

REACU

Spanish Network of University
Quality Agencies

Evaluation for Verification

**Evaluation protocol for verification of official
university degrees
(Bachelor's and Master's)**

INTRODUCTION

Royal Decree 861/2010, amending Royal Decree 1393/2007 setting out the organisation of official university education states that only those assessment bodies stipulated by Autonomous Community law and that comply with the quality standards and criteria laid down by the European Commission, and subsequent to successful external evaluation enabling them to become full members of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and register with the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), may undertake evaluation processes for verification. At the present time, the following agencies are in a position to take part in said process: ACSUCyL, ACSUG, AGAE, ANECA and AQU-Catalunya.

In order to achieve as wide a consensus as possible, the protocol for evaluation of verification has been drawn up by the Spanish Network of University Quality Agencies (REACU) of which the above mentioned agencies are members. Each agency shall apply it when evaluating proposals for the bachelor's and master's degrees for which it must issue the mandatory evaluation report prior to verification by the University Council.

This protocol is the result of the evaluation experience gained from conducting an assessment of some 5,500 proposals for bachelor's and master's degrees and seeks to focus on an analysis and appraisal of the most relevant matters which can, at least a priori, ensure that all degree proposals meet certain minimum requirements.

The structure of this evaluation protocol reflects how universities should provide the information related to each degree proposal which is subject to verification and may be found in Annex I of the above mentioned Royal Decree 861/2010. In addition to dealing with matters of a general nature, the evaluation protocol also addresses ten criteria, each of which lays out a series of guidelines that act as a guide to the evaluation protocol. This does not, however, mean that agencies may not draw up their own handbooks to provide support and set out in greater detail how the criteria and guidelines described herein are to be applied in the evaluation procedures.

In order to endow evaluation processes for verification with the greatest possible coherence and consistency, agencies are committed to engaging in an ongoing analysis and review of the protocol so as to

ensure that at all times universities have the necessary information available to guide them when drawing up their degree proposals.

CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES

The degree should ensure respect for and fostering of basic human rights and equality and should promote democratic values in addition to a culture of peace. Curricula should bear in mind that any professional activity is carried out:

- Respecting fundamental equal rights amongst men and women. Where applicable, curricula should include teaching which relates to such rights.
- Respecting and promoting human rights and the principles of universal accessibility and availability. Where applicable, curricula should include teaching which relates to such rights and principles.
- In accordance with the values of a culture founded on the basis of peace and democratic values. Where applicable, curricula should include teaching which relates to such values.

Criterion I: Description of the degree

The degree contains a description which is both suitable and adequate as well as consistent with its level or academic effects, such that it does not prove misleading with regard to its content, scope and, where applicable, professional repercussions.

- The name of the degree should be consistent with the curriculum and should not be misleading.
- The professional repercussions of the degree should be clearly defined, particularly for degrees which lead to regulated occupations.
- Rules and conditions governing student continuance on degree courses should be appropriate to the nature of the degree in question, and have been approved when the degree is implemented in addition to which they should enable students to study part time.

Criterion II: Justification of the degree

The degree should be relevant, suited to training or research experience, coherent with the academic field to which it refers and/or in accordance with other similar existing studies.

- The benchmarks used should be appropriate and directly linked to the degree.
- The outcome of consultative procedures should evidence a direct link with the degree.
- The professional or research relevance of the degree should be adequately justified.
- The degree should be justified by its context, tradition, the overall offer of degrees as well as the potential of the university or universities proposing it.

Criterion III: Competencies

The skills to be acquired by the students should be assessable and concur with those required for the degree to be awarded as well as the grades set out in the European Higher Education Area.

- The skills proposed in the degree should be clearly and accurately described and come into line with their level in the Spanish Framework of Qualifications in Higher Education.
- The skills proposed in the degree must be assessable and must ensure that they can be acquired by all students.
- In the case of degrees which provide a qualification for regulated occupations, the skills must concur with those set out in the corresponding ministerial orders.

Criterion IV: Student admission

The degree should have accessible systems which control and provide clear information for students concerning the various means of admission as well as guidance when they commence their studies.

- University admission procedures and access to official university teaching of bachelor's and master's degrees must comply with current legislation.
- Admission criteria and procedures for official master's degrees must be publicly available, clearly written out, and must be coherent with the thematic area of the degree, in addition to which they must not be misleading in any way.
- In the case of master's degrees, any complementary training must be suited to the thematic area of the degree and consistent with the admission criteria.
- Regulations governing recognition and transfer of credits must be appropriate to the characteristics of the degree and be approved at such time as the degree is introduced. In cases in which there may be recognition of credits awarded for professional experience, or credits awarded through in-house degrees and/or other non-university higher education teaching, said recognition should be implemented within the competencies of the degree.
- In the case of official bachelor's degrees, regulations governing the recognition and transfer of credits should allow for the recognition of at least six degree credits, awarded through participation in university activities related to culture, sports student representation, cooperation and social involvement.
- Under no circumstances may either the Final Bachelor's Degree Project or the Final Master's Degree Project be used for recognition of credits.
- The criteria as well as terms and conditions for admission to adaptation courses and their curricular design should be consistent with the curriculum and with graduates' prior education given under previous university legislation.

- Should there be any teaching in the degree in languages other than official languages, information must be provided concerning the command of said language required by students wishing to take the course.
- The degree must make information concerning the characteristics of the degree available to students, particularly with regard to admission criteria, before they enrol.
- The degree must have in place procedures for supporting and guiding new students who are commencing their university studies.
- The degree must have in place procedures which support and guide students once they have enrolled, and which help them to acquire the skills described in the curriculum.

Criterion V: Planning of teaching

The curriculum must offer a coherent proposal for education, designed in a coordinated manner and taking account of student dedication over a given period of time.

- The curriculum (structure, content, training activities, placements, evaluation systems, etc.) should be consistent with the skills to be acquired by the students.
- The curriculum must evidence overall internal coherence across the various competencies and skills, content, learning outcomes, training activities, evaluation systems, type of teaching, time distribution of the modules and subject matter, as well as the theoretical-practical nature thereof.
- Allocation of credits to modules, subject matter and courses in the curriculum and the time planning thereof should bear in mind that the total number of ECTS for each academic year should be 60, to be spread evenly over the academic year.
- Allocation of ECTS credits for training activities should be consistent with the definition of European credit with regard to distribution of student time.

- Should there be any teaching in the degree in languages other than official languages, these should be clearly reflected in the teaching plan as well as in the description of the degree.
- Bachelor's degrees should include a minimum of 60 basic ECTS credits, of which at least 36 should be linked to the particular subject matter dealt with in the area of knowledge to which it is related, specified in courses with a minimum of six ECTS credits each and offered in the first half of the curriculum. The remaining credits should be made up of basic subjects from the same or other areas of knowledge or other subjects, provided the basic nature thereof is justified.
- In the case of degrees which lead to regulated occupations, the curriculum proposal should reflect the stipulations set out in the corresponding ministerial orders.
- In the case of degrees which include external placements, the latter should cover no more than 60 ECTS credits, preferably be offered in the second half of the curriculum, and should ensure that as many students as possible are afforded the opportunity to engage therein.
- The curriculum should conclude with the writing and public presentation of a final bachelor's or master's degree assignment of between 6 and 30 credits, which should be completed in the latter part of the curriculum and be aimed at providing an assessment of the skills and competencies linked to the degree.
- The curriculum should embrace coordination mechanisms appropriate to its nature.
- Where applicable, the curriculum should involve appropriate organisation of student mobility which includes recognition of credits consistent with the competencies contained in the degree.
- Where applicable, the curriculum should involve a range of planning which is differentiated in terms of the mode of teaching, whilst ensuring that said different modes of teaching enable the same skills and competencies to be acquired.

- The set up and planning of the *mentions* or specialities within the degree should be consistent with the nature thereof.

Criterion VI: Human resources

The teaching staff and human resources supporting the degree should be appropriate to ensure that the skills and competencies described in the curriculum are acquired.

- The available and foreseen human resources (in terms of number, status, teaching and research experience amongst teaching staff and professional skills of support staff) should be both sufficient and appropriate to implement the proposed curriculum, ensuring its sustainability over time (in accordance with the number of places and different modes of teaching offered).

Criterion VII: Material resources and services

The material resources and services required to undertake the activities foreseen in the curriculum should be appropriate to ensure that the necessary skills and competencies are acquired.

- The material resources and services available and foreseen, both belonging to the degree itself as well as available through agreements (areas, facilities, laboratories, scientific, technical or artistic equipment, library and reading rooms, new technologies, etc.) should be both sufficient and adequate to implement the proposed curriculum, ensuring its long-term sustainability (in accordance with the number of places and different modes of teaching offered).

Criterion VIII: Foreseen outcomes

The degree should include foreseen outcomes as well as a general procedure to appraise student learning outcomes.

- The numerical values of the indicators should be appropriately justified.
- The general university procedure to gauge student learning progress and outcomes should be consistent with the skills and competencies to be acquired and should enable milestones which indicate whether students have acquired such a competency to be pinpointed (results of external tests, final bachelor's and master's degree assignments or projects, ...).

Criterion IX: Quality assurance system

The degree should include an internal quality assurance system (SGIC) which safeguards the control, review and improvement thereof.

- The proposed internal quality assurance system (related to the degree itself, the centre or university as a whole) should ensure the proper introduction and implementation of the curriculum.

Criterion X: Schedule for introduction

A timeline for implementation of the degree should be set out and should involve a mechanism to accommodate, where necessary, students from already existing curricula.

- The gradual or overall introduction of the new degree should respect the rights of students from the curriculum being discontinued and the adaptation tables should be public and coherent for both degrees.