Junta de Andalucía

Consejería de Universidad Investigación e Innovación

Agencia para la Calidad Científica y Universitaria de Andalucía

GUIDE FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF THE PROCEDURE FOR THE CERTIFICATION OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY LEVELS IN ANDALUSIAN UNIVERSITIES

Approved by the Technical Committee on Evaluation and Accreditation on 07/03/2025 - V2

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This document is written using non-sexist language, in accordance with the provisions of Organic Law 3/2007, of 22 March, for the effective equality of women and men. In this sense, the use of the generic masculine is made in an inclusive manner, thus referring to both women and men, splitting the gender when the opposition of sexes is relevant in the context..

1. Introduction

The creation of the European Higher Education Area has promoted a notable increase in the international mobility of students, marking a new strategy in the context of higher education and in the internationalisation processes and actions of Spanish universities. In this context, the command of different languages has become a fundamental instrumental competence for any graduate of the Andalusian university system. Competence in one or more foreign languages facilitates international mobility and communication in the real world in the personal, public, educational, academic, occupational or professional spheres with speakers from different linguacultural contexts. It also facilitates access to information, especially information in digital media, enabling the acquisition of knowledge and learning that would be more difficult to obtain without a command of one or more foreign languages. Several thematic reports of the European Universitiy Association (EUA) highlight the need for students to acquire linguistic and intercultural competence through proficiency in foreign languages and cross-cutting skills and competences such as 'writing, presentation and communication skills' and 'intercultural competence'. As stated in the report 'Empowering students for their future professional life and civicengagement' (Loukkola and Dakovic, 2019, p. 9), foreign language proficiency strengthens and enhances students' professional development and civic engagement. On the other hand, other important developments have been made along the same lines. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (hereafter CEFR) now incorporates descriptors of linguistic mediation (North and Piccardo, 2016), a new competence whose development should be encouraged and therefore assessed alongside the other language competences described in the CEFR as it is not only the sum of reception and production, but introduces a new factor: the co-construction of meaning. Furthermore, it also emphasises the two key notions of co-construction of meaning in interaction and the constant movement between the individual and social level in language learning, mainly through its view of the user/learner as a social agent (Piccardo, 2012).

At supranational level, European policies on language education highlight the value of plurilingualism and interculturalism as a hallmark of European citizenship and as a factor of mutual enrichment, integration and coexistence; of personal, academic and professional development, and of social and economic progress. Likewise, following the recommendations of the Council of Europe on the promotion of plurilingualism, Royal Decree 1041/2017, of 22 December, indicates that 'the certification modalities of levels Intermediate B1, Intermediate B2, Advanced C1, and Advanced C2 may be diversified. In addition to the certification of general competence, which will include the activities of comprehension of oral and written texts, production and co-production of oral and written texts, and mediation for each level, partial competences corresponding to one or more of these language activities may also be certified. In all cases, the certificates shall be official and valid throughout the national territory'.

Following the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (hereinafter CEFR), the Andalusian universities and ACCUA have drawn up a 'Procedure for the certification of foreign language proficiency levels in Andalusian universities', which allows universities to structure and assess foreign language proficiency examinations using the same criteria.
This procedure coordinates the definition of common criteria for the elaboration, piloting, administration, marking and revision of the marking of the examinations at the levels established by the CEFR, as well as the evaluation of all these actions. Following the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (hereinafter CEFR), the Andalusian universities and ACCUA have drawn up a 'Procedure for the certification of foreign language proficiency levels in

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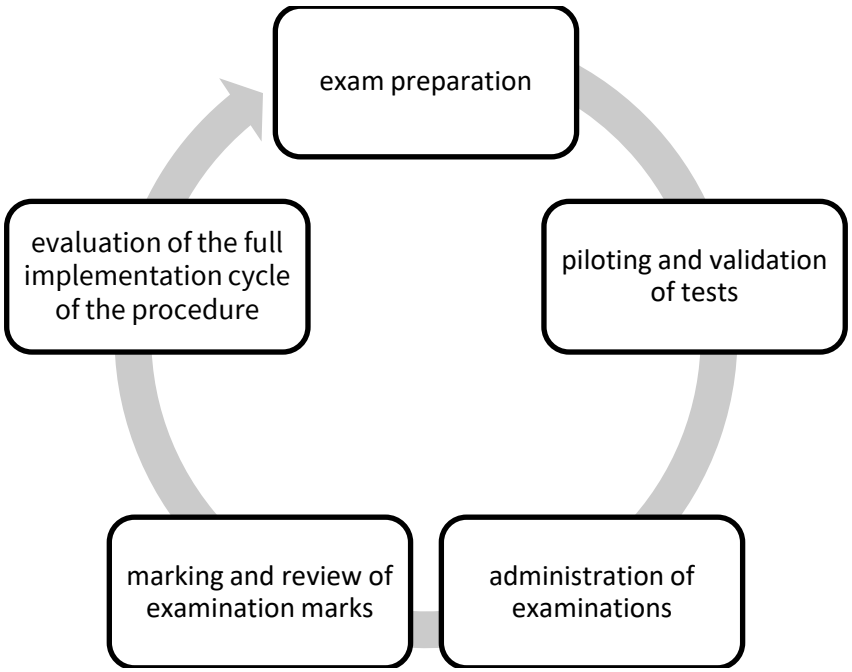

Figure 1. Definition of criteria for the implementation of the procedure.

Once the procedure for the certification of foreign language proficiency levels has been implemented in the universities, each university will apply to the Agency for Scientific and University Quality in Andalusia (ACCUA) for accreditation of this procedure.

This document shows the steps to be followed for the accreditation of the procedures for the certification of foreign language proficiency levels implemented by the universities. Universities that certify their procedure must undergo a follow-up after three years and apply for renewal of the accreditation six years after it has been obtained..

2. Accreditation procedure

The accreditation procedure carried out by ACCUA will follow the criteria and guidelines established by the CEFR. The university shall submit a report on the procedure implemented and an analysis of the results after at least one complete cycle of implementation of the procedure (whereby a cycle of implementation is understood to be the process that begins with the publication of the examination announcement and ends with the issuing of the degrees). Once the report has been reviewed by the accreditation committee, the university will receive a visit from this external committee, which will assess whether the procedure implemented by the university complies with the **Procedure for the certification of foreign language proficiency levels in Andalusian universities** established in this guide. If the committee's report is favourable, ACCUA **will grant accreditation for the procedure**, which will be valid for a maximum of six years, although it will be compulsory to send a **follow-up self-report** every three

years. The university must apply to ACCUA for **renewal of accreditation** before the end of the six-year accreditation period.

2.1. Accreditation

ACCUA will publish on its website the **call** for applications for the 'Accreditation of the procedure for the certification of levels of competence in foreign languages in Andalusian universities' and will appoint an accreditation committee with the profiles and functions specified in section 4 of this document. In order to participate in the call for applications, it is essential that the university has completed at least **one cycle of implementation of the procedure**, as mentioned above.

Each university must **submit a self-assessment** report on the procedure followed and the results obtained in accordance with the criteria and evidence set out in this guide. The application and the self-report will be sent to ACCUA in the terms established in the call and according to the format included in Annex 1: Application.

ACCUA will appoint the Accreditation Commission, which **will evaluate the self-report** submitted using the criteria set out in this guide and draw up a **visit programme** to be sent to the university representative to prepare for the corresponding visit by the commission.

Once the visit has been completed, the evaluators will have one month to draw up an **provisional evaluation report**. Once this report has been drawn up, it shall be sent to the university and a period of 20 days from the date of receipt of the report shall be opened for the submission of allegations. The accreditation committee shall review the allegations and issue a final report in favourable or unfavourable terms, as appropriate.

If the report is favourable, ACCUA will assume the result and accredit the procedure. ACCUA will issue a certificate stating that:

- The name of the university whose procedure has been accredited.
- Reference to the model on which the certification process carried out by the universities is based.
- The scope of accreditation.
- The date of entry into force and the expiry date.

In the event of an unfavourable report, the university may appeal to the University Appeals Commission..

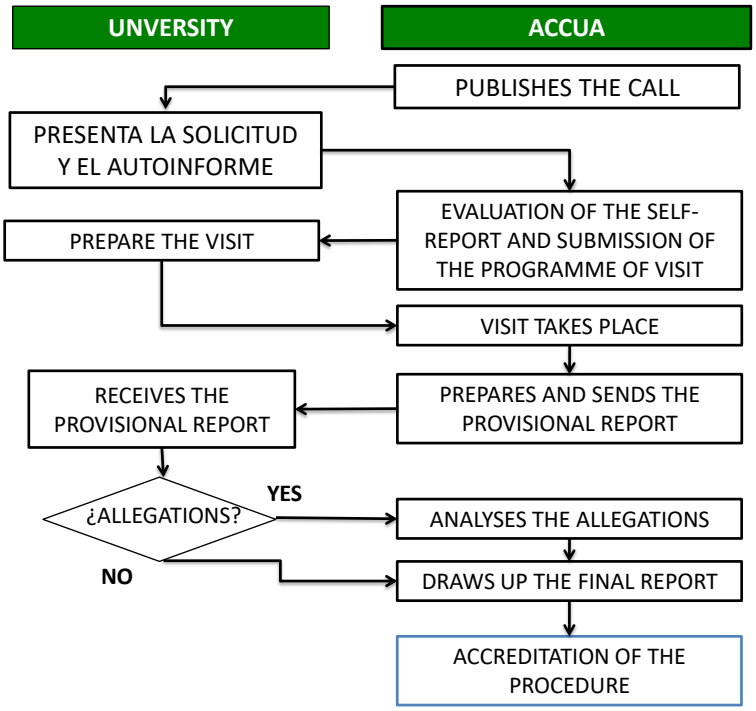

Figure 2. Accreditation process.

2.2. Follow-Up

Once the **procedure for the certification of foreign language proficiency levels in Andalusian universities** has been accredited, the university must send ACCUA a **self-assessment report** three years after its implementation or renewal. This self-report will include the application of the accredited procedure, as well as the possible changes introduced by the university in the language proficiency certification procedure

The Accreditation Committee will review the self-report and check that the implementation and changes made to the procedure are in line with the requirements of the model.

The self-monitoring report should include the procedure followed in the different actions described in Figure 1, as well as the results obtained in accordance with the criteria and evidence established in this guide.

2.3. Renewal of Accreditation

The accreditation of the procedure will be valid for six years, although it will be compulsory to send the corresponding self-monitoring report in the third year. The University must apply to ACCUA for the renewal of the accreditation in the call prior to the end of the period of validity of the accreditation.

The visit to the applicant university will be carried out if the commission considers it necessary to hold hearings with the different agents involved in the process (institutional managers, teaching staff, PTGAS and students who have participated in the different actions of the certification process (Figure 1)). The accreditation renewal process will be similar to the initial accreditation process (Figure 2).

Changes made by the university to the foreign language proficiency certification procedure that affect the scope of accreditation will require the university to apply for a new accreditation process.

3. Evaluation criteria

1. PUBLICLY AVAILABLE INFORMATION

Guidelines:

a) **Universities shall make public on their website** all information on the procedure followed for the examination of foreign language proficiency.

Evidence:

a) The information contained on the website shall be as follows:

1. Characteristics of the accreditation model.
2. Structure and contents of the examination.
3. Examination model.
4. Evaluation criteria.
5. Examination results review process.
6. Suitability of review developers and reviewers.
7. Timelines for issuing certificates.
8. Recognition of external certifications.
9. Examination administration regulations.

2. OBJECTIVE AND GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

Guidelines:

a) The Andalusian universities will certify knowledge of foreign languages by means of taking an exam that accredits proficiency in the language assessed according to the guidelines of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

b) Certification will be the result of the results obtained in the proficiency test described in this procedure and never of the mere completion of courses.

c) According to its needs and characteristics, each university shall plan the objectives of the certification process, which shall include:

1. Languages to be accredited.
2. CEFR levels (A1-C2) at which it will do so.
3. The number of annual examinations to be offered.

d) The university will recognise other certificates of foreign language proficiency provided that these are included in the list of certificates accepted by Andalusian universities for the accreditation of foreign languages.

Evidence:

a) Documentation detailing the general characteristics of the procedure that the university wishes to accredit. The university must justify that it certifies knowledge of foreign languages

by means of a proficiency test in accordance with the CEFR guidelines, and that this proficiency test is independent of the foreign language training processes offered by the university.

b) Documentation detailing the scope and planning of the model, specifying the languages it certifies, the CEFR levels (A1-C2) at which it does so, the number of sittings, the number of candidates enrolled and the number of passes per sitting, as well as the number of passes in each of the language skills defined in the CEFR.

c) Updated table of certificates accepted by Andalusian universities for the certification of foreign language proficiency levels and certificates accepted.

3. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROFICIENCY TEST: CONTENTS, STRUCTURE AND EVALUATION CRITERIA OF THE TESTS.

Guidelines:
a) The content of the examination and the assessment criteria will correspond to the CEFR. The proficiency test for each level and for each language will have the characteristics developed by consensus by the Andalusian universities.

b) The five skills (oral expression, written expression, oral comprehension, written comprehension and mediation) will be assessed. In the skills of oral and written expression, production and interaction will be taken into account. Mediation may be assessed in an integrated or stand-alone manner. Tasks assessing language use may also be included.

c) A result equal to or higher than 50% of the possible score in each and every skill must be obtained in order to consider the tested level accredited.

d) All test tasks, with the possible exception of the language use tasks, will be close to real-world tasks and will be appropriate to the level tested.

e) Textual materials shall be authentic (i.e. samples of real language which have not been produced especially for language teaching), as far as possible. For their use, universities shall comply with the provisions of Law 23/2006 of 7 July 2006 on Intellectual Property.

f) Published assignments or examination materials shall not be used.

g) Each institution shall be free to choose the examination media it deems appropriate. However, the oral expression examination will always be in the presence of the candidate.

h) The examinations will be assessed by two examiners according to the procedures established at each university with the exception of written and oral comprehension and use of language.

Evidence:

a) Description of the characteristics of the proficiency examination, detailing the content, structure and assessment criteria which must conform to the model. The specifications of the examination must be provided, detailing the following aspects:
    1. Examination contents and assessment criteria.
    2. Skills to be assessed.
    3. Requirements for each of the skills in order to obtain the certificate for the level examined.

4. Examination specifications: type and characteristics of examination tasks and characteristics of the textual materials used.
5. Examination task sheets, (responsible, level, descriptor, version...).
6. Examination media, (computer, paper, mixed...).
7. Correction and evaluation procedure.
8. Number of examiners conducting written and oral examinations.

b) Results evidencing the validity and reliability of the examination.

4. ADMINISTRATION OF EXAMINATIONS.

Guidelines:

a) Candidates shall enrol at their university in accordance with the procedure established by each university.
b) Each university shall be responsible for the proper conduct of its examinations and shall implement the systems it deems appropriate to guarantee objectivity and equal opportunities in the examinations.
c) The oral production examination shall be recorded. Each candidate must be asked for permission to be recorded, for example during the registration process.
d) The centres will facilitate the taking of exams for people with special needs, respecting at all times Royal Decree 1791/2010, of 30 December (University Student Statute).

Evidence:

a) Enrolment procedure.
b) Documentation describing how the correct development of the exams is guaranteed in order to ensure objectivity and equal opportunities.
c) Procedure to facilitate exams for people with special needs, alluding to compliance with Royal Decree 1791/2010, of 30 December (University Student Statute).
d) Procedure established for the recording and subsequent use of these recordings.
e) Procedure followed for the safekeeping of examination materials prior to and during the examinations. Likewise, the procedure for the custody and destruction of documentation after the examinations must be specified..

5. EXAMINATION REVIEW PROCEDURE

Guidelines:

a) All candidates have the right to request a second review of their examination.
b) The university will publish the results of the exams within the established deadline (and published on its website), as well as the information regarding the review process established, safeguarding, in any case, the regulations in force at each university that may affect them. In the event of failing the exam, the candidate will not be informed of the skills in which he/she has not reached the required 50%.
c) The request for review of the exam shall be made in writing on the dates indicated by the university within 10 working days. From the publication of the results. No request for review after the deadline will be accepted.
d) The review shall be carried out by two examiners other than those who first corrected the examination.
e) The examinations shall be made available exclusively to the institutions and may not be made available to the examinees.

Evidence:

a) Documentation describing the examination review procedure, detailing the following aspects:
   1. That the procedure is in accordance with university regulations.
   2. The right of candidates to request a review.
   3. The procedure for requesting a review.
   4. The evaluators conducting the review.
   5. The availability of the reviews.
   6. The publication of the results of the reviews.

6. CERTIFICATES

Guidelines:

a) Add the candidate's details in this section.
b) The certificates will be issued by each university.
c) Certificates will only be issued if the level has been reached. Certificates must indicate:
   1. The university where the exam was taken.
   2. The date of the call/exam/test.
   3. The language examined.
   4. The level of competence achieved according to the CEFR.
   5. The breakdown by skills (oral and written expression, oral and written comprehension), indicating the percentage obtained in each of them.
   6. The name and surname of the candidate.
   7. The candidate's personal identification number.
d) The certification procedures will be in accordance with Organic Law 3/2018, of 5 December, on the Protection of Personal Data and guarantee of digital rights.

Evidence:

a) Procedure describing how the issuing and safekeeping of reports is carried out. For each examination session, a report must be completed for each language, level and, where appropriate, modality (general competence or by skills). The minutes shall include the basic standard and the standard corresponding to the educational administration in matters of certification; the list of students registered to take the language proficiency certification examinations; the language and level of the certificate; the academic year; the date of the examination, as well as the marks obtained by the candidates.
b) Procedure followed for the application, issue and delivery of certificates, specifying the issuing body.
c) Documentation describing how the recognition of other foreign language proficiency certificates for certification of CEFR levels is carried out and that this procedure conforms to the reference model.

7. SUITABILITY OF EXAMINERS

Guidelines:

a) Each university, in the centre or unit responsible for the certification of foreign language levels, shall have staff trained to conduct examinations at these levels. For these purposes, the basic requirements that these staff must meet are listed below:

1. Hold a higher education qualification in the field of languages.
2. Be a speaker of the language of the exam in which they are taking part as an L1 or, at least, have at least two levels higher than that of the exam.
3. Have at least three years of teaching experience in L2 in the centre or units responsible for the certification of foreign language levels.
4. If they do not hold a higher education degree in the field of languages and/or do not have three years' teaching experience, they must have specific training in second language teaching equivalent to at least 1 ECTS credit.

b) Developers and/or examiners, in accordance with the relevant European guidelines and for the appropriate use of the CEFR, must have specific training for the development and/or marking of proficiency tests. Such training should include:
   1. Basic principles of assessment by examination at the CEFR level: concepts of validity, reliability and feasibility.
   2. The development of test specifications. Operationalisation of CEFR descriptors.
   3. Techniques for developing tasks in receptive skills: listening and reading comprehension.
   4. Assessment of productive skills: oral and written expression. Development of assessment scales. Setting acceptable levels of competence.
   5. Setting standards.
   6. Basic analysis of test quality: ease, discrimination, internal reliability.

Evidences:

a) Documentation indicating the availability and staffing requirements for conducting proficiency tests and for writing and marking proficiency tests.
b) Documentation indicating the training of the staff involved in the proficiency test (both the person writing and marking the test). If this requirement is not met, the university must provide an action plan that will be reviewed in the evaluation of the first self-monitoring report.
c) Documentation indicating the training of the staff responsible for the preparation and marking of proficiency tests. If this requirement is not met, the university shall provide an action plan that will be reviewed in the evaluation of the first self-monitoring report.
d) The plan for the continuous training of examiners.

8. REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PROCEDURE.

Guidelines:

a) Each university shall have a committee responsible for the examination procedure for CEFR levels. This committee must have internal operating rules or regulations and will have the following functions:
   1. To plan and review the examination procedure.
   2. To evaluate the results obtained and implement actions for improvement in order to achieve the objectives, in accordance with the established procedure.
   3. To collect, deal with and analyse the suggestions or complaints received, in accordance with the established procedure.
   4. To analyse the satisfaction of the different groups involved (candidates taking the tests, academic staff, administration and services staff and, if applicable, external agents), in accordance with the established procedure.
   5. Guaranteeing the transparency of the proceedings, in accordance with the established procedure.
   6. Assessment of the sustainability of the **Procedure for the certification of foreign**

language proficiency levels in Andalusian universities. Consideration should be given to whether the periodicity and coverage of the assessment are sustainable, taking into account the characteristics of the model and the resources available to achieve the objectives of the certification process.

b) The university should specify the modifications made to the accredited model. Changes made by the university to the model shall be reviewed to check that they do not alter the general guidelines of the model.

Evidences

a) Documentation detailing the body, unit or persons responsible for planning and reviewing the foreign language proficiency testing procedure. It should detail its composition and, where appropriate, the regulations or rules of operation.
b) Documentation detailing the procedure to be followed for review and improvement, specifying how the results will be assessed and how decisions and actions for improvement will be taken in order to achieve the objectives of the certification process. This procedure must establish who, how and when the activities related to the review and improvement of each of the milestones of the process will be carried out: development, administration, evaluation/qualification and review of the examination grade, suitability of examiners and issuing of qualifications.
c) Documentation detailing how suggestions or complaints received will be collected, dealt with and analysed. The planned method of collection, the frequency with which it will be carried out and other relevant aspects must be defined.
d) Documentation describing how the analysis of the satisfaction of the different groups involved (students, academic staff, administrative and service staff and external agents) is carried out. It must also describe how the analysis of the satisfaction of the different groups involved in the procedure will be carried out, as well as the planned method of collection, the frequency with which it will be carried out and other relevant aspects.
e) Documentation indicating how the transparency of the process is guaranteed through the publication and updating on its website of all the information on the procedure relating to the certification of CEFR levels.
f) Documentation indicating how the analysis of the sustainability of the model is carried out. Consideration should be given to whether the periodicity and coverage of the assessment are sustainable, taking into account the characteristics of the model and the resources available to achieve the objectives of the CEFR competence level certification process.
g) Documentation showing the analysis of the sustainability of the model.
h) Where applicable, documentation showing any possible modifications made to the accredited model.

4. Accreditation Commission

The Commission will be made up of independent experts, appointed as technical collaborators as evaluators, selected according to the criteria of suitability, territorial representation, independence, availability, responsibility and gender and specialisation in different fields of knowledge.

They will form part of the same:

- Academic member, who will chair the committee.
- Member-student representative.
- Professional member.
- A person designated for this purpose from among ACCUA's technical staff, who will act as the committee's secretary.

The functions associated with each profile are as follows:

Presidency

- Evaluation and review of dossiers.
- Attendance at meetings.
- Attendance at visits.
- Drawing up the agenda of meetings.
- Coordination of commission meetings.
- Signing the minutes of the committee meetings.
- Drafting the report proposal and reviewing it with the other members of the committee for approval.

Secretariat

- Assistance to the presidency in the coordination of work (preparation of meeting agendas, preparation of documentation and other actions related to the development of its competences).
- Attendance at visits.
- Reviewing the proposal, drafting the committee's resolution and signing the minutes of the committee's meetings.

Student

- Evaluation and review of dossiers.
- Attendance at meetings.
- Attendance at visits.
- Review of the chair's proposal and agreement to approve it.

Professional

- Evaluation and review of dossiers.
- Attendance at meetings.
- Attendance at visits.
- Review of the chair's proposal and agreement to approve it.

5. Regulations

- Royal Decree 1041/2017, of 22 December, which sets the minimum requirements of the basic level for certification purposes, establishes the basic curriculum of the Intermediate B1, Intermediate B2, Advanced C1, and Advanced C2 levels of the Special Regime Language Teaching regulated by Organic Law 2/2006, of 3 May, on Education, and establishes the equivalences between the Special Regime Language Teaching regulated in various curricula and those of this Royal Decree.
- Agreement of 24 January 2017, of the Governing Council, approving the Strategic Plan for the Development of Languages in Andalusia Horizon 2020.
- Order of 21 March 2018, which resolves the procedure for the recognition of the accreditation of the levels of competence in foreign languages for bilingual teaching staff in the Autonomous Community of Andalusia, corresponding to the 2017 call for applications.

6. References

- Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Learning, Teaching, Assessment. https://cvc.cervantes.es/Ensenanza/Biblioteca_Ele/marco/cvc_mer.pdf
- Companion Volume: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Learning, Teaching, Assessment. https://cvc.cervantes.es/ensenanza/biblioteca_ele/marco_complementario/mcer_volumen-complementario.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0e0DmjI_rIYUG3QFfXZ7D2V0C7XzowsOBy8Psw2iW2Cq4hsigsJmmDrnE
- Development of illustrative descriptors of aspects of mediation for the CEFR (2016: Brian North and Enrica Piccardo).
- Piccardo, E. (2012). Médiation et apprentissage des langues : Pourquoi est-il temps de réflechir à cette notion ? ELA : Études de Linguistique Appliquée, 167, 285–97.

7. Changes made

Version	Changes to the guide
V1-06/03/2012	Initial version
V2-XX/XX/2025	• Updating to current legislation and changes in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. • The guide is structured into eight evaluation criteria, each of which is divided into Guidelines and Evidence. • Changes in procedure, commission and regulations..

Annex 1: Application for accreditation of the procedure for the certification of foreign language proficiency levels in Andalusian universities

Applicant University:

Responsible for the University

Name	First surname	Second surname

Address

Postcode | City | Province

Email | Fax | Mobile

Position

Applicant centre:

Responsible for the Centre. For communication purposes, notifications shall be sent to the following address.

Name	First surname	Second surname

Address

Postcode | City | Province

Email | Fax | Mobile

Position

Scope of accreditation:

Languages and levels certified by the centre, CEFR levels (A1-C2).

Language	Level

Documentation provided

☐ Report on the procedure followed and the results obtained in accordance with the reference model 'Procedure for the certification of foreign language proficiency levels in Andalusian universities'

In [city], [day][month] 20xx.
The representative of the university

Signed:
Position:

Applicants must send the application and the report in digital format.

Mr. Director of the Agency for Scientific and University Quality of Andalusia.
Calle Dª Berenguela s/n, 14006 Cordoba