

# THE WAY TOWARDS THE STANDARDS FULFILMENT FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF PhD PROGRAMMES

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why we do  
what we do  
and  
why we do it  
in the way we do  
in 3rd cycle

JM (ESG & SP)  
JM & LGV & CH  
  
JM (ESG & SP)  
LGV & CH

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## Outline

- Ex-ante accreditation, if required by national regulations.
  - information & criteria & assessment
- Follow-up or monitoring, if required by national regulations.
  - information & criteria & assessment
- Ex-post **accreditation**
  - information & criteria & assessment
- Conclusions

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## Accreditation of PhD Programmes

### ACCREDITATION (AFTER ? YEARS)

EX-POST EVALUATION BASED ON A EXTERNAL VISIT (OF A PANEL OF EXPERTS) FOR ANALYSING:

- QUALITY OF THE FORMATIVE PROGRAM
- RELEVANCE OF THE PUBLIC INFORMATION
- EFFICACY OF THE PROGRAMME'S INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM
- SUITABILITY OF TEACHING STAFF
- EFFECTIVENESS OF LEARNING SUPPORT SYSTEMS
- QUALITY OF PROGRAMME (LEARNING) OUTCOMES

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# Accreditation of PhD Programmes

EX-ANTE EVALUATION  
WHAT TO INCLUDE HERE?

FOLLOW-UP  
PUBLIC INFORMATION  
INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE  
OUTCOMES & INDICATORS

ACCREDITATION (AFTER ? YEARS)  
EX-POST EVALUATION  
EXTERNAL VISIT PLUS .....

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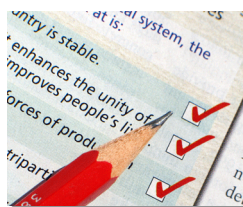
# EX-ANTE

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# Ex-ante accreditation

Designs for  
new doctoral programmes,  
when they have to be evaluated,  
they must be evaluated  
according to a series of  
**quality-based criteria**



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# EX-ANTE: The information

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# Ex-ante: the information

## INFORMATION: THE PhD Programme proposal

- [1] Description, context, R&D strategy, collaborations and number of students.
- [2] Learning Outcomes.
- [3] Admission.
- [4] Training & Courses & ... .
- [5] Organization.
  - 5.1. PhD Monitoring & Mentoring.
  - 5.2. PhD Follow up.
- [6] PhD Advisors.
- [7] Available resources and PhD students support.
- [8] QA, enhancement and program outcomes.

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# Ex-ante: the information

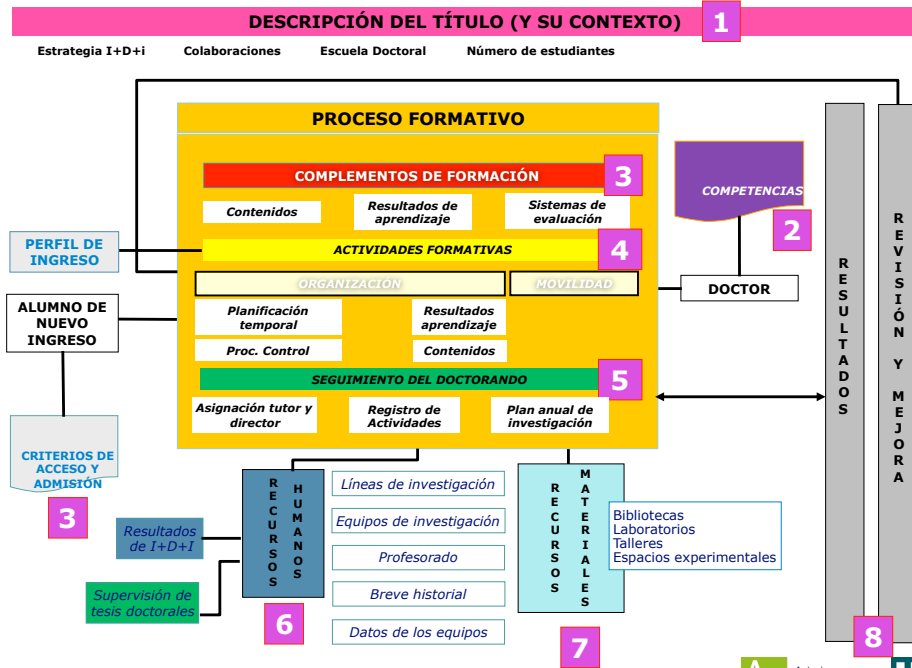
## Ex-ante

- [1] Description, context, R&D strategy, collaborations and number of students.
- [2] Learning Outcomes.
- [3] Admission.
- [4] Training & Courses.
- [5] Organization.
  - 5.1. PhD Monitoring & Mentoring.
  - 5.2. PhD Follow up.
- [6] PhD Advisors.
- [7] Available resources and PhD Student support.
- [8] QA, enhancement and program outcomes.

## versus Ex-post (Josep Manel's Lecture)

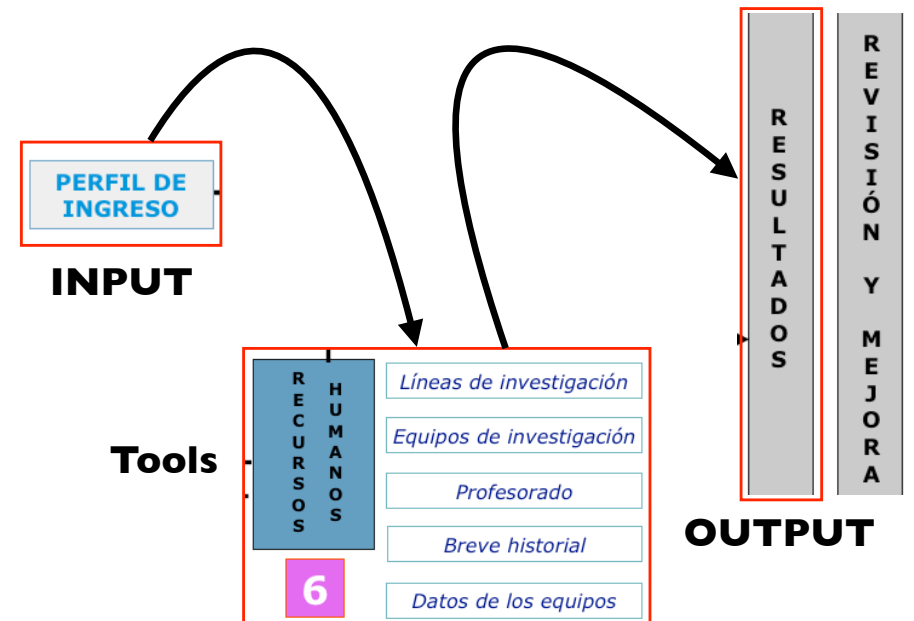
- [A] Quality of the formative program
- [B] Relevance of the public information
- [C] Effectiveness of the programme's internal quality assurance system
- [D] Suitability of teaching staff
- [E] Effectiveness of learning support systems
- [F] Quality of programme (learning) outcomes

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## EX-ANTE & EX-POST



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# EX-ANTE: The criteria

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## Ex-ante: the evaluation criteria

### Criterion I: Description of the doctoral programme

Doctoral programmes must include a description consistent with their level and academic purposes, so that they do not lead to any confusion regarding their features.

- The title must be consistent with the lines of **research** proposed and must not lead to confusion.
- It must be justified by the context, tradition, global offer of degrees or the potential of the university or universities that propose it.
- It must be consistent with and integrated into the **university's R&D strategy** or into that of other bodies and institutions.
- It must show the appropriate degree of **internationalization** in terms of its subject and its context.

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## Ex-ante: the evaluation criteria

### Criterion II: Learning outcomes

The competences to be acquired by the doctoral candidates must match those required to grant the degree and with the qualifications established in the European Higher Education Area.

- The learning outcomes proposed must be described clearly and precisely and must be aligned with their level in the Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (**level 3**).
- The learning outcomes proposed must be assessable and their acquisition by all doctoral candidates must be guaranteed.

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### The framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area

	LEARNING OUTCOMES
Third cycle qualification	<p>Qualifications that signify completion of the third cycle are awarded to students who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● have demonstrated a systematic understanding of a field of study and mastery of the skills and <b>methods of research</b> associated with that field;</li> <li>● have demonstrated the ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial <b>process of research</b> with scholarly integrity;</li> <li>● have made a contribution through <b>original research</b> that extends the <b>frontier of knowledge</b> by developing a substantial body of work, some of which merits national or international refereed publication;</li> <li>● are capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas;</li> <li>● can communicate with their peers, the larger scholarly community and with society in general about their areas of expertise;</li> <li>● can be expected to be able to promote, within academic and professional contexts, <b>technological, social or cultural advancement in a knowledge based society</b>.</li> </ul>

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DUBLIN DESCRIPTORS

## Ex-ante: the evaluation criteria

### Criterion III: Entry and Admission of Students

The doctoral programme must feature an entry and admissions system that clearly regulates and informs students on admission criteria.

- Admission criteria must be public, clearly explained, consistent with the doctoral programme's scientific field and it must not be misleading.
- If additional educational requirements are needed, these should adapt to the students' entry profiles and be consistent with the scientific field of the doctoral programme.
- Information on doctoral programmes should be available to doctoral candidates prior to enrolment.

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## Ex-ante: the evaluation criteria

### Criterion IV: Educational Activities

Educational activities included in the study programme must constitute a coherent educational proposal designed in a coordinated manner that takes into account students' dedication over a specific time period.

- The planning and organisation of training activities, in particular specific learning and methodologies (seminars, courses, workshops, ...), cross-cutting learning outcomes, learning experiences (conferences for doctoral candidates, national or international meetings, ...) should be consistent with the learning outcomes the doctoral candidates are expected to acquire.
- The doctoral programme should provide the adequate **mobility** organisation for doctoral candidates in line with the learning outcomes they have to acquire.
- The doctoral programme should include planning, for both full- time and part-time students, to ensure the acquisition of the expected learning outcomes.

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## Ex-ante: the evaluation criteria

### Criterion V: Programme organisation.

Doctoral candidate follow-up procedures and the supervision of doctoral theses must ensure that students acquire the learning outcomes defined in the doctoral programme.

Doctoral programmes must include the procedures listed below and make them public. These procedures [**autonomy**] should be appropriate and focus on:

- The procedures used by the academic committee to allocate thesis tutors and supervisors.
- The procedure used to control the registration of each doctoral candidate's activities and the certification of their data.
- The procedure governing the annual assessment of the Research Plan and the registration of doctoral candidate activities.
- The procedure for defining and assessing activities aimed at promoting the management and supervision of doctoral theses.

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## Ex-ante: the evaluation criteria

### Criterion VI: Human Resources

Doctoral programmes must be supported by a group of **researchers** capable of ensuring, a priori, the feasibility of the programme regarding educational issues. The academic staff involved must be sufficient and suitably qualified and have the necessary experience to impart doctoral courses.

- Each research team must have a **competitive project** on issues related to the programme's lines of research.
- The programme should be supported by the quality of the most important **scientific contributions from the researchers** involved in it.
- The programme must be supported by the **proven experience** of its researchers **in the management of doctoral theses** and their quality.
- The University must have clear mechanisms in place to acknowledge doctoral thesis tutoring and supervision tasks.

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## Ex-ante: the evaluation criteria

### Criterion VII: Material resources and support available to doctoral candidates

The material resources and services necessary for the development of the educational activities included in a doctoral programme and for the comprehensive education of candidates must ensure the acquisition of the expected competences.

- The material resources and other means available should ensure the development of the research to be performed by each doctoral candidate.
- The services and resources required to enable doctoral candidates to attend conferences and conduct visits abroad, as well as the funding to provide the organisation of seminars, conferences and other national and international training activities within the framework of the doctoral programme must be ensured.
- Doctoral programmes must include professional guidance services to promote adequate job placement of graduates.

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## Ex-ante: the evaluation criteria

### Criterion VIII: Doctoral programme review, improvement and results

Doctoral programmes must include mechanisms that make it possible to analyse their development and results and to ensure their **continuous review and improvement**.

- They must include an academic committee which sets procedures and mechanisms to supervise programme development, analyse results and establish appropriate actions for improvement. The opinion of doctoral candidates and graduated doctors should be one of the main factors considered when defining and implementing improvement actions.
- They must include procedures to study the results of the mobility programme.
- Information on the programme, its development and results should be published regularly.
- There should be a procedure for following-up graduated doctors.
- In the case of doctoral programmes involving more than one university, there should be mechanisms and procedures capable of ensuring coordination between the participating universities.

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# EX-ANTE: The assessment template

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## Ex-ante: the assessment template

### 1. DESCRIPTION OF THE DEGREE

	Not provided	Insufficient	Sufficient but improvable	Satisfactory
<b>1.1 NAME OF THE DOCTORAL PROGRAMME</b>				
The name of the doctoral programme is consistent with the lines of research.				
<b>1.2 PARTICIPATION OF OTHER INSTITUTIONS</b>				
In the event that the doctoral programme should collaborate with other national or international universities, bodies or institutions:				
The said partnerships are considered necessary, appropriate and sufficient to provide the programme.				
The integration or not of the doctoral programme in a network or in international conventions has been adequately justified.				
The doctoral programme shows the proper degree of internationalization in terms of its subject matter and context.				
The integration or not of the programme in a doctoral school has been adequately justified.				
The doctoral programme has been integrated into the university's R&D+i strategy or into that of other bodies and institutions.				
In the event that the doctoral programme should not collaborate with other national or international universities, bodies or institutions:				
The said lack of cooperation is justified in relation to programme development.				

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## Ex-ante: the assessment template

### 5. DOCTORAL PROGRAMME ORGANISATION.

	Not provided	Insufficient	Sufficient but improvable	Satisfactory
<b>5.1. DOCTORAL THESIS SUPERVISION</b>				
The activities included in the programme/university aimed at promoting the supervision of doctoral theses are considered sufficient and suitable for the development of the said theses.				
Activities have been included to promote the joint supervision of doctoral theses, where justified academically.				
The doctoral/university study programme includes a good practice guide for the supervision of doctoral theses.				
The participation of international experts has been planned in relation to follow-up committees, preparing prior reports and as members of thesis tribunals.				

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## Ex-ante: the assessment template

### 7. MATERIAL RESOURCES AND SERVICES

	Not provided	Insufficient	Sufficient but improvable	Satisfactory
The material resources and other available means (laboratories and workshops, library, access to databases, connectivity...) linked to doctoral programmes are considered adequate to ensure doctoral candidates will be able to undertake the relevant research work.				
Where appropriate, the material resources and other available means from collaborating bodies will ensure the development of research activities.				
The doctoral programme includes an estimate of external resources and travel expenses dedicated to grants for attendance at conferences and stays abroad to support doctoral candidates in their training.				
The estimate of the percentage of doctoral candidates who receive these grants is considered appropriate.				

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## Ex-ante: the assessment template

### 6. HUMAN RESOURCES.

	Not provided	Insufficient	Sufficient but improvable	Satisfactory
<b>6.1. LINES OF RESEARCH AND TEAMS</b>				
The doctoral programme is supported by a group of researchers capable of ensuring, a priori, the feasibility of the programme regarding educational issues.				
Each of the research teams that belong to the doctoral programme has at least one active research project on issues related to the programme's lines of research.				
The quality of the 25 scientific contributions prepared over the past 5 years and submitted by the personnel participating in the programme is considered adequate.				
The research staff has proven experience in supervising doctoral theses over the previous 5 years.				
The quality of the 10 scientific contributions derived from the 10 theses is appropriate.				
The University has mechanisms to acknowledge doctoral thesis tutoring and supervision tasks and these are appropriate.				
The participation of international experts in the doctoral programme, if relevant, has been considered.				
<b>6.2 MECHANISMS FOR ASSESSING DOCTORAL THESIS TUTORING AND SUPERVISION TASKS.</b>				
The University has clear mechanisms to acknowledge doctoral thesis tutoring and supervision tasks.				

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## Ex-ante: the assessment template

### RECURSOS HUMANOS (0/2)

El personal asociado al programa de doctorado ha de ser adecuado para asegurar la consecución de las competencias previstas. Per tanto, el personal académico implicado ha de ser suficiente y su cualificación y experiencia adecuadas para llevar a cabo el programa de doctorado. La institución responsable del programa ha de tener mecanismos claros y aprobados de reconocimiento de la labor de tutoría y dirección de tesis.

**Las líneas, los equipos de investigación y el profesorado son suficientes en número y adecuados para asegurar la viabilidad del programa y la consecución de las competencias previstas**

- Ninguno -

#### Observaciones

Existen mecanismos de cómputo de las labores de tutoría y dirección de tesis doctorales son claros y adecuados

✓ - Ninguno -

- No aplica
- Información insuficiente
- Poco adecuado/revisión
- Adecuado
- Muy adecuado

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## Ex-ante: the assessment template

### 8. DOCTORAL PROGRAMME REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND RESULTS.

	Not provided	Insufficient	Sufficient but improvable	Satisfactory
<b>8.1 QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM</b>				
	Not provided	Insufficient	Sufficient but improvable	Satisfactory
The doctoral programme has an academic committee.				
The programme includes procedures and mechanisms to supervise its development, analyse results and establish appropriate actions for improvement.				
In the case of doctoral programmes involving more than one university, the doctoral programme features mechanisms and procedures to ensure coordination between the participating universities.				
The doctoral programme includes procedures and mechanisms to ensure the proper development of mobility programmes.				
The doctoral programme includes procedures and mechanisms for publishing information about the programme, its development and results.				
<b>8.2 FOLLOWING-UP GRADUATED DOCTORS</b>				
The doctoral programme features procedures and mechanisms to follow-up graduated doctors.				
The estimate of the percentage of doctoral candidates who receive aid for post-doctoral contracts is considered appropriate.				
The data on the employability of doctoral candidates, during the three years following the presentation of their theses (in the case of existing programmes) or estimates of the said employability (for new programmes) are considered adequate.				
<b>8.3 RESULTS AND EXPECTED RESULTS</b>				
	Not provided	Insufficient	Sufficient but improvable	Satisfactory
If a doctoral programme has been developed based on other existing doctoral programme/s:				
The evolution of a doctoral programme's results over the previous 5 years justifies its existence, taking into account the scientific field.				
If a programme is a newly created programme:				
The estimate of a doctoral programme's results over the next 6 years justifies its existence, taking into account the scientific field.				

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## Follow-up: monitoring First step (if needed) towards accreditation

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## Follow-up

The follow-up of a doctoral programme should be a gradual process that may lead to its continuous improvement and conclude naturally with its accreditation ex-post.

During the follow-up, the QA agency role, from the university point of view, must be that of an external consultant which provides objective assessment on how each doctoral programme is being implemented and which seeks, as its main goal, to offer the doctoral students the best possible education.

From the point of view of the QA Agency, following up a doctoral programme must be seen as a tool and long term process that must include the following features:

- It must be continuous, being performed in a regular and sustainable manner over the time.
- It must be a process mainly based on significant but non-invasive cooperation, collaboration and dialogue.
- It must be proportionate and commensurate to the searched end (and avoid over-evaluation).

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## Follow-up

The purpose of follow-up should be to analyse the implementation of the doctoral programme, thus gradually helping universities to improve the training they offer to their PhD students and to detect and solve in advance those issues that may arise during the ex-post accreditation.

Follow-up aims at providing each university with an external assessment on the implementation of each doctoral programme with a view to using this assessment as another element to improve the training offered to their PhD students.

Follow-up is a tool that universities should use to show their commitment with quality assurance, transparency and accountability.

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## Follow-up

Follow-up may be conducted based on the following guidelines:

- Analysing the information provided by the university for each PhD programme being followed up together with its ex ante accreditation report.
- Analysing the information that the university uses to present the features of the PhD programme to society and to prospective students.
- Assessing the information, at all levels, generated by the internal quality assurance system, which should include an analysis of the evolution of qualitative and quantitative academic performance and satisfaction indicators.

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## Follow-Up: The information

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## Follow-up: the information

Follow-up of a doctoral programme should work by requesting to the University the location (on their websites, repositories, ...) of the information allowing to answer the following questions:

1. How the doctoral programme has been presented to prospective students and to society?
2. What information is available for a student that are already registered in the doctoral programme?
3. How the doctoral programme is being implemented? This should include the analysis of the results, the achievement of proposed objectives, the incorporation of the recommendations identified in the ex ante accreditation, the changes introduced, ... . In other words, the answer to this question should provide the information about the delivery of the doctoral programme (via the Internal Quality Assurance System) and, additionally, the University's commitment to transparency and accountability.
4. How the qualitative and the quantitative performance and satisfaction indicators evolve?

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## Follow-Up: The criteria

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## Follow-up

### 4. Suitability of teaching staff

Staff involved in teaching in the faculty are both sufficient and suitable in accord with the characteristics of the programmes and the number of students.

- The teaching staff has an accredited research activity.
- There are sufficient teaching staff in the doctoral programme and staff assignment is adequate for them to carry out their duties and attend the PhD students.
- The programme has implemented suitable actions to foster the direction of PhD thesis.
- The degree of participation of foreign teaching staff and international doctors in the commissions of follow-up and thesis committees is suitable for the scientific area of the program

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## Follow-up

For follow-up, the criteria can be the same than in ex post accreditation (with minor modifications) or can be in the middle between the ex ante and ex post accreditation exercises.

But the most useful strategy here is to ask if the doctoral programme is continuously thinking about the accreditation “questions”, but not asking for the concrete answer to those questions.

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## INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

There is a body or unit **in charge of the quality assurance system for the PhD programme**, together with the internal rules of procedure and including the participation in this body of academics, students, managers, staff and external stakeholders.

The development of the PhD programme is to be **reviewed** (aims, LOs, planning, etc.) through adequate **mechanisms and procedures** applied periodically for gathering and analysing information on:

- The quality of the programme and the teaching staff.
- The quality of the outcomes
- Employment rates.
- The satisfaction of the different groups involved (students, academic staff and administration and services staff, etc.) and the attention paid to suggestions and complaints.

Includes mechanisms to **publish the information about the PhD programme, its development and outcomes.**

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# Follow-Up: The assessment template

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## Follow up

### ADECUACIÓN DEL PROFESORADO (0/2)

El professorat és suficient i adequat, d'acord amb les característiques del programa de doctorat, l'àmbit científic i el nombre d'estudiants.

**S'analitza i valora adequadament l'evolució de l'adequació de la plantilla de professorat al programa de doctorat?**

- Ninguno -

#### Observacions

**¿Existen evidencias que demuestran la superación de los puntos débiles detectados en el proceso de verificación, acreditación o seguimiento anterior?**

- Ninguno -  
 Sí  
 Parcialment  
 No  
 No aplica

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## Follow up

### CALIDAD DE LOS RESULTADOS (0/2)

Las tesis doctorales, las actividades formativas y la evaluación son coherentes con el perfil de formación. Los resultados cuantitativos de los indicadores académicos y de inserción laboral son adecuados.

**¿Se analiza y valora adecuadamente la evolución de los resultados del programa de doctorado?**

- Ninguno -

#### Observaciones

**¿Existen evidencias que demuestran la superación de los puntos débiles detectados en el proceso de verificación, acreditación o seguimiento anterior?**

- Ninguno -  
 Sí  
 Parcialmente  
 No  
 No aplica

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## Follow up

### EL PLAN DE MEJORA (0/3)

El plan de mejora da respuesta adecuada al análisis y valoración del despliegue del programa de doctorado.

**¿El plan de mejora da respuesta adecuada al análisis y valoración del despliegue del programa?**

- Ninguno -

#### Observaciones

**¿El plan de mejora está estructurado de manera adecuada?**

- Ninguno -  
 Sí  
 Parcialmente  
 No

**¿El plan de mejora incluye los resultados de las acciones a implantar que formaban parte del anterior plan de mejora?**

- Ninguno -

#### Observaciones

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# EX-POST

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# Ex-Post: The information The criteria

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## Ex post

### The information:

Provided by Josep Manel's lecture in terms of evidences and indicators plus the self-evaluation report (see Conchita's lecture tomorrow).

### The criteria:

Provided by Josep Manel's lecture and classified as:

- Quality of the formative program
- Relevance of the public information
- Effectiveness of the programme's internal quality assurance system
- Suitability of teaching staff
- Effectiveness of learning support systems
- Quality of programme (learning) outcomes

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# Ex-post: The assesment template

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## Ex post

### 4.2. El professorat és suficient i té la dedicació adequada per desenvolupar les seves funcions.

<i>En progrés vers l'excel·lència</i>	L'estructura de la plantilla del professorat i el nombre de professors són molt adients per dirigir les tesis doctorals i atendre els doctorands i, si fos el cas, per impartir les activitats formatives del programa.
<i>S'assoleix</i>	L'estructura de la plantilla del professorat i el nombre de professors són suficients per dirigir les tesis doctorals i atendre els doctorands i, si fos el cas, per impartir les activitats formatives del programa.
<i>S'assoleix amb condicions</i>	L'estructura de la plantilla del professorat i el nombre de professors no són suficients per dirigir les tesis doctorals i atendre els doctorands i, si fos el cas, per impartir les activitats formatives del programa.
<i>No s'assoleix</i>	L'estructura de la plantilla del professorat i el nombre de professors presenten greus deficiències per dirigir les tesis doctorals i atendre els doctorands i, si fos el cas, per impartir les activitats formatives del programa.

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## Ex post

### 6.2. Els valors dels indicadors acadèmics són adequats per a les característiques del programa de doctorat.

<b>En progrés vers l'excel·lència</b>	L'evidència documental posa de manifest que la sèrie temporal de tots els indicadors acadèmics és coherent amb la tipologia dels doctorands i programes equivalents, i mostra clarament la millora contínua del programa de doctorat.
<b>S'assoleix</b>	L'evidència documental posa de manifest que la sèrie temporal de la majoria dels indicadors acadèmics és coherent amb la tipologia dels doctorands i els programes equivalents.
<b>S'assoleix amb condicions</b>	L'evidència documental posa de manifest que la sèrie temporal dels indicadors acadèmics presenta desajustos amb la tipologia de doctorands i els programes equivalents, i no mostra una clara millora continuada del programa de doctorat.
<b>No s'assoleix</b>	L'evidència documental posa de manifest que la sèrie temporal dels indicadors acadèmics presenta un desajust significatiu i greu en relació amb la tipologia de doctorands i els programes equivalents, i no mostra una millora continuada del programa de doctorat.

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# CONCLUSIONS

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## A shared view on QA

A shared view on QA should bring the right definitions for every context and should be independent of the details.

For example:

- ✦ If program and/or institutional evaluation are used.
- ✦ If ex-ante accreditation is to be used or not.
- ✦ The concrete data to be analysed.
- ✦ .....

A shared view on QA should imply **transparency**, **mutual trust** and **accountability**, and contribute to **employability**.

Mutual trust and **transparency** are pre-requisites for recognition.

Who to share the view on QA? Universities, Students, Academics, Staff, Employers, Countries, Society, ...

Difficult to achieve: to make possible the difficult [QA Agencies role]

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## A shared view on QA

This shared view on QA for HE should be promoted and encouraged: **rankings can replace QA ...**

Any shared view on QA, for promoting employability and **internationalization** in HE, requires **mutual understanding** and “**working together**” at all levels.

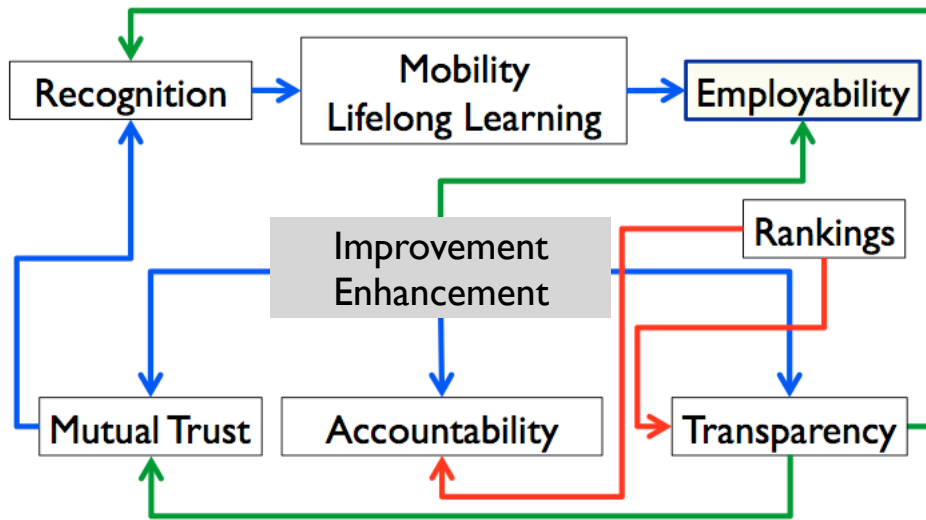
Any shared view will require a smooth and timely construction based upon previous experiences of cooperation.

The information problem:

- Compromise & involvement.
- Tools versus aims.
- Do we know what the final goal is?

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# Conclusions



implies  
contributes to  
does imply?

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# THANKS



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