

# REACU

Spanish Network  
of Quality Assurance Agencies in  
Higher Education

## **EVALUATION PROTOCOL FOR FOLLOW-UP AND ACCREDITATION RENEWAL of University official Bachelor and Master Degrees**

In accordance with Royal Decree 822/2021, 28 September, on the organisation of University Education and the procedure for its quality assurance

Approved by REACU on 2 March, 2022

## ACCREDITATION OF UNIVERSITY OFFICIAL DEGREES

The accreditation of official university degrees is regulated in Royal Decree 822/2021, 28 September, which established the organisation of university education and the procedure for its quality assurance.

The initial consideration as an **accredited degree**, to all the legal and regulatory effects and purposes established, is achieved through its registration in the Register for Universities, Centres and Degrees (RUCT), following official approval by the Ministers Council, the study plan verification by the Council for Universities and after its implementation is authorised by the Autonomous Community. Royal Decree 822/2021 provides for accredited degrees:

- A **follow-up** procedure that must be applied by university centres to review compliance with the academic project included in the official study plans provided.
- A procedure for **accreditation renewal** of official degrees to periodically review that the study programmes are being developed in accordance with their initial or modified project: the university must justify that the programme implementation and development comply with the proposal included in the verified report, or in any case, describe the academic, infrastructural reasons or teaching staff availability which justify the mismatch and actions developed within each scope.

## FOLLOW-UP OF UNIVERSITY OFFICIAL BACHELOR AND MASTER DEGREES

The follow-up procedure provided in Royal Decree 822/2021 establishes the following provisions:

- **University Centres institutionally accredited.** The follow-up review of University official degrees is conducted within the scope of the centre institutional accreditation, in accordance with Royal Decree 640/2021, 27 July, on the creation, recognition and authorisation of universities and university centres, and institutional accreditation of university centres.
- **University Centres without institutional accreditation.** The follow-up review is carried out through the bodies established in the university normative and its internal quality assurance systems. In accordance with the guidelines provided by the corresponding quality assurance agency and external review report, at least a **review report** is required in the course of three years after its effective implementation or accreditation renewal.
  - These **reports aim** to review the programme effective development, in order to analyse compliance with the standards and fundamental academic approach included in the verified report of the study plan, as well as to detect improvement that might be developed in the modification procedures.
  - The reports must include the **actions implemented** in accordance with the requirements and recommendations provided in the procedures for the degree verification and accreditation renewal.
  - The follow-up reports will **evidence** the information transparency and the indicators that provide the degree learning outcomes, by detecting possible areas for improvement and by **identifying** best practices in follow-up and continuous improvement of university studies.
  - The follow-up reports are remitted to the corresponding **quality assurance agency** and they are reviewed according to the agency procedure.
  - In case the agency detects serious non compliance with regard to the commitments acquired in the study plan report, it will be notified to the centre and the university institutional governing bodies, as well as to the Autonomous Community, it will be notified to the centre and the university institutional governing bodies, as well as to the Autonomous Community, in order to provide the appropriate measures to ensure students educational interests, otherwise it might imply the degree extinction.

This evaluation protocol provides the general guidelines to support universities to complete the **follow-up reports of official Bachelor and Master degrees** delivered at university centres without institutional accreditation.

## ACCREDITATION RENEWAL OF UNIVERSITY OFFICIAL BACHELOR AND MASTER DEGREES

The procedure for accreditation renewal established in Royal Decree 822/2021 distinguishes between:

- **Institutionally accredited university centres** which will renew the accreditation of official university degrees delivered as long as they keep institutional accreditation. The date for the degrees accreditation renewal in RUCT will correspond to the date of the resolution on the centre's institutional accreditation issued by the Council for Universities.
- **University centres without institutional accreditation.** The university official degrees accreditation must be renewed in accordance with the procedure provided by each Autonomous Community with regard to the universities within their competency.
  - The university will apply for accreditation renewal to the Council for Universities. The Council will request its review to the competent quality assurance agency, in order to confirm that the study plan is being developed according to the initial project, through an external review process including, if applicable, a site visit by external experts with the participation of at least a student.
  - For the degree **second or successive accreditation renewal**, the aspects pointed out for special attention in previous accreditation renewal, will be specially taken into account, regardless the quality assurance in all the degree aspects.
  - The Council for Universities, after receiving the **agency report** on accreditation renewal, will issue the corresponding favourable or unfavourable resolution on the accreditation renewal, which will be included in the degree file in RUCT. In case that a degree does not renew accreditation, it will be declared "to extinguish", and the corresponding annotation will be registered in RUCT to that effect.

This evaluation protocol aims to provide the general standards as a guide for quality assurance agencies on the elaboration of accreditation renewal reports concerning official **Bachelor and Master degrees** delivered at university centres without institutional accreditation.

## ALIGNMENT WITH ESG

The dimensions and evaluation criteria for the follow-up and accreditation renewal of official degrees are established in accordance with the study plan report and with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, ESG*. The ESGs are the essential reference for the universities internal quality assurance systems (IQAS) and the procedures for external review conducted by the quality assurance agencies in the University System in Spain, in accordance with the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education, EQAR.

Therefore, social trust in the rigour and strength of university degrees is reinforced, facilitating continuous improvement, strengthening the employability capacity and graduates labour market integration, appropriate and of quality, in addition to the international recognition of Spanish university degrees and the development of international joint programmes.

FOLLOW-UP AND ACCREDITATION RENEWAL		STUDY PLAN	STANDARDS ESG
I. DEGREE MANAGEMENT	1. Programme development and implementation	1. Degree description, learning goals and justification	1.2. Design and approval of programmes
		3. Admission, recognition and mobility	1.4. Students admission, progression, recognition and certification
		4. Educational planning	1.3. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment
		7. Implementation timeline	1.6. Learning resources and student support
	2. Information and transparency	8. Internal Quality Assurance System	1.8. Public information
	3. Quality assurance, review and improvement		1.1. Policy for quality assurance 1.9. On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance
II. RESOURCES	4. Academic and supporting staff	5. Academic and supporting staff	1.5. Teaching staff
	5. Learning resources	6. Learning resources: material and infrastructures, practices and services	1.6. Learning resources and student support
III. OUTCOMES	6. Learning outcomes	2. Teaching and learning process outcomes	1.2. Design and approval of programmes
	7. Satisfaction and graduation	8. Internal Quality Assurance System	1.7. Information management

## DIMENSIONS, STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATION

### I. DEGREE MANAGEMENT

#### 1. Programme development and implementation

The educational programme has been implemented in accordance with the conditions established in the **verified report** and, if applicable, in the **corresponding modifications**.

- The **articulation** of education, its **development** and **coordination** correspond to the structure designed in the study plan report to allow an appropriate distribution of student workload as well as an adequate timeline planning to ensure that learning outcomes are achieved by students.
- **Learning modalities** and **provider centres** comply with the provisions in the study plan report.
- The **admission** criteria allow that student profiles are appropriate to start these studies and the application comply with the provisions in the study plan report.
- The number of **new students** respects the number of places included in the study plan report.
- The **recognition of credits** is appropriately carried out, in accordance with the supposed cases established in the study plan report.
- The centre application of the different **academic regulations** is appropriate and according to the legislation in force and the study plan report, facilitating students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.
- The degree attends to possible **recommendations** and **aspects for special attention** provided in the Verification Report and, if applicable, in the possible modification reports, as well as in successive follow-up and accreditation renewal reports.
- If applicable, the inclusion of **dual mention**, the incorporation of **specific curricular structures** and **teaching innovation** (the organisation of a Bachelor programme with **open academic itinerary**, or an academic programme with **double degrees** simultaneity with specific itinerary), the **academic programmes** with **successive itineraries**, have been properly developed and in accordance with the conditions established in the study plan report.

## 2. Information and transparency

The institution has mechanisms to appropriately communicate the characteristics and outcomes of the programme to all stakeholders, as well as the management procedures that ensure its quality.

- The university publishes **appropriate and updated information** for stakeholders decision making, on the programme characteristics, access and admission systems, its development and outcomes, including the information concerning the follow-up and accreditation processes as an official degree.
- The information on the degree is published in a **clear** and **accessible** way to students, and to other interested people such as future national or international students, and to general society.
- Students have **access** in the appropriate moment, before and after enrolment, to the relevant information about the intended learning outcomes, the study plan implementation, as well as the educational and evaluation activities.

## 3. Quality assurance, review and improvement

The institution has launched, implemented and reviewed the Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS) formally identified in the study plan verified report, ensuring the efficient review and continuous improvement of the degree.

- The provided processes, procedures and mechanisms facilitate the **gathering and continuous analysis** of relevant and appropriate information, both quantitative and qualitative, which facilitate the indicators for an effective management of the degree, specially on learning outcomes and stakeholders satisfaction.
- The implemented processes, procedures and mechanisms facilitate the degree **review** based on the analysis of collected information, as well as the preparation of **periodical follow-up reports**, which support continuous improvement and decision-making on the degree modification and accreditation renewal.
- The implemented processes, procedures and mechanisms facilitate the design and development of **actions for improvement** derived from the follow-up and external review reports.

## II. RESOURCES

### 4. Academic and supporting staff

Teaching staff providing the degree, as well supporting staff, are sufficient and appropriate, according to the degree characteristics, the number of students and allocation commitments included in the verified study plan report and, if applicable, in successive modifications:

- Academic staff has the **academic qualifications** included in the study plan report and the adequate teaching and research experience, which is consistent with the degree characteristics.
- Academic staff is **sufficient** for the development of the study plan and has the appropriate dedication to perform their functions.
- Academic staff teaching activity is subject to **evaluation, updating and performance recognition**, taking into account the degree characteristics, to ensure the correct development of the learning and teaching process.
- **Supporting staff** participating in educational activities is appropriate and sufficient to the degree development according to the commitments acquired in the study plan report.

## 5. Learning resources

The material resources, infrastructures and supporting services provided for the degree development are appropriate with regard to its nature, modality, enrolled students and intended learning outcomes, in accordance with the allocation commitments included in the study plan verified report and, if applicable, in successive modifications:

- Material resources, and the available student support and counselling services, are **appropriate** to the degree characteristics and its learning modality (on-site, virtual or hybrid) for the correct development of the study plan and according to the commitments in the study plan.
- The actions for **students mobility** included in the study plan report have been effectively developed.
- If the degree includes **external academic practices**, they are appropriately developed and according to the commitments established in the study plan report.

## III. OUTCOMES

### 6. Learning outcomes

The learning outcomes achieved by graduate students correspond to the intended results included in the study plan, which is consistent with the graduation profile and, the degree MECES level.

- The adequacy of training activities, teaching methodologies and evaluation systems, is justified so that students can achieve the intended learning outcomes in the degree, areas/subjects, including final degree theses, and if applicable, external academic practices.



- The results indicators established for the degree and its evolution are adequate to the educational objectives included in the study plan.
- The **learning outcomes achieved**:
  - Correspond to the intended learning outcomes included in the verified study plan report and, if applicable, in successive modifications.
  - Meet the programme educational objectives and graduation profile.
  - They are adequate to MECES level.
  - In case of degrees leading to the exercise of regulated professions, the learning outcomes achieved are appropriate to the guidelines established in the regulatory framework provided for the professional degree.

## 7. Satisfaction and graduation

The stakeholders satisfaction and graduates background in the educational programme are consistent with the educational objectives and graduation profiles and they meet the social demands in their scope.

- The degree has **indicators**, achieved from studies, reports, surveys etc., on stakeholders satisfaction and employment rate of graduates.
- The values of the indicators on students, teaching staff, graduates and other stakeholders **satisfaction**, as well as their evolution, are appropriate to the learning objectives included in the study plan.
- The values of indicators on graduates **employment** are consistent with the socio-economic and professional context of the degree and they are appropriate to the study plan educational goals.
- The fundamental graduation profiles developed in the study plan keep their interest and they are updated according to the academic, scientific and professional scope.

## QUALITATIVE VALUATION OF STANDARDS

Compliance with standards and guidelines, within a level scale, must differentiate between:

- **Achieved compliance**, which can differentiate among
  - **Excellently achieved**, when without detecting deficiencies, the study plan development stands out within its scope and relevant best practices are identified.
  - **Achieved**, when the study plan development adjusts to the intended planning, without detecting deficiencies in its development.
  - **Partially achieved**, when deficiencies in the study plan development are detected, however, serious non compliance is not detected with regard to the commitments acquired in the verified or modified study plan report. The deficiencies detected will require the implementation of actions for improvement.
- Compliance is **not achieved**, when non compliance with the commitments acquired in the verified or modified study plan report, as when the aspects recommended for special attention in former external review reports are not being attended.

### Serious non compliance

The following situations will be considered as serious non compliance:

- Deficiencies which, after being detected and recommended the need for improvement in the external review reports, have not been corrected throughout 6 years (period between two accreditation renewals).
- Non compliance of clear commitments and educational objectives included in the verified report or successive modifications that affect the degree nature, objectives and characteristics.
- Non compliance with the commitments in the standards:
  - Academic staff.
  - Material resources and supporting services.
  - Learning outcomes.

### External evaluation reports on accreditation renewal

Serious non compliance will imply at least **unfavourable** reports on accreditation renewal.

**Favourable** reports on accreditation renewal might include requirements and recommendations, as well as the aspects that should be specially taken into account in future follow-up and external review processes in the degree.