



AGENCIA NACIONAL DE EVALUACIÓN
DE LA CALIDAD Y ACREDITACIÓN

PROPOSAL

CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF UNIVERSITY DEGREE PROGRAMMES LEADING TO RECOGNISED UNDERGRADUATE AND MASTER'S DEGREES IN SPAIN

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1. PRESENTATION

This document contains the ANECA's proposal on criteria, guidelines and procedures for the accreditation of degree programmes leading to recognised undergraduate and Master's degrees in Spain.

The proposal must be examined in the light of both the distinctive features of higher education in Spain and the process of incorporation into the European Higher Education Area that the Spanish university system is now immersed in. Another ANECA document titled *Report on the accreditation model for university degree programmes in Spain*, of 20 April 2005, and the report drawn up by the ANECA Advisory Board in the conclusions of the Fifth ANECA Forum titled *Accreditation of degrees versus institutions*, deal with the need for the accreditation of degree programmes leading to recognised degrees from the point of view of the feasibility and implications of such a process.

The definition of the criteria and guidelines for the model was made using the rules that, in the Spanish university system, regulate both the official recognition of degrees (Royal Order 49/2004) and the structure of degree programmes (Royal Orders 55/2005, 56/2005 and 1509/2005). In the same way, the established quality criteria are compatible with the agreements adopted between European evaluation and accreditation agencies belonging to the ENQA. The selection of the criteria that articulate the model was based on the subsequent international recognition of Spanish degrees and the effectiveness of the accreditation process itself.

Accreditation processes are based on the trust that is established between the university, students and society. When students enrol in a particular degree programme, they place their trust in the university regarding the quality of the study programme, the soundness of the studies and ability of the teaching staff, the suitability of the general services that they will receive, and the appropriateness of the facilities, amongst other things.

Accreditation can be considered to be an informative factor of great importance given that it provides the student and society in general with information on the official value of the degree awarded and the assurance that the quality of the degree programme is reviewed periodically by an external independent agency. It also offers the possibility, once the degree programme is accredited, of the transfer of credits with programmes in different universities and countries so the student can take other more advanced degree programmes and receive economic assistance.

The rulings resulting from an accreditation process are important because other decisions of a different kind can be based on them. The results of this accreditation process are taking the form of a new distinguishing factor within the university system that can be used as another criterion in different objectives-based funding processes or in recognised professional bodies; the consequences of a negative ruling, on the other hand, are quite the opposite.

2. ACCREDITATION

Accreditation is defined, in this model, as an *ex post* evaluation process that leads to a formal and independent decision on whether a degree programme conforms to certain standards of quality.

The object of the accreditation model referred to in this document is university degree programmes leading to recognised undergraduate and Master's degrees in Spain that have been introduced in their entirety (e.g. four years after a four-year degree programme is introduced for the first time). In this case, it is proposed that the process begins one year following the complete implementation of the curriculum and is then repeated every six years.

The result is a **formal, binary ruling** that establishes either the upholding of the official recognition of a curriculum, the temporary suspension of official recognition, or the definitive revocation of official recognition of the corresponding curriculum. These rulings are the responsibility of the various corresponding public administrations with jurisdiction in higher education. In addition to the conclusive formal, binary ruling, the evaluators also **identify the areas for improvement**. This also makes the accreditation model a way of assuring the quality of the degree programmes given in a university.

Accreditation must lead to **public results** so that all interest groups (present-day and future students, university staff and society in general) can know what the resulting administrative consequences are. Both the ENQA's *Standards and guidelines for Quality Assurance* and the ECA's *Code of good practice* establish the need for accreditation agencies to report accreditation rulings in an appropriate way to the public.

Accreditation must be carried out by an **agency that is external** to the university offering the degree programme to ensure the credibility of the final ruling. The agency must ensure that the accreditation is sound, i.e., that it is based on predefined criteria of quality and an evaluation process that reveals and provides appropriate technical information on the compliance of these criteria. The ANECA fulfils the requirements to comply with these conditions. The accreditation agency

itself must have an ***internal quality assurance system***, it must be evaluated externally on a periodic basis, and it must have a procedure enabling its rulings to be appealed. The ANECA has entrusted the ENQA with this external evaluation as an assurance for the Spanish university system that its work is recognised by the main European agencies network.

3. STRUCTURE OF THE ACCREDITATION MODEL

The ANECA accreditation model structures the accreditation of recognised undergraduate and Master’s degree programmes according to 9 quality criteria and 46 guidelines. The structural relationship on which the model is based on five main points, each one of which refers to one or various criteria for quality as shown in the following charts.

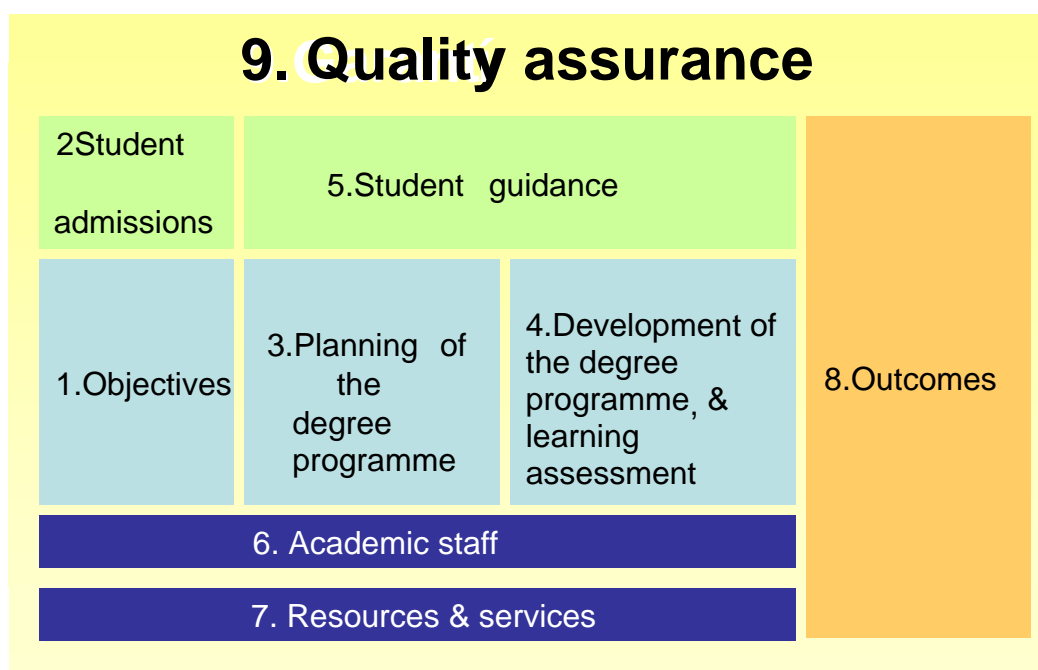


Diagram 1. Outline of the accreditation model

In the definition for the model, in addition to the prescriptive elements represented by the criteria and guidelines, consideration is given to other elements that are for guidance purposes, such as the information to be provided by university institutions that submit recognised degree programmes for accreditation. Universities may use their own formats to submit the information. For guidance purposes, however, examples of the required document formats are provided and may be used as reference.

The accreditation criteria and guidelines, grouped according to the main point, are given below.

<i>Main point</i>	<i>Criteria and guidelines</i>
<p>Planning and development of the degree programme</p> <p>The objectives and factors that will bring about a change in the students' learning are formulated in an explicit way in the curriculum. As a result, degree programmes leading to the degree qualification have been planned and carried out so the students can achieve the anticipated objectives.</p>	<p>1. Objectives of the curriculum: The objectives of the curriculum, which include the knowledge, abilities and skills that students must have acquired on completion of their studies, are described in detail and made public.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The objectives are documented. - The objectives define the knowledge, abilities and skills in a precise and assessable way. - The objectives have been disseminated. <hr/> <p>3. Planning of the degree programme: The planning of the degree programme is coherent with the objectives of the curriculum in both the overall programming of the degree programme and the course syllabae. The syllabae contain all the necessary elements to inform the student and are made public.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is a plan for the development of the curriculum in terms of subjects, scheduling and necessary human and material resources. - The plan enables the anticipated objectives of the curriculum to be achieved. - The syllabus for each subject in the curriculum is approved by the corresponding body in the university. - The course syllabae take in the identifying elements of the degree programme and each subject, namely, all the sections referred to in the ECTS guide on objectives, contents, learning methodologies, etc. - The anticipated evaluation methodology complies with the regulations, criteria and procedures. - The course syllabae are made available. - The course syllabae in the curriculum are coherent with the objectives of the curriculum. - There are mechanisms that facilitate student mobility, where this forms part of the objectives of the degree programme. • There is planning of work experience/placement in private enterprise and institutions, where this forms part of the objectives of the degree programme.
	<hr/> <p>4. Development of the degree programme and learning assessment: The development of the degree programme conforms to what has been planned.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The degree programmes are appropriately carried out (compliance with the planned activities in the implementation of the curriculum). - There are no serious complaints on the development of the course syllabae. - Incidents identified during the development of the curriculum have been resolved. - Meetings to coordinate different subjects have been held according to the anticipated plan. - Students are evaluated in accordance with the generally established criteria, regulations and procedures and the syllabus. • Teaching staff and students are satisfied with complying with the course syllabae.

<i>Main point</i>	<i>Criteria and guidelines</i>
<p>Student support services</p> <p>The University has explicit policies and procedures for student admissions that conform to the objectives of the curricula. Institutions where degree programmes are given, as well as the university itself, carry out information, guidance and support activities aimed at the students, which affect and have an impact on their learning process from the time of entry to after graduation.</p>	<p>2. Student admissions: There are student admission policies and procedures that conform to the objectives of the curriculum, which are applied and made public.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is an admissions policy and procedures. - The admissions policy is defined according to the general objectives of the degree programme and the entry requirements. - The admission criteria and procedures are disseminated. - The admission procedures are applied. <hr/> <p>5. Student orientation: Actions are carried out to guide students regarding the development of the degree programme and their future on completion of their studies (careers guidance/postgraduate training).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Documentation is made available to orientate new entry students. - Documentation is made available to orientate the students on the development of the degree programme and the different curriculum content alternatives for completing their studies, including mobility and placement. - Documentation is made available to deal with the diversity of student groups. • Documentation is made available to prepare the student for decision-making on completion of undergraduate studies: employment/postgraduate studies.

<i>Main point</i>	<i>Criteria and guidelines</i>
<p>Resources that support the degree programme</p>	<p>6. Academic staff: There are sufficient academic staff in terms of number, full/part-time activities and qualification to train the students, so that in each case the quality of teaching, research and the student's professional training is assured.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are sufficient, appropriate and qualified academic staff to fulfil the planning requirements of the degree programme. - The core subjects of the degree programme are mostly covered by full time staff. - The prevailing external regulations, and the university's own regulations, regarding teaching staff selection procedures are applied. - There are teaching allocation criteria that comply with the regulations and are coherent with the objectives of the curriculum. - There is significant participation by teaching staff in activities involving professional development (training, research, innovation, etc.), either internal or external. - In the case of professionally-orientated disciplines, the participation of staff with experience and professional practice in the subjects where these are required is sufficient in terms of number, full/part-time activities and qualification to ensure the anticipated objectives.
<p>The University has sufficient full and part-time qualified academic staff to cover the credits and activities that are programmed in the curriculum. It also has sufficient material means and support services to respond to the needs arising out of the development of the degree programmes in the curriculum.</p>	<p>7. Resources and services: The resources and services allocated to the degree programme enable it to be developed in accordance with the planned curriculum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The facilities (classrooms, study rooms, computer rooms, laboratories, meeting rooms, library reading areas) and the scientific, technical, assistance and artistic equipment and materials are sufficient for the development of the degree programme. These facilities may belong to the institution itself or be external, in which case they must be regulated by agreement. - Access is guaranteed to different sources of information, databases, the university's own library collections and those of other libraries and document centres to cover the needs of the development of the degree programme. • There is the necessary technology to obtain, process, store, transfer and present data and information.

<i>Main point</i>	<i>Criteria and guidelines</i>
<p>Outcomes Learning by the students is heading in the anticipated direction according to the objectives of the curriculum.</p>	<p>8. Outcomes: The students' learning outcomes coincide with the objectives of the curriculum and design.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information is provided on fulfilment of the students' learning objectives. - The thresholds established for the quantitative indicators are complied with (graduation rate, drop-out rate and efficiency rate).

<i>Main point</i>	<i>Criteria and guidelines</i>
<p>Quality assurance Those in charge of the curriculum have established a quality assurance system that enables them to analyse deviations from what has been planned and areas that can be improved. This system also makes it possible to define and implement proposals for the continuous improvement of the curriculum.</p>	<p>9. Quality assurance: Those in charge of the degree programme have quality assurance systems to analyse its development and the outcomes, enabling them to define and implement actions for the continuous improvement of quality, with the participation of all the stakeholders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is a system for gathering information and for review and improvement on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The objectives of the curriculum. - The admission criteria and procedures. - The planning of the degree programme. - The development of the degree programme and student assessment. - On actions to orientate the students. - The number of academic staff. - The degree programme's resources and services. - The learning outcomes. - There are consultation procedures for gathering information on graduates, employers and other relevant social groups, on graduate employment, learning that has been acquired (knowledge, abilities and skills), and professional competences and the needs for continuous training.