Experimental programme and the European Pilot Project have allowed the adoption of a model of assessment that is compatible with that used in international university systems with more experience, which incorporates for each course and department an internal review process (self-assessment) in addition to an external assessment.

Meanwhile, the European Commission, in its recommendation¹¹ to the Universities Council *relating to European cooperation in questions of guaranteeing the quality of higher education*, points out the need to establish permanent mechanisms of quality assessment and guarantee that allow the assessment of the weak and strong points of higher education institutions in relation to the teaching objectives of each, taking into account its institutional characteristics and its training requirements on a European and world scale.

It also points out that “the use of common methodological elements does not lead to a *hierarchical classification* or a common European norm”, but, on the contrary, that “quality assessment methods are rules of procedure, but not of content. This means that they define the procedure of quality assessment (who participates in it, the aspects to be examined, etc.)”, but without establishing which criteria determine the quality of an institution.

¹¹ Recommendation of the European Commission to the Council relating to European cooperation with respect to guaranteeing quality in higher education. May 1997.

The Assessment Guide developed by the Plan's Technical Committee covers the three dimensions of assessment (Teaching, Research and Management), as well as the criteria for method and organisation (structure and development) of the process.

- **Definition of the courses to be assessed**

The Plan does not previously establish which universities nor which courses or departments are to be assessed in each application, but rather allows the universities themselves, when applying for financing for a specific assessment project, to determine the scope with respect both to the courses to be assessed and to the organisational structure and method, or the assessment process in general, always within the margins established in the 1a Assessment Guide, which is to be considered as a common methodological instrument and not as a questionnaire for a general review of the characteristics of the university system.

- **Internal review**

The assessment process begins with an internal review phase, called self-assessment, which is the responsibility of each university. The Assessment Guide recommends the constitution of a Committee in each of the courses to be assessed, whose function is to write a report. This report, after describing the objectives and situation of each unit of assessment, following the checklist in the Guide, should evaluate, in accordance with the general feeling in the university community, the strengths and weaknesses of the course and departments, at the same time pointing out specific proposals for improving quality.

- **External assessment**

A second phase is constituted by external assessment, the responsibility of the General Secretariat of the Universities Council. The Assessment Guide states that each unit will be visited by an External Committee, selected by the Universities Council, and whose function is to analyse the self-study, comparing it with the information obtained by the systematic carrying out of a set of semi-structured interviews (Internal Assessment Committee, Supervision Teams, Teaching Staff, Administrative and Service Staff, First and Second-Cycle Students, Graduates), and to write an external assessment report that evaluates in an equal manner objectives, situation and weak and strong points, at the same time as making recommendations for improving quality.

- **Assessment report**

The assessment process concludes with the preparation by the Assessment Committee of the evaluated unit, or by the university, of a report integrating the documents generated

in the self-assessment and the external assessment, indicating especially the decisions the institution should take in the light of the assessment. This report, or at least its principal aspects, should be made public.

- **Annual report on the situation of the National Assessment Plan for the Quality of Universities**

A final element is constituted by the report which must be approved annually by the Universities Council. The responsibility for drawing up this report lies with the General Secretariat of the Universities Council, which should collate the overall results of the Plan.

2.2. Appraisal of the first application

2.2.1. Universities participating, types of project and schedule

In the first application of the National Assessment Plan (1996), 46 universities, public and private, participated. These presented 7 global projects, 32 thematic projects and 31 special actions for providing the university with assessment offices. 130 courses were assessed.

The Ministry of Education and Culture financed the assessment projects with 184 million pesetas.

The schedule proposed for each phase of the assessment process is as follows:

1. Self-assessment phase: 5 months.
2. External assessment phase: 3 months.
3. Preparation and approval of assessment report: 2 months.
4. Publication of results: 2 months.

This schedule begins on November 8th, 1996, date of the publication in the *Boletín Oficial del Estado* (Spanish government information bulletin) of the concession of financing. However, some universities did not begin activities related to the Assessment Plan until the actual transfer of the grants approved in that Order.

2.2.2. Activities carried out by the General Secretariat of the Universities Council

The agreement by the Universities Council of September 25th, 1995, as stated in the Royal Decree 1947/1995 of December 1st, entrusts to the General Secretariat of the

Universities Council the supervision and coordination of the National Assessment Plan, for which it will have the assistance of a Technical Committee.

In order to assist the General Secretariat in the tasks deriving from the coordination and supervision of the Plan, the Universities Council proposed the creation, within the General Secretariat, of an office for the management of the assessment of the quality of universities, with a qualified staff under the directorship of a Vice-Secretary of the Council.

However, up to the present, such an office has not yet been created. In order to facilitate the Plan's supervision, the General Secretariat of the Universities Council entrusted, in January of 1996, the Vice-Secretary of Studies with the responsibility of carrying out the functions proposed for the Management Office, despite the fact that up to now the Universities Council has not yet been provided with the personal and material resources proposed in the Second Final Disposition of the Royal Decree for the development of the National Plan.

Since the approval of the National Plan the General Secretariat of the Universities Council has carried out the following activities:

• **Constitution of the Technical Committee**

The Technical Committee¹² was set up in the Rectorate of the Universidad Politécnica de Cataluña on March 15th, 1996, and its functions are the following:

1. To approve protocols, guides and technical norms for the assessment of the quality of universities.
2. To assess the quality and viability of the projects presented by the universities.
3. To organise training and preparation of university assessors.
4. To appoint external assessors for each project.

¹² Agreement, 25th September, of the Plenum of the Universities Council, establishing the National Assessment Plan, determining that the Technical Committee will be chaired by the General Secretariat of the Universities Council, and that it will be made up of experts in educational, research and university management assessment, named by the Council's President. They will be members from the Technical Committee of the Director General of the Ministry of Education and Culture with powers in the area of university teaching, who will act as Vice-President of the Technical Committee, the Director of the National Agency of Assessment and Prospectives, and the Vice-Secretary of the Universities Council, on whom depends the Office of Assessment Management.

By Order of 13th March 1996 (BOE núm. 68 de 19 de marzo), the Education Ministry designated as members of the Technical Committee of the National Plan for the Assessment of the Quality of Universities the following experts: D. Sebastián Rodríguez Espinar, Catedrático de Métodos de Investigación y Diagnóstico en Educación, de la University de Barcelona; D. José Ginés Mora Ruiz, Profesor titular de Economía Aplicada de la University de Valencia; D. Mario de Miguel Díaz, Catedrático de Métodos de Investigación y Diagnóstico en Educación, de la University de Oviedo; D. Miguel Ángel Quintanilla Fisac, Catedrático de Lógica y Filosofía de la Ciencia, de la University de Salamanca; D. Francisco Pérez García, Catedrático de Fundamentos del Análisis Económico, de la University de Valencia; D. Lluís Jofre Roca, Catedrático de Teoría de la Señal y Comunicaciones, de la University Politécnica de Catalunya; D. Miguel Valcárcel Cases, Catedrático de Química Analítica, de la University de Córdoba.

5. To approve a report on each assessment project.
6. To cooperate with the General Secretariat in the preparation of an annual report on the quality of universities, which will be subject to the judgement of the follow-up commission for its approval in the Plenum of the Universities Council.
7. To advise the General Secretariat on all matters related to the National Programme of Institutional Assessment of the Quality of Universities.

Since its constitution there have been 7 plenary sessions¹³ and 36 working group sessions of the Technical Committee.

• **Elaboration of the technical documentation**

The Plan's Technical Committee has prepared the technical documentation necessary for carrying out the assessment process, which includes the following documents:

1. Assessment Guide.
2. External Assessor Guide.
3. Material for Assessment Committee training sessions.

• **Presentation of the characteristics of the National Assessment Plan**

After selection of the assessment projects of the first application of the Plan, two types of action were carried out in order to provide those responsible for the participating universities with the technical information necessary for the development of the plan, and to make known the assessment objectives and procedures to the university community.

¹³ Below are indicated the most important dates and accords of each of the plenary sessions of the Technical Committee.

Inaugural session: 15th March 1996. It was agreed to approve the work schedule and the setting-up of four working groups. One of these, a permanent group, was formed by D. Sebastián Rodríguez Espinar, D. Mario de Miguel Díaz, D. José Gines Mora, assisted by the Vice-Secretary of Studies of the Universities Council.

The second session was held on 24th May 1996, and it was agreed to propose to the General Secretary of the Council the financing of the projects presented in the 1996 application.

The third session was held on 18th June, 1996, and approved the Assessment Guide and the training programme for the external and internal assessment committees.

The fourth session was held on 4th September, 1996, and approved the criteria for the selection of the members of the external assessment committees.

In the fifth session, held on 23rd January, 1997, a draft of the 1997 application of the National Assessment Plan was discussed, together with a discussion of the guide for external assessors.

In the sixth session, held on 10th April, 1997, the members of the external assessment committees were selected.

In the seventh session, 7th October 1997, the characteristics of the annual report on the National Assessment Plan were discussed.

1. Presentation to the Chairpersons of the Assessment Committees of the Universities (May 1996).
2. Presentation to the members of the Assessment Committees of the Universities and Courses (June-July 1996).

• **Training of the Internal Assessment Committees**

Representatives of the Assessment Committees of all courses and those responsible for the technical units of assessment of the universities attended, in the town of Jaca, a seminar (November 1996) on the Assessment Guide, oriented especially to the internal review process (self-assessment).

• **Selection and training of External Assessment Committees**

The number of courses selected in the first application of the Plan made for considerable organisational complexity. This difficulty was increased by the necessity to carry out external assessment in a short space of time, which meant employing a large number of external assessors. The members of the External Committees were selected by the Technical Committee, made up of three different types of member: academics from the corresponding subject area; non-academics working in the professional context pertaining to the course; and experts in assessment.

The members of the External Committees participated in two training sessions (May and November 1997) on the Assessment Guide, and especially on the External Assessment Process.

• **Coordination of the external assessment**

In April half of the courses had still not finished the self-study, and given that assessment visits must take place during term-time, the General Secretariat of the Universities Council took the decision to put back half of the external assessment process until November 1997. Increasing the period available for the carrying out of self-studies in this way enabled all the universities to conclude the first phase of self-assessment, in September 1997.

Between the months of May and June 1997, in accordance with the schedule initially proposed, external assessment of half of the courses was carried out (mainly in the fields of Engineering and Experimental Sciences), whilst the remainder began in the second half of November 1997.

2.2.3. Outstanding tasks

The level of completion of the activities proposed in National Assessment Plan in its 1996 application, evaluated as a function of the cost of each of the phases of the process, is 80.5%.

The internal review phase (self-assessment), which represents 33% of the Plan, was carried out in its entirety.

The external assessment phase, representing 32% of the Plan, was carried out to a level of 50%.

The creation of assessment units through financing by means of special actions, representing 16.4% of the Plan, was totally covered.

The coordination by the General Secretariat of the Council of External Assessment Committees, representing 4.4% of the Plan, was carried out in its entirety.

Lastly, activities related to the management of the plan, accounting 14.2% of the total actions proposed, has been covered up to now to a level of 75%.

By the end of the year completion level of the activities of the first application was expected to reach 95 or 97%. It is important to underline that still, at the time of writing, and with the deadline reached, no university¹⁴ had returned its final assessment report to the Council.

2.3. Evaluation of the first application

In general terms, the development of the first application of the Plan is satisfactory, even though there is room for improvement in later applications. The quality of the assessment process in this application, as could be expected, varies considerably, and is dependent on, among others, the following factors:

1. Successful participation in the Experimental Programme of Assessment or the European Pilot Project.
2. The previous existence of *technical units* familiar with the requirements of the assessment process.
3. The existence of information systems capable of providing the data required for the evaluation process.

¹⁴ Varias Universities are concluding their final report. Only the Universidad Politécnica de Catalunya, in October 1997, sent to the General Secretariat a draft final report.



4. The composition established by the universities for their internal committees and the human, material and institutional support they received.

The implementation of the National Plan enjoyed the explicit support of those responsible for the institutions of the university system. The resources and presentation actions constituted suitable instruments for the diffusion of the Plan.

The boost given by the Government Teams of the Universities was extremely positive. In some cases, they put back the effective start of the assessment activities until the transfer of the funds assigned to the Plan, a delay which could be explained not in terms of economic disposition for the carrying out of the projects, but by the weakness of the assessment culture and the fragility of the technical infrastructure of internal support of the institutions themselves.

The previous assessment experience of each university and the image generated by them, the intensity of the internal institutional support, the mechanisms of decision on the project presented and the individual experiences of assessment of the members of the university community are elements that necessarily influence the climate of the assessment project of each university.

The most problematic points detected in the process relate to the following aspects:

1. When the course evaluated is carried out in an institution where other courses are offered, when there is a great dispersion of research groups in the departments or when these include disparate areas of knowledge or their units are not integrated geographically, the Assessment Committees did not adapt sufficiently to the prescriptions of the Assessment Guide.
2. The lack of adjustment of the different databases of the institution to those requiring an institutional assessment process has led to important imbalances with respect to the time distribution in the different phases of the process. On occasions, the search for information has consumed the greater part of the energies of those involved in assessing.
3. The amplitude and intensity of the phase of diffusion of internal information was not, in general, sufficient for establishing a suitable climate.

2.3.1. Development of the internal assessment process

The first tangible result of the National Plan was the preparation of the entire set of self-assessment reports proposed.

• Characteristics of the process

Despite the indications of the Assessment Guide, there are very few self-assessment reports which explicitly evaluate the process carried out. In some extreme cases, there is not even any mention of the composition of the Assessment Committee responsible for the report or the institutional representation of its members.

The cases in which there is a description of the self-assessment process appear to correspond to the existence of a greater awareness of the importance of this information for providing an interpretation that fits the report in the context of an approach oriented towards improving the quality and the situation of the unit assessed.

• Assessment Committees

Schematically, we can distinguish two basic orientations in the composition of the Assessment: one emphasises institutional representation, through the integration of those responsible for the government teams, while the other stresses their operative function, incorporating those responsible for the unit assessed and technical staff.

The two objectives are equally necessary for the effective development of the assessment process, and for the viability of the proposals for improvement. The weight of each component in the committee reflects the solution adopted by the university. The majority of the committees have combined members of each type, and no general rule is observed. In the University Committees academic heads have greater weight than in the Course Committees.

The greater the weight of the institutional representation, the greater the responsibility of the technical support structures for the Committee, and the greater the risk that self-assessment is not taken on by the units evaluated. Those universities that have carried out assessment of courses with only a University Committee constitute an extreme example of this situation.

Beyond a certain threshold of representativity, the operative component appears to facilitate the development of self-assessment and the assumption by the assessed unit of responsibility for the process and its results.

The assumption of a greater role by those responsible for courses was facilitated by the assignation of technical support staff to the Course Committee. In this case, the legitimacy of the assessment with regard to the different parts of the institution (teaching staff, administrative and service staff, students) is ensured by establishing mechanisms of participation and consultation during the process and observing the periods of internal audience of the self-assessment reports.

An extreme example of "operative" orientation is found in some universities which explicitly avoided including academic heads in the Assessment Committees. However, the most frequent case is that the Course Assessment Committee was made up of directors of the institution and the departments, by teachers, by administrative and service staff (generally from the secretariat of the institution) and by students. Where students were not present, the External Assessment Committees considered this to be negative, and in some cases asked for their presence.

In any case, it was observed that training and internal diffusion of the process were not sufficient in order to achieve the cultural change that is essential for taking advantage of the efforts of assessment. Numerous External Assessment Committees point out that the groups consulted were unaware of the process carried out, and that they only knew of the Self-Assessment Report because of the external visit. This ignorance may be attributable to both to a lack of visibility and the scant importance given by some groups to the assessment process.

• Time periods

Despite a considerable number not strictly observing the exact time periods established at the outset, there have been no indications in the self-evaluation reports of any problems in complying with them. In any case, the difficulties seem to have occurred in the manner in which time was allocated in the internal process.

The committees seem to have spent too long obtaining information, and too little discussing, integrating and interpreting and judging the figures and trends. This distribution of effort could be a result of their being short on experience or the general tendency to avoid enforced assessment.

This experience may suggest that it would be convenient to draw up more detailed recommendations for self-evaluation procedure. Nevertheless, the diversity in the way universities and degree courses are organised makes it difficult to establish a sequential plan of action which is applicable in all cases (beyond the large procedural sections already collected in the presentation of the evaluation guide: information and publication; collection and analysis of figures; drawing up and discussion of the report; etc.)

• Sources of information: obtaining and interpreting of figures

The problems relating to the time and effort dedicated to obtaining the necessary figures for the institutional analysis of the development of teaching and research reflect the generalised lack of trustworthy data bases which have not been brought up-to-date or

integrated. These should provide correct information for evaluation and decision-making with respect to the academic processes in the university system.

In general, this difficulty has been partially overcome by collecting during the self-evaluation process the information relating to skills or the individual results of teachers in teaching and research. It has been more difficult, in the time periods involved in the process, to obtain information which requires the processing of the system of institutional management (such as the figures which refer to success rates in teaching and research).

Despite these difficulties, in general the reports have observed the structure of the evaluation guide and reflect the available information adequately (although some External Evaluation Committees have found cases which sidestep points, aspects or dimensions expressly indicated in the Guide).

The lack of information has not obstructed the description of the processes of teaching, research and management. However, this information does not seem to have been sufficiently utilised by the Evaluation Committees, as there are few reports which have developed mere description into critical interpretation of the figures. There are even less which analyse trends.

Despite this, from the information provided by audiences and direct observation, the External Evaluation Committees consider that the majority of the self-studies adequately reflect the strengths and weaknesses of the degree courses (which are, in general, coherent with the figures in the rest of the report). In other cases, it has been noted that this analysis suffers from reflecting exclusively the perspective of the teaching staff, a lack of clarity about results, a lack of a guarantee through relevant information and a lack of explanation of plans for improvement.

• **Relationship between process and results**

In terms of results, the solutions are similarly effective for the various institutions, as the results of the self-evaluation (with respect to obtaining and using critical integrated analysis) do not appear to depend on the composition of the committee.

In this sense, the processes of self-evaluation and its results have been, in general terms, less problematic in the degree courses which involve the analysis of one department than in those which concern several departments or the whole centre even though different working relationships between the different departments or centres are quite possible.

In the case of degree courses which involve more than one department a lack of integration between the analysis of different units is relatively frequent. This is more

evident in the evaluation of research, where integration between departments is not usually the case. The processes in the departmental units have been better able to encourage a collective commitment to the evaluation process and a greater willingness to utilise it for improvement.

According to the different styles of management and internal organisation of the Evaluation Committee, those with reduced teams of managers or where work is divided up amongst participants have been more efficient in resolving the problems raised by the process.

Although the size and the relative complexity of the unit are influential factors, the quality of the process cannot be attributed wholly to them and the results were not substantially different, despite there being notable differences between degree courses in terms of:

1. Institutional context (type of university, size, age).
2. Type of degree course (short cycle/long, area of knowledge).
3. Composition of teaching staff (categories, subjects).
4. Organisation of the process, especially regarding participation in writing the self-report.
5. Favourable disposition to the process and relative professional experience.

On the other hand, the capacity for encouraging collective commitment and involvement, organisational efficiency and institutional identity seem to be important factors in the success of the process.

In the cases where the Degree Course Evaluation Committee decided a technical division of work according to areas of evaluation (teaching, research, management), the External Evaluation Committees have found more problems in writing or finally integrating the self-study.

• Advantages and risks of the self-evaluation procedure

The procedure of self-evaluation highlights the responsibility of the unit itself in terms of the process and the results of the evaluation. This design supposes (for better or worse) that the processes are conditioned by the situation and the way the institutions function internally. This is reflected both in the capacity of the Evaluation Committee to encourage interest, collaboration and participation of the different sectors of the university community, and in the writing process (collection of figures, synthesis/integration of aspects, valuations and criticisms, proposals) and the degree of consensus about the report.

As a consequence, in the *problematic* cases a dilemma arises concerning the value of what the self-evaluation has produced:

They can be a good reflection of the existing reality. This represents information about the situation of the organisation which is useful in itself with regard to institutional diagnosis.

But they can be of little value in terms of their technical quality in aspects as follows: limitations in the trustworthiness and validity of the reported figures, little use of available data, unbalanced analysis between self-criticism and self-complacency, lack of integration and synthesis: lack of identification of the strengths and weaknesses and an absence of viable proposals for improvement of the weak aspects and in terms of proposals for improvement (or its exclusive attribution to external factors), doubts about the legitimacy of the report, scarce use of the report for internal debate and improvement or for external comparison.

These cases can even be counter-productive in the short and long terms. In the short term, because they can lead to internal tensions in terms of the responsibility of the decision and development of the self-evaluation process, criticism and lack of collaboration in the process and, finally, scepticism regarding the aims, the process and its results. The immediate effect can be the misuse of the intervening teams, both those directly responsible for the evaluation process (especially for the drawing-up of the report) and those academically responsible for the unit and, finally, those of the technical unit. The long-term effect is the general loss of prestige for the process and the evaluation agents.

These possible perverse effects of a problematic self-evaluation can be neutralised by contrasting the internal process with the external evaluation and ensuring that the consequences of the evaluation for the participating institution and degree courses can be seen.

2.3.2. Development of the external evaluation process

Two qualifications should be made to value the contents of this section correctly:

1. Before the completing the final reports the opinions of those who will assess this phase of the general process are unknown.
2. The sources of information utilised are centred exclusively on what is reflected in the reports issued by the External Experts' Committees.

• The valuation of the evaluation process by the External Evaluation Committees

Apart from isolated cases, all the External Evaluation Committees have tackled this point in the report. From the analysis of this section a series of assessments should be highlighted which provide a positive image of the general process of evaluation.

1. There is unanimity about the relevance and usefulness of the external evaluation phase.
2. This evaluation phase has been carried out with the scrupulous completion of the designed evaluation process, in accordance with the recommendations of the External Evaluation Guide.
3. In general, the different External Evaluation Committees have detected a satisfactory or very satisfactory climate during their visit. Some of the initial suspicion or reticence has come through failings in the internal processes of information-communication-implication of the evaluated units.
4. There have been no special omissions in their report. The lack of information about the reaction phase of the degree course to the External Evaluation Committees report can be interpreted as demonstrating the lack of conflict between internal and external evaluation. The principle of complementarity has been observed. This principle was defended in the model adopted because of the lack of assessments made by those to whom the evaluation is directed.
5. There is a positive view of the collaboration and help given to the External Evaluation Committee by the universities' Evaluation of Technical Units, where they boasted a minimum infrastructure and organisation.
6. The technical documentation to support their work, with special reference to the External Evaluation Guide, was also viewed positively.
7. There was a positive opinion of the number and type of audiences included in the external evaluation process. The objections-suggestions referred to the following aspects: Different audiences of the managing team and the management of the departments; Specific audience for third cycle students; Ensuring a significant presence of graduates; More time to visit facilities.
8. Positive view of the participation of the different audiences, producing isolated cases in which the participants in the audience did not know the contents of the self-study which had been drawn up.

The most problematic aspects in the opinion of the External Evaluation Committees refer to three points:

1. Not availing of the programmed time (one month) for the self-study is viewed as a negative factor in the work of the External Evaluation Committee. In the cases where the given time period was observed, the view of this phase (analysis of self-study) is very positive.
2. General agreement about the lack of time for a relaxed and thoughtful visit. When the work of the External Evaluation Committee shows depth, interest and commitment to the institution, it is clearly suggested that the time devoted to the external visit be increased by one day.
3. Some External Evaluation Committees considered as a defect the absence of an external expert from the professional field connected with the evaluated degree course. Except in one university, which by increasing to four the number of external experts has included one or two professional experts, there have only been occasional situations when this type of expert has been available. Similarly, and in occasional cases, the presence of an international academic expert has been suggested.

• Valuation of external evaluation

The following sections analyse two aspects of the work carried out by the External Evaluation Committees: the structure of the contents of the evaluation and the nature of the evaluation carried out. The former examines the degree of compliance with the recommendations contained in the Evaluation Guide. The latter examines the nature and typology of the value judgements issued.

• The structure of the contents of the external evaluation report

In general terms, the External Evaluation Committees have systematically tackled the different subsections of each of the three dimensions evaluated (teaching-research-management), although it is true that such a systemisation is much more apparent in teaching than in research or even less in management.

In only one case is it argued that it is not necessary to carry out any other evaluation of the research further to what was carried out within the sections of research.

The quality of work carried out by the External Evaluation Committee can be demonstrated through two extreme cases:

1. Presented with a self-study which was barely structured or explained, the External Evaluation Committee carried out an excellent evaluation report, adding figures, arguments and value judgements to this weak self-study.

2. Presented with a formally correct self-study, although hardly endowed with depth, the External Evaluation Committee carried out a superficial report, dedicating only a few paragraphs to the valuation of teaching and research. It could be considered paradigmatic of badly carried out work.

In general terms the External Evaluation Committee include in their reports assessments and recommendations for improving quality.

The assessment made of the strengths and weaknesses of what has been presented in the Self-Study (modified by the External Committee itself for each point proposed) in comparison with those identified by the External Experts' Committee, demonstrate the high standard of the External Committees' work.

• The nature of the evaluation carried out

The External Committees have tried to establish value judgements - sometimes fragmentary ones- about the unit evaluated. Only some of the External Committee Reports describe (in resumé form) the contents of the Self-Study, without establishing any type of contrast.

In general, in making assessments the External Evaluation Committees have tended to include figures on research than on teaching or management. It can be deduced that the External Committees, on lacking benchmarks in the fields of teaching and management, encounter technical difficulties or disagree about criteria in identifying the relevant figures in terms of the quality of a degree course.

All too often the external evaluation has centred on organisational procedure and quantity to the detriment of deeper aspects. In teaching, the number of teachers is stressed but not their training. Similarly the efficient administrative organisation of examinations is mentioned but not the relevance of the form and content which relates to training aims.

Finally, it should be stressed that some External Committees have reflected seriously on the intrinsic quality of educational plans (from the perspective of science and training of professionals), going beyond the mere description of the academic and administrative structure of the plan.

In an evaluation model orientated to improvement, one of the functions of the External Evaluation Committees is to be consultors for the organisation evaluated in relation with the actions to be undertaken for raising its level of quality. In consequence they have to adapt the explained proposals to the facts and possibilities. In this sense, a significant part of the recommendations of the External Committees are quite difficult.

In general, most of the recommendations are addressed at the system (university - administration) and are of the following types:

1. Greater and better control of student admissions (less places . entrance exams).
2. More and better resources (teachers, laboratories, libraries...).
3. Less workload on teachers...

Only in some reports do the External Committees tackle proposals for improvement which could be carried out by the degree course itself and are of the following types:

1. Greater student attention-information.
2. Adaptation of programmes.
3. Adaptation of course options etc...

The external function in shortfall situations, as well as the emphasising of the contribution of external resources as a basic factor for the increase in quality is mostly a consequence of a reference framework which corresponds to a culture with a scarce predominance of an autonomous model of management.

The Spanish university conforms to a complex system which has been expanding from the mid-nineteen sixties and subject to considerable tensions as a result of the diversity and heterogeneity of social, economic and political demands.

The size of this system can be summarized as follows:

1. In all the Autonomous Regions there is, at least, one university.
2. In almost all municipalities with populations of more than 50,000 there is a university.
3. The number of students is over one and a half million. The level of enrolment has nearly tripled over the last twenty five years and has gone from one of the lowest (8th in Europe) to one of the highest in the European Union (3rd place) and the OECD.
4. The number of university graduates is well over three million. The level of graduation, while remaining one of the lowest in Europe and the OECD has almost doubled in the last decade.
5. Expenditure on higher education, which comprises 1% of GDP, has increased fourfold over the last twenty years.

2. In general terms the External Evaluation Committee carries out the following paragraphs to the valuation of teaching and research. It could be considered as follows:

1. Greater and better control of student admissions (less physical constraints).
2. More and better resources (teachers, laboratories, libraries...).
3. Less workload on teachers...

The assessment made of the strengths and weaknesses of what has been presented in the Self Study (modified by the External Committee itself for each point proposed) is only in some reports do the External Committees lack proposals for improvement, comparison with those identified by the External Committees, and are of the following types:

1. Greater student attention information.
2. Adaptation of programmes.
3. Adaptation of course options etc...

The External Committees have tried to establish criteria to be used in making the assessment of the external function in similar situations, as well as the emphasis of the Reports received in relation to the content of the Self Study. The condition of external resources as a basic factor for the increase in quality is usually a consequence of a reference framework which corresponds to a certain level of science and management.

in general, in making assessments the External Evaluation Committees have tended to include figures on research (as well as on teaching or management). It can be deduced that the External Committees are lacking benchmarks in the fields of teaching and management, encounter technical difficulties or disagree about criteria in identifying the relevant figures in terms of the quality of a degree course.

All too often the external evaluation has centred on organisational procedure and quantity to the detriment of deeper aspects. In teaching, the number of teachers is stressed but not their training. Similarly the efficient administrative organisation of examinations is mentioned but not the relevance of the form and content which relates to training aims.

Finally, it should be stressed that some External Committees have reflected seriously on the intrinsic quality of educational plans (from the perspective of science and training of professionals), going beyond the mere description of the academic and administrative structure of the plan.

In an evaluation model orientated to improvement, one of the functions of the External Evaluation Committee is to be consultants for the organisation evaluated in relation with the actions to be undertaken for raising its level of quality. In consequence they have to accept the responsibility of the facts and possibilities. In this sense, a significant part of the recommendations of the External Committees are quite difficult.

3. FIRST RESULTS OF THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT PLAN

This section gathers the first results (Ministerial Directive of 21 February 1996) of the National Plan of Evaluation of the Quality of Universities (Royal Decree of 1 December 1995), evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of some of the degree courses presented in reports drawn up by the Universities. It includes general conclusions about education, research and university organisation. Given that the universities, without guidance, defined the degree courses to be evaluated and that generally the Universities' Council proposed the subsidising of all the projects, under no circumstances should the results be considered a statistically representative sample of the university system, even though all the universities participated.

The Spanish university conforms to a complex system which has been expanding from the mid-nineteen sixties and subject to considerable tensions as a result of the diversity and heterogeneity of social, economic and political demands.

The size of this system can be summarised as follows:

1. In all the Autonomous Regions there is, at least, one university.
2. In almost all municipalities with populations of more than 50,000 there is a university.
3. The number of students is over one and a half million. The level of enrolment has nearly tripled over the last twenty five years and has gone from one of the lowest (8th in Europe) to one of the highest in the European Union (3rd place) and the OECD.
4. The number of university graduates is well over three million. The level of graduation, while remaining one of the lowest in Europe and the OECD has almost doubled in the last decade.
5. Expenditure on higher education, which comprises 1% of GDP, has increased fourfold over the last twenty years.

A large transformation occurred through the constitutional programme which guaranteed the right of autonomy of nationalities and regions and recognised the autonomy of the universities, within the framework of a social and democratic State of Law. This resulted in a profound change in the university and scientific systems, expressed in the Constitutional Law 11/1983 of 25 August, of University Reform and in Law 13/1986 of 14 April, of Development and General Co-ordination of Technical and Scientific Research.

The state of the Spanish University can be summarised by stressing its strengths and weaknesses.

Among its strengths is the increase in the quality and quantity of scientific production and its capacity to attend to a growing demand for increasingly diversified education.

And among its weaknesses in many cases is the failure to define aims or the reliance on traditional educational strategies.

There are also structural difficulties due to changes in organisation and advantages which come from a more diversified and flexible curriculum.

3.1. Teaching

The growth and diversification of university degree courses together with the reform of education plans characterise university teaching today.

In the Spanish University there is a widely held belief that elements of planning and rationalisation should be introduced which articulate the teaching process. Meanwhile, there is a demand for education plans to be revised, enabling the university's functions to be reconsidered.

3.1.1. Goals and aims of degree courses

- **Failure to define aims**

Generally, degree courses do not identify the goals and aims which justify and orientate their teaching programmes. In most evaluation reports the aims of the degree course are expressed in generic form and are restricted to the transcription of general directives.

In addition, degree courses normally lack the mechanisms for checking the attainment or viability of proposed goals, preventing reorientation of performance strategies and teaching processes.

Given that a great part of teaching is developed without indicating the goals by which quality may be valued, as a consequence there is a tendency to opt for indirect indicators of quality (pass marks to gain entry to studies, level of demand, levels of success, levels of employment, etc.) which are generally interpreted in an excessively simplified and biased manner.

- **Lack of precision in the professional and academic profile**

There is a great variety and lack of exactitude in professional and academic profiles which are given in teaching guidelines. When profiles are laid down they are not justified through studies on the needs of society or the labour market, nor on the academic logic behind each degree course.

Moreover, on many occasions there are no procedures for analysing the conditions for the incorporation of graduates into the workplace. This impedes us from knowing how demand is evolving and what professional needs are required.

- **Lack of differentiation in teaching programmes**

When they exist, neither in the identification of goals and aims nor in the definition of professional or academic profiles is there a clear differentiation between the first three-year cycle of study (diplomas) and longer courses (degrees) within the same scientific field. Differentiation is only made in terms of theoretical weight with no reference to the professional or academic orientation of studies.

3.1.2. Education Plans

- **Defects in education plans**

The great majority of the evaluation reports emphasise the existence of defects in the formulation and structuring of Education Plans.

There is a great disparity of criteria in the teaching programme of each degree course. There are imbalances in the theoretical and practical dimension of education plans, variations in the number of options offered or in the programmes of optional subjects, or lack of prior information about student levels of knowledge etc.

A large part of the reports analysed stress imbalances between the profiles of degree courses and what is taught. Among other aspects attention is drawn to curricula which are centred principally on the interests of the teacher.

Defects in the way courses are structured by education plans: multiplication of the number of subjects, the excessive number of class hours and the presence of subjects with a reduced number of class hours, are some of the most significant examples.

• **Improvement in orientation processes**

With respect to the academic information received by students, it is observed that universities are increasingly drawing up teaching guides with the aim of orientating students on the objectives and contents of the diverse subjects which comprise the degree course.

• **Poor co-ordination and adaptation of the programmes of new education plans.**

In the programmes of degree subjects deficiencies are detected in the following aspects:

1. Lack of co-ordination in departments and between other departments in terms of specific aims, contents, activities and criteria of evaluation of the degree subjects encompassed by the education plan.
2. Lack of following-up of teaching programmes in order to evaluate both the adaptation of their contents to students' prior level of knowledge and how they are adjusted to the time period assigned to each subject.
3. The absence of mechanisms of revision which allow the adaptation and updating of the contents established in each subject to be evaluated with the aim of avoiding both gaps and irrelevant demands in terms of the aims of a degree course.

• **Improvement in organisation of teaching**

It is noted that over recent years significant attempts have been made to adequately plan and organise educational processes. In general, this aim has been covered satisfactorily although below are some of the deficiencies which still remain:

1. In some cases there are very high numbers of students per group.
2. Not always do criteria and guidelines exist in relation to the organisation of term-teaching which help the teacher to adapt and revise his or her teaching programmes.

3.1.3. Development of teaching

• Traditional teaching

The teaching method utilised in classrooms continues to be mainly the “schoolmaster’s” class based on explanations given by the teacher. Consequently there is:

1. A tendency for students not to participate in classes and restrict themselves to merely receptive attitudes.
2. Little encouragement of a student’s personal work through appropriate strategies (consulting texts, group work, etc.)
3. A lack of differentiation between the value of the theoretical and practical components of each subject. This leads teachers to utilise the same type of methodology in both cases.
4. A continuity of the idea that university teaching is ineffective as class attendance remains unnecessary to pass most subjects.

• Positive perception of the quality of teaching

Without ignoring the weaknesses of teaching methods, from the students’ perspective the quality of teaching received is satisfactorily regarded on many occasions and the following aspects are underlined:

1. Most teachers are said by students to have a good command of the material they impart.
2. There is a high completion rate of the programmes proposed.

• Ineffectiveness of the tutorial system

There is criticism of the quality of tutorials whose activity is restricted to exam revision.

• Lack of adaptation of the systems for the evaluation of learning.

In almost every case, it is also noted that there are no mechanisms for the evaluation of learning which take into account objective criteria in terms of overall performance.

The processes of evaluation of learning are those which are valued lowest by university students. Among the arguments that they use to justify their dissatisfaction are the following:

1. There is no coherence nor awareness of the evaluation criteria to be employed in each subject. The absence of some general criteria leads each teacher to establish his own benchmark and causes differences between different subjects to be very marked.
2. There is a tendency to base the processes of control of learning on a sole examination without taking into account other information (attendance, personal work, practicals, etc)
3. The imbalance between the contents which have been explained in class and the level required in examinations. Differences emerge especially in those degree courses and subjects where knowledge is evaluated through applying theoretical contents.

• **Improvement in university services**

University services providing help and guidance for students have improved considerably although there are still deficiencies to be observed in the following areas:

1. Academic and professional guidance and information both for the new intake and those about to join the workplace.
2. Information on student rights and obligations together with the way which initiatives, complaints and participation may be channelled.
3. Organisation of curricular and extra-curricular activities in which students may participate and channel their cultural and educational interests.

3.1.4. Academic results

• **Low performance**

The most outstanding point that emerges from the reports is the poor performance of the university system. There is emphasis of the low success rates, the long delays in completing courses (around two academic years) or the high level of abandonment, etc.

Performance varies greatly according to type of degree course, duration, subject, and even teacher. Failure is very high in at the beginning of courses where some subjects always act as a selective filter and where teaching activity is shared by different teachers. In latter stages success is higher, especially in optional subjects.

The variation in marking by different teachers in the same subject is so great in some cases that they bring into question the credibility of the system of evaluation employed.

- **Ineffectiveness of the method of marking exams**

In most of the universities evaluated there is a norm which governs the way exams are marked together with any ensuing complaints. However, students say these norms are not adhered to as teachers appear to apply their discretion to a great extent.

- **Variation in valuing of the quality of results**

Evaluation of results varies according to degree courses. While in some, graduates are recognised for their high level of knowledge - scientific degree courses and higher technical courses - in others the quality of learning is not a priority in the evaluation of results.

3.1.5. Students

- **Dissatisfaction with the university entrance system**

The first conclusion from the reports is the way universities have reacted against the increase in students taking certain degree courses. The universities link opportunities to improve the quality of teaching to a reduction in the number of new students.

In order to value performance indicators correctly, there is a stressing of the need to take into account the differences in the way students of the same degree course are selected. For the first three year cycle there are students who have passed university entrance exams, technical college students, those who have passed exams for the over-25's etc; and for the latter stage: those who have completed the first cycle of the degree course or those taking bridge courses.

Many reports insist that the diversity in students according to their origins provides one way of evaluating the results, despite the fact that in degree courses no revision and analysis procedures have been established which allow the observing of characteristics of students (those admitted on first option courses, entrance exam, part-time students, grant students etc.) and their academic performance (levels of those entered, success, delays and abandonment). Nor are teaching strategies modified for the needs of the different types.

- **Lack of foresight in levels of demand**

On many occasions, no consideration or foresight has been given to the time that the student must devote to obtaining a satisfactory performance.

In the design of education plans there has been no acknowledgement of the total daily or weekly number of hours which a student must employ to complete studies in a given time. In some cases, if the teacher's expectations of the time a student should devote to personal work were to be added up (sometimes three hours per each hour of class), the demands of the timetable would make this impossible.

3.1.6. Teachers

- **Positive opinions about the quality of teachers.**

All the reports tend to stress the high level of ability, competence and dedication of teachers and coincide in stressing that this is one of the strengths of the university system.

- **Negative opinions about staffing policies.**

Nevertheless, a large part of the evaluation reports stress the precariousness of human resource policies. The main reasons for this are as follows:

1. Absence of policies for attracting those who have doctorates and good teachers so as to incorporate into the teaching profession persons with academic prestige and who in turn have strong links with the workplace.
2. Imbalances between the theoretical and the real situations with regard to personnel, the result being an excessive number of non-qualified teachers, especially in relatively-new degree courses.
3. Poor rationalisation in the way teachers are appointed. This leads to obvious imbalances between the most experienced teachers and the youngest and least qualified, who have the greatest burden both in terms of subjects, class hours and students.
4. Lack of clear and explicit criteria concerning promotion. This reduces career expectations to mere circumstantial decisions.

- **Absence of training and pedagogical qualifications**

Despite the positive opinion about teachers, another of the most notable conclusions in almost all the reports is the fact that little attention is paid to the training of teachers. This is regretted by a large number of teachers who would like adequate training, especially when starting out.

• **Lack of adaptation of teachers' evaluation procedures**

Frequently teachers are critical of the system for evaluating teaching activity in most universities (students' opinion polls) as, from their point of view, according to current guidelines, they offer a very limited vision of teaching work. They complain that departments do not establish a way of allowing them to include the information from surveys in decisions aimed at improving the quality of teaching.

• **Ineffectiveness of the departments**

In many reports there is an emphasis on the ineffectiveness of university departments as organs of teaching and coordination, given that most restrict themselves to bureaucratic tasks.

3.1.7. Facilities

• **Improvement in facilities**

There is generally approval of the great effort made by the universities to provide facilities which allow teaching to take place in the right conditions.

Apart from certain situations it is recognised that facilities have improved considerably over recent years. Despite this, however, the following deficiencies are noted:

1. Insufficient resources for practical activities, especially when compared with research facilities and resources.
2. Lack of space for students within academic facilities. Complaints are particularly centred on libraries - their facilities and the way they function.
3. Little use of technological resources at the university's disposal to develop teaching.

• **Lack of adaptation of the use of the resources available**

As an overall observation in this section it can be concluded that, in the consolidated degree courses, problems generally result more from poor rationalisation in the use of resources than from the lack of them.

3.1.8. External relations

• Improvement in co-operation between universities

There is a positive appraisal of the effort made by universities over recent years to co-operate with various institutions over teacher and student exchanges. Nevertheless certain peculiarities need to be stressed:

1. Generally these relations are set up at an international level under the auspices of European programmes and hardly occur within the national context, despite its academic importance.
2. There is a clear imbalance in cooperation between degree courses - aimed specifically at student exchange - and personal co-operation by teachers most closely involved with research.

• Weakness in University-Private Sector Relations

One of the failings detected in all the reports is the low link-up between the academic and professional worlds. The following has been emphasised:

1. Lack of agreements between universities and businesses which allow exchange of information and coordination of efforts so that undergraduate education is more tailored to the requirements of the labour market.
2. In those degree courses which require end-of-course projects and work experience there are complaints of a lack of coherence in the design of academic activities which respond to concrete needs in real situations.

3.2. Research

Among Spanish researchers there is a widespread awareness that in recent years there has been a sizeable increase in the quantity and quality of research realised in Spain. This feeling is especially notable in the experimental sciences and technology, and less-defined in humanistic and social areas. The indicators of scientific activity and results support this impression. By way of illustration we know that the presence of Spanish researchers in the international databases of scientific production has grown spectacularly, both in quantity and in quality. In parallel, it has been noted that Spanish science now integrates more with its European counterparts through international collaboration projects. These characteristics are observed in general in all Spanish scientific production, not only in the universities, but it should be taken into account that the presence of university researchers in the whole of Spanish scientific production is above 70%.

Also very widespread (and also unequally distributed between the different scientific fields) is the acceptance of the evaluation of research as a normal practice in scientific activity. This does not mean to say, of course, that there is unanimity with regard to methods of evaluation, and even less so in terms of the results and the consequences that the evaluation could have for the researchers and institutions evaluated.

In connection with this point, it is important to highlight a problem which appears in numerous reports: university teachers are accustomed to their research activity being evaluated, through the National Agency of Evaluation and Prospective (evaluation of projects) or the National Commission for Evaluation of Research Activity (evaluation of sections of research), but it is difficult for them to accept institutional evaluation. This is not evaluation of researchers' activity considered individually but of institutions (departments). And the difficult thing for many university researchers is to understand that there is at least an institutional dimension to university research which is not simply the sum of each individual's contribution.

This difficulty has been worsened sometimes by the existing ambiguities in the evaluation itself. In theory, the unit for evaluation of research should be the department, however the central unit of the evaluation process is the degree courses and it does not appear that homogenous criteria have been applied for the determination of the departments to be evaluated (ideally those which should have been chosen have a greater presence in the evaluated degree courses). In fact, the options go from the cases in which committees have evaluated only the research realised by the teachers of a degree course in each department, up to the setting up of specific departmental committees, separate from the degree course committee.

Despite these difficulties, it should be pointed out, however, that in the majority of cases the participation of researchers on committees has generated a certain "learning" of the institutional evaluation method allowing them to arrive at interesting conclusions and to value their own participation in the exercise very positively.

3.2.1. Aims

- **Failure to define aims**

In general terms, it is interesting that there are virtually no defined aims nor plans for development or quality of research in the departments analysed, neither at departmental nor university level. The most common situation is when research aims are regarded as a "private" affair to be organised by the researcher or research team and the agencies which run programmes of research financing. Generally the department is not thought of as the right place for the defining of research aims, but rather as an administrative entity where certain academic affairs should be handled (distribution of subjects, requests for places, approval of thesis proposals, etc.)

3.2.2. Resources

- **Increase in resources**

Generally, the increase over recent years in teachers and resources in the field of research is regarded as a good thing.

However, there is hardly any internal financing for research by the university itself. When there is, it is regarded as trivial in comparison with external sources, both national and international.

- **Lack of support**

The lack of permanent back-up personnel, both technical and administrative is considered to be an obstacle for research.

Another frequent connected complaint concerns the excessive number of bureaucratic and management tasks which fall on the shoulders of researchers due to lack of adequately trained technicians.

Although infrastructure for research is considered to have improved greatly, the lack of infrastructure both in terms of instruments and bibliography etc. is still a problem.

What is especially significant is the lack of means of analysis and evaluation, particularly of the "quality" of results. The situation is particularly grave in the humanities, but different branches in the social sciences, engineering, health sciences and even experimental sciences also suffer this problem. In none of these cases will reference to the SCI resolve it.

3.2.3. Structure

- **Increase in University-Private Sector relations**

Mention is made of the increase in links with the business world. This appears to be generalised, although it is still perceived as being insufficient in most cases. The majority of the reports consider the level to be insufficient.

- **Increase in maturity of research groups**

The greater maturity in research groups is valued positively. This refers to the stability of personnel and lines of research.

• **Improvement of the management of research**

It is considered that there has been a marked improvement: information, transfer of results, both in state institutions and the university's own services.

Nevertheless, there is enough coincidence to point out the lack of internal collaboration and communication between researchers of the same department, even in the same area of scientific knowledge or speciality.

• **Deficiencies in the teaching staff**

In rather a lot of cases the low proportion of those with doctorates in research personnel and the excess of associated teachers is viewed as negative.

Similarly, there is an abundance of complaints about the excess of teaching, worsened by the new education plans. Finally, the lack of strategic aims hampers the planning of the research personnel.

3.2.4. Results

There is a positive view of the increase in research production, the quality of the results and the greater international projection, exemplified by participation in European programmes, papers in congresses etc.

3.3. University organisation

There are marked defects in the planning, organisation and management of degree courses given that, although initially being a responsibility of universities, these are conditioned by departmental decisions. According to current norms, policies concerning teachers depend on the departments. This conditions the planning and management of the specific teaching of a degree course. The lack of coordination between both organs (departments and centres) is one of the main difficulties affecting teaching.

This dichotomised organisation of degree courses is one of the main weaknesses affecting quality in the management of teaching processes. It is highlighted clearly when considering complaints. Although administratively they must be formulated in the centre, given that the majority of them imply teachers in some way, the Rector or Director is seen obliged to transfer the file to the department both to request the necessary information and to decide on the correct solution.

The absence of a sole Organ responsible for the management and the results of a degree course, or the weakness of the functioning of the collegiate organs, has not only hampered the creation of a specific teaching culture but also has impeded collaboration and teamwork among teachers. Teaching activity is considered as something individual. This does not take into account that the quality of teaching demands a collective project and the coordination of all teachers both in terms of aims and procedures.

It is equally noted that universities have not set up mechanisms to generate the idea of university education as performing a service to society. This would encourage awareness in teachers that their function requires coordination and teamwork. The development, uniquely, of systems of evaluation of teachers based on students' opinion polls has contributed in reinforcing the culture of individuality against a conception of the quality of teaching as an institutional challenge and demand.

This lack of coordination and collective reflection on the processes of teaching in a degree course is clearly highlighted in the reports realised by the universities. In the evaluations of different committees when judging the factors which condition the quality of teaching more emphasis tends to be placed on those aspects of the university which depend on the educational system than those which are relative to the concerns derived from university autonomy. Despite the predominantly descriptive nature of reports, the result is that when value judgements are made, they usually use external criteria.

• **Non-existence of plans to improve quality**

There is a marked heterogeneity between the levels of management of the universities. In some there are plans to improve quality. In others, there are general plans for all the university. Whether they are effective or not has been commented on by the authors of the reports.

Furthermore, save in occasional cases, there are no studies on customer satisfaction.

• **Fragmentation of the decision process.**

The excess of decision-making panels is repeatedly cited as a hindrance to efficient management. In many universities management is diluted in the hands of a multitude of panels within each degree course. Although conversely in some, management is concentrated in just a few hands which bear great decisive capacity.

In the same way, the relations for the management of degree courses are considered complex and reference is made to a lack of coordination between departments for the running of degree courses.

• Ineffectiveness of information systems

There is a highly negative appraisal of the use of information available. This is said to be defective and as a consequence, there is a lack of up-to-date knowledge.

• Deficiencies in personnel management

Various evaluation reports indicate deficiencies in personnel management, among which should be included:

1. The difficulties for promotion, the absence of staff or their lack of adaptation when staff exist, are all stressed in many reports.
2. The lack of teacher training and absence of refresher courses is often regarded as a serious problem, together with the infrequent usage of new technology in teaching.
3. A source of many difficulties is the lack of flexibility and mobility of the teaching profession.
4. In general, a shortage of service personnel, especially those who can help with research, is mentioned in a good number of reports.
5. Similarly, the lack of adequate training for the PAS for the posts it fills and the lack of management manuals, are also regarded as an important failing.

• Adequate performance of personnel and services

Generally in the evaluation reports the high level of completion of work by teachers and administrative and service personnel is underlined. The working atmosphere is considered cordial.

• Quality of the administrative processes

Most of the evaluation reports make positive appraisals of the basic processes of administrative management, such as, student registration or the management of pay slips, to cite just two examples, which are said to be handled with sufficient effectiveness and efficiency.

The absence of a sole Organ responsible for the course, or the weakness of the functioning of the collegiate organs, has not only inhibited the use of information available but is also a hindrance to the use of information available. This does not take into account that the quality of teaching demands a collective project and the coordination of all teachers both in terms of aims and procedures.

• Deficiencies in personnel management

It is equally not to be overlooked that the various evaluation reports indicate deficiencies in personnel management among which should be included: The difficulties for promotion of staff in their lack of adaptation when staff exist, are all stressed in management as an institutional challenge.

1. The lack of teacher training and absence of refresher courses is often regarded as a serious problem, together with the infrequent use of new technology in teaching.
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4. PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVING QUALITY

This section gathers the main proposals for improving quality indicated in the reports realised by the universities which evaluate some of their degree courses for the first time (Ministerial order of 21 February 1996) in accordance with the National Plan of Evaluation of the Quality of Universities (Royal Decree of 1 December 1995). This includes a summary of proposals for improving teaching, research and university organisation, in the University (evaluated unit), in the educational administration or in the Universities Council.

Generally, the proposals for improving quality made in the reports of evaluation indicate a shortfall in both financing and in the human and material resources within the university system. At the same time they stress that evaluation allows better allocation of resources and an improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of the University.

4.1. Proposals for improving teaching

The proposals for improving teaching can be resumed in the following list:

4.1.1. Internal measures of the University

- **Identify the aims of the degree course**

One of the most significant weaknesses highlighted in the majority of the evaluation reports is the failure to identify and formalise the goals and aims of each course.

In the evaluation reports it is pointed out that precise identification of the aim of each degree course by the university is a basic requisite. This would orientate the teaching programme so that it fulfils the aims of each university. To do so, the following action is proposed in the evaluation reports:

1. Define the goals and concrete objectives of each degree course in terms of the educational, social, economic or political expectations and demands, and the competitive advantages of the university.
2. Identify the professional and academic profiles linked to degree courses with the aim of pinpointing the social and working skills that influence the teaching process. To do so it would seem vital to develop instruments which link the universities with its graduates and in general with the direct or indirect economic sectors connected with each course.

• **Establish a Strategic Plan**

A second inconsistency which is pointed out in the majority of the reports is the lack of strategic plans which ensure the efficiency of the teaching process and fulfil the objectives of each degree course in terms of efficiency. This is why in a wide number of evaluation reports it is proposed that each university draws up a strategic plan in which the short and medium term aims of each degree course are contemplated together with the necessary resources and strategies in order to carry out the activities derived from it. The strategic Plan should take the following into account:

1. Incorporate systems of coordination of the academic activities developed in a degree course with the aim of achieving the maximum coherence and adaptation; both in terms of what is taught and in the teaching strategies utilised or in the procedures of evaluating student learning. These procedures will have to include express objective criteria and refer to overall performance.
2. Establish control systems and self-regulation of teaching, thereby taking into account that the quality of a degree course depends fundamentally on institutional action and decisions. This means that, as at present, orientation which is centred exclusively on the individual actions and evaluation of each teacher seems clearly insufficient.
3. Set up channels and mechanisms for analysis of the academic progress of the students throughout their studies, and of the results obtained in the time period established in education plans, valuing the causes and factors which affect the levels of success and failure.
4. Strengthen the tutorial function of the teacher, creating channels and stimuli which allow the student to make greater use of it as a strategy for learning. In this respect the creation of the figure of the teacher-tutor for each student throughout his or her course is regarded as important.
5. Intensify the activities which relate to the practical dimension of the curriculum through the provision of necessary resources as well as linking the development of these activities to the world of work.

6. Establish as a norm the drawing up of teaching guides for each degree course. These would aim to inform students of the criteria and procedures which orientate teaching and learning.
7. Strengthen the channels of guidance and information to students on the demands of the labour and professional market. These would be linked to the different degree courses and develop their relationship with the organs and services which create offers of employment.

• Rationalise education plans

A third particularly relevant aspect refers to the deficiencies observed in the education plans approved by each university. This is why the evaluation reports propose an ordering and structuring of education plans. This would make changes to the number of subjects and class hours, the organisation of timetables, the fragmentation of subjects, the low real choice for the student, or the reduced practical dimension of the curriculum, etc.

4.1.2. General Measures

Much of what has been observed, such as education plans, requires general action from educational administrators or the Universities Council.

In the evaluation reports other general questions are included such as the following:

1. Increase the resources of the university system by modifying the model of allocation in accordance with the Financing Report approved by the Universities Council in 1994.
2. Promote teaching as a social service demanding that universities and teachers consider the focusing and adapting of their work from the perspective of social needs aside from their personal academic interests.
3. Set up teacher training both prior to starting out and during the teacher's career.
4. Revise university entrance so that student selection is not made solely from general criteria.
5. Encourage policies of rationalisation and promotion of the human resources connected with the degree course. This would not only enable the selection of good teachers but also strengthen teachers' roles.

6. Establish follow-up mechanisms for graduates as they are incorporated into the workplace. This would not only inform us on the expectations of the labour market but also provide feedback on the academic and professional profiles of the degree course.
7. Generate policies of rationalisation of the available human and material resources so as to avoid the inefficiencies and defects observed.
8. Intensify agreements and exchanges in degree courses so as to project the university and link up with society.

4.2. Proposals for improving research

In the evaluation reports there are many proposals aimed at resolving problems and making improvements. Generally there is a reasonably strong tendency to place solutions not at the level where the evaluation is made but in the upper levels of decision-making (rector, government, etc.) Although on occasions this strategy is the result of objective factors (low capacity of manoeuvre at departmental level, etc.), in many others it reveals a failure in the orientation of the self-regulatory process.

The most common and relevant proposals can be resumed in the following list:

4.2.1. Internal departmental measures

1. Concentrate researchers in common projects of the greatest importance possible.
2. Encourage the explicit definition of the aims and programming of the research in one yearly periods or longer.

4.2.2. Internal university measures

1. Greater dedication of internal resources to promote research.
2. Improve the criteria (aims) of internal distribution of funds.
3. Promote internal relations and multidisciplinary research.
4. Strengthen and encourage research of high quality, designing mechanisms of competence which recognise quality.
5. Strengthen and encourage renovation and innovation in the lines of research.

4.2.3. General Measures

1. Measures should be considered which encourage universities to adopt strategic plans for the development of research in their departments. This would overcome the rather passive attitude which currently predominates in universities which are accustomed to external initiatives in the development of the research, such as the CICYT, etc.
2. Increase those personnel who are highly qualified in management, back-up administrative personnel and the number of auxiliary technicians.
3. Establish objective evaluation criteria of scientific results at the institutional level, especially in areas of social and human sciences and in engineering.

4.3. Proposals for improving university organisation

4.3.1. Internal university measures

1. Create an Organ which is directly responsible for management and of the results of each degree course with the brief to take effective decisions on all educational and organisational aspects of each course.
2. Establish plans which improve quality, including directives on the ordinary management of all university processes.
3. Establish human resources policies, both for the teaching profession and for service personnel, which define posts and promotion criteria.

4.3.2. General Measures

Strategic action, on which depends a great part of the opportunities to increase the quality of decision making in all levels of the university system, refers to the need to improve considerably the statistical information systems at the disposition of the Spanish University. This needs to be done particularly in terms of the speed with which the main results are published.

The General Secretary's office of the Council has been developing the normalisation and the cleansing necessary to consolidate the information facilitated by the universities, providing the possibility of including, at the end of each academic year, the data required by all the players in the university system.

5. Establish follow-up mechanisms for graduates as students at workplaces. This would not only inform us on the expectations of the labour market but also help to identify areas for improvement in the curriculum.
6. Encourage the development of research in their departments. This would overcome the rather passive attitude which currently predominates in universities which are accustomed to external initiatives in the development of their research as the CICYT does.
7. Increase those personnel who are highly qualified in management, back-up and administrative personnel and the management of scientific research.
8. Establish objective evaluation criteria of scientific results at the institutional level, especially in areas of social and human sciences and in engineering.

4.2. Proposal for research

The proposal is based on the following premises: the evaluation of the university organization should be carried out at the level of the university as a whole and not at the level of the departments or faculties.

4.2.1. Internal university measures

Factors (low capacity of management at departmental level, etc.) which reveal themselves in the university are the result of the following:

1. Create an Organ which is directly responsible for management and of the results of each degree course with the brief to take effective decisions on all educational and organizational aspects of each course.
2. Establish plans which improve quality, including directives on the ordinary management of all university processes.

3. Establish human resources policies, both for the teaching profession and for service personnel, which define posts and promotion criteria.
4. Encourage and support research and innovation in the university.

4.2.2. General Measures

1. Strategic action on which depends a great part of the opportunities to increase the quality of decision making in all levels of the university system, takes into account the need to improve considerably the statistical information systems at the disposition of the Spanish University. This needs to be done particularly in terms of the speed with which the main results are published.
2. Promote research.

The General Secretary's office of the Council has been developing the normalization and the cleaning necessary to consolidate the information facilitated by the universities, providing the possibility of including, at the end of each academic year, the data required by all the universities in the university system, the normalization agreement has reached.

5. PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVING THE NATIONAL EVALUATION PLAN

This section includes the proposals which figure in the evaluation reports drawn up by the universities together with others of a general nature. Important among these is the necessity to possess an instrument of rapid diagnosis which is sufficiently accurate to assess the quality of the whole of the university system. Also proposed is the re-establishing of the role of the Autonomous Regions in the development of the National Plan of Evaluation.

Generally, the method of evaluation developed in the National Plan allows the aims of the National Plan to be attended to. These are the promoting of institutional evaluation and providing universities and education administrations with a homogeneous and common method for the development of evaluation processes which will improve universities.

The Plan aims to give to each university relevant information on the quality of their university. It also aims to provide the education administrations of the Autonomous Regions with objective information on the quality achieved by the universities under their jurisdiction. To achieve this, the method of evaluation seems adequate.

However, the Plan also aims to give the whole of Spanish society relevant and objective information on the quality of the universities and to the Ministry of Education and Culture and the University Council equally objective information on the level of quality achieved by the whole of the university system. In this case, the method established in 1996 and developed in the evaluation guide does not seem good enough.

This weakness in the evaluation method derives above all from the lack of performance indicators as quality criteria. This means that the extent and the progressive introduction of significant indicators which avoid imprecision in internal and external evaluation, especially in the fields of teaching and management, must be agreed on with the whole of the university system.

Furthermore, the university system needs to offer society a precise, rapid diagnosis of the quality of the system as a whole. For this, it could study the incorporation into the

National Plan of an immediate check on the main elements which make up the structure, the processes and the results of the system, by taking a representative sample of the different degree courses, departments and services of the university.

This proposal may guarantee that annually, at the end of the university year, the Secretary General of the University Council draws up an overall picture on the quality of the university.

• **Organisation and management of the evaluation process**

Firstly, it seems necessary to reestablish the participation of the education administrations of the Autonomous Regions in the Evaluation Plan, so that they can act decisively in developing the Plan. At the same time the activities of the Universities Council may be adapted to ensure the coordination and sufficient homogeneity of the evaluation procedures, as well as the accreditation of the members of the external evaluation committees.

Similarly, the organisational structure of the General Secretary's Office should be strengthened, granting the Office the evaluation management envisaged in the National Plan and providing the General Secretary's Office with the human and material measures indicated by the Decree 1947/95 of 1st December.

• **Prior requisites on commencing institutional evaluation**

It is neither efficient nor effective for the phase of internal revision (self-evaluation) to be adapted to obtain the necessary information to evaluate quality. As has been pointed out it is essential to provide the university system with a statistical profile and with management information which allows communication between its different players.

Moreover, there should be an extension of the action aimed at publicising the culture of evaluation to allow the creation of a suitable climate for the National Plan to be in essence a strategy for improving quality.

• **Simplification and adaptation of the guide for evaluation**

Generally the guide for evaluation must be simplified and specially adapted to the singularities of the great disciplines. At the same time, formulas must be established for reducing organisational complexity and the costs of evaluation. In particular the following aspects may be considered.

1. It is very important for there to be a clear definition of the way evaluation of research connects with the rest of institutional evaluation, especially with the evaluation of teaching. This would improve relations between the various levels and evaluation units.
2. It is also relevant to emphasise the need to adopt a specific perspective in the institutional evaluation, not just limited to the individual evaluation of the researchers.
3. For the Plan to continue there has to be an urgent resolution of the current lack of objective criteria in the evaluation of the quality of scientific publications, especially in the field of the humanities and social sciences.

4. University organisation must be improved by focusing it on criticism and analysis of the processes of management and decision making, and not on the counting of situations or listing of statistical data.
5. Facilitate through the corresponding changes in the guide evaluation of all services and decision processes.

Alicante	León
Asturias	Madrid
Autónoma de Madrid	Málaga
Barcelona	Murcia
Burgos	País Vasco
Cádiz	Politécnica de Catalunya
Cantabria	Politécnica de Madrid
Carlos III	Politécnica de Valencia
Castilla-La Mancha	Pompeu Fabra
Complutense	Pontificia de Salamanca
Córdoba	Pública de Navarra
Europea de Madrid (CEES)	Ramón Llull
Extremadura	Rovira Virgili
Girona	San Pablo - C.E.U.
Granada	Salamanca
Huelva	Santiago
Islas Baleares	Sevilla
Jaén	U.N.E.D.
Jaume I	Valencia
La Laguna	Valladolid
	Zaragoza

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...with the rest of institutional evaluation especially with the evaluation of
teaching. This would improve relations between the various levels and involving
units

This proposal may guarantee that annually at the end of the university the
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institutional evaluation not just limited to the individual evaluation of the
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reducing organisational complexity and the costs of evaluation. In particular the
following aspects may be considered:

APPENDIX I

UNIVERSITIES PARTICIPATING IN THE FIRST RESULTS OF THE NATIONAL PLAN FOR ASSESSMENT OF THE QUALITY OF UNIVERSITIES

Alcalá de Henares	Las Palmas
Alicante	León
Almería	Lleida
Antonio de Nebrija	Málaga
Autónoma de Madrid	Murcia
Autónoma de Barcelona	Oberta de Catalunya
Barcelona	Oviedo
Burgos	País Vasco
Cádiz	Politécnica de Catalunya
Cantabria	Politécnica de Madrid
Carlos III	Politécnica de Valencia
Castilla-La Mancha	Pompeu Fabra
Complutense	Pontificia de Salamanca
Córdoba	Pública de Navarra
Europea de Madrid (CEES)	Ramón Llull
Extremadura	Rovira Virgili
Girona	San Pablo - C.E.U.
Granada	Salamanca
Huelva	Santiago
Islas Baleares	Sevilla
Jaén	U.N.E.D.
Jaume I	Valencia
La Laguna	Valladolid
	Zaragoza

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UNIVERSITIES PARTICIPATING IN THE FIRST RESULTS OF THE NATIONAL PLAN FOR ASSESSMENT OF THE QUALITY OF UNIVERSITIES

Las Palmas	Alcalá de Henares
León	Alicante
Lleida	Almería
Málaga	Antonio de Nebrija
Murcia	Autónoma de Madrid
Operas de Catalunya	Autónoma de Barcelona
Oviedo	Barcelona
País Vasco	Burgos
Politécnica de Catalunya	Cádiz
Politécnica de Madrid	Cantabria
Politécnica de Valencia	Carlos III
Pompeu Fabra	Castilla-La Mancha
Pontificia de Salamanca	Complutense
Pública de Navarra	Córdoba
Ramón Llull	Europeo de Madrid (CEBS)
Rovira Virgili	Extremadura
San Pablo - C.R.U.	Girona
Salamanca	Granada
Santiago	Huelva
Sevilla	Islas Baleares
U.N.E.D.	Jair
Valencia	Juanes I
Valladolid	La Laguna
Zaragoza	

APPENDIX II

DEGREE COURSES¹⁵ ASSESSED

UNIVERSITY	COURSE
Alcalá de Henares	Biología
Alicante	Óptica Química
Almería	Cc. Ambientales Química
Antonio de Nebrija	I. de Gestión I. de Sistemas I. Informático
Autónoma de Madrid ¹	A. de Empresas Economía Geografía I. Informático Psicología
Autónoma de Barcelona ¹	C. Audiovisual Empresariales I. de Gestión I. de Sistemas I. Informático Maestro E. Primaria Políticas Relaciones Laborales
Barcelona ¹	Biología Bioquímica Empresariales Empresariales, Vic Farmacia I. Electrónico I. Químico
Burgos	C. Tecnología Alimentos
Cádiz	Química
Cantabria ²	

¹⁵ In this list no inclusion has been made of the Services which have been evaluated independently of the Degree Course (Library of Salamanca, Polytechnic of Valencia and Polytechnic of Catalunya; Students' Service and Transfer Centre of Technology of the Polytechnic of Valencia). In the report, where there are 130 degree courses, these services are not added onto the list of evaluated degree courses.

UNIVERSITY	COURSE
Carlos III	Empresariales I. Gestión
Castilla-La Mancha	Derecho (3 centros) I. Gestión I. Sistemas Química
Complutense	Biología Geología I. Químico
Córdoba	Derecho Relaciones Laborales
Europa Madrid (CEES) ²	
Extremadura	I. Gestión I. Sistemas I. Informático
Girona	Empresariales I. Gestión I. Sistemas
Granada	F. Árabe F. Francesa Filosofía Historia
Huelva ²	
Islas Baleares ²	
Jaén ²	
Jaume I	I. Gestión I. Informático
La Laguna	Maestro Primaria Maestro E. Infantil Maestro E. Física Maestro E. Musical Maestro L. Extranjeras
Las Palmas ²	
León ²	
Lleida	Empresariales I. Gestión I. Sistemas
Málaga ²	
Murcia	Bioquímica Química
Oberta de Catalunya ²	

UNIVERSITY	COURSE
Oviedo	Física I. Químico Matemáticas Química
País Vasco ¹	C. T. Alimentos Diet. y Alimentación I. Industrial (2 centros) Topografía I. Químico Química
Politécnica de Catalunya ¹	I. Electrónica I. Gestión (3 centros) I. Sistemas I. Telecomunicación I. Automática I. Industrial I. Informático I. T. Telecomunicación
Politécnica de Madrid	I. Gestión I. Sistemas I. Telecomunicación
Politécnica de Valencia	I. Gestión I. Sistemas I. Informática L. Informática Diseño Industrial I. Electricidad I. Electrónica I. Mecánica Química Industrial
Pompeu Fabra ¹	Derecho A. de Empresas Economía Empresariales A. Pública Relaciones Laborales
Pontificia de Salamanca ²	
Pública de Navarra ²	
Ramón Llull ²	
Rovira Virgili	Empresariales I. Gestión I. Sistemas

UNIVERSITY	COURSE
Salamanca ¹	Biología Farmacia Física Geología I. Químico Matemáticas Medicina Química
San Pablo - C.E.U.	Farmacia Química
Santiago	Agrónomos Farmacia Física
Sevilla	Filosofía Geografía Historia Historia del Arte
U.N.E.D. ²	
Valencia	Física I. Químico Matemáticas Óptica
Valladolid ²	
Zaragoza	I. T. Industrial Telecomunicación
¹ Global project.	
² Special action.	





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