



Regulation for online Higher Education in Spain

Royal Decree 822/2021 establishes that:

The study plans leading to official degrees will be verified by the Council of Universities through evaluation of the submitted Verification Report.

The National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA) has published a "Support Guide for the Preparation of the VERIFICATION REPORT for Official University Bachelor's and Master's Degrees." The objective of this guide is to advise universities and provide recommendations and/or suggestions on elements that improve official degree programs, facilitate their evaluation, and enable their more appropriate development.

The quality assurance agencies of the Autonomous Communities registered in the European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (EQAR) are responsible for processing the quality assurance procedures for the university system within their territorial scope, after having successfully passed an external evaluation in accordance with the ESG - European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance of Higher Education.

PROPOSAL FOR A UNIVERSITY DEGREE:

- 1) Full degree title
- 2) Affiliated with a specific branch of knowledge: Each branch has a verification committee.
 - Arts and Humanities
 - Sciences
 - Health Sciences
 - Social Sciences and Law
 - Engineering and Architecture
- 3) Interdisciplinary: cooperation between several disciplines that results in the degree
- 4) Multidisciplinary: several disciplines involved.
- 5) BACHELOR'S DEGREES:
 - Qualifying for regulated professions: Engineering, Dentistry, Nursing, etc.
 - Linked to a regulated profession + a qualifying Master's degree: Lawyer and Clinical Psychologist.
- 6) MASTER'S DEGREES: Constitute a specialisation.
- 7) Curricula are structured around 60 ECTS courses = the standard unit of measurement in Europe for quantifying the volume of work and time a student must dedicate to completing a course or academic program. 1 ECTS = 25/30 working hours.



- 8) Bachelor's degrees will have 240, 300, or 360 ECTS credits. Generally, 240 ECTS credits per degree. The duration of Master's degrees will be 60, 90, or 120 ECTS credits. 9) At least 50% of the 60 basic ECTS credits of a degree (introductory subjects of the branch of knowledge) must be assigned to the same branch to which the degree is attached and taken mainly in the first and second years.
- 9) TEACHING METHOD: The relevance of the proposed method(s) must be adequately justified.
- IN-PERSON: All teaching activities are conducted in person. Only purely in-person hours will be considered, that is, hours involving physical and synchronous interaction between faculty and students.
 - HYBRID: This modality combines in-person and online teaching, always maintaining the unity of the educational project and the coherence of relevant academic aspects. A teaching method is considered hybrid when the sum of ECTS credits for online subjects/courses is between 40% and 60% of the total ECTS credits for the degree.
 - ONLINE: This university teaching modality is characterised by its intensive use of digital technologies. The vast majority of activities do not require interaction between students and faculty in the same learning environment.
- 10) The Verification Committee of each Branch will assess the suitability of the delivery method associated with the degree.
- 11) JUSTIFICATION OF THE academic, scientific, professional, and social INTEREST of the degree, as well as its relevance within the strategic planning of the institution or the university system.

OUTCOMES OF THE TRAINING AND LEARNING PROCESS

- 1) Learning outcomes are statements of what a student is expected to know, understand, and be able to do at the end of a training and learning process.
- 2) They are specified as follows:
 - Knowledge or content acquired through the assimilation of theories, information, data, etc.
 - Skills, attitudes, and values to apply knowledge in order to complete tasks and solve problems.
 - Demonstrated abilities to apply knowledge, skills, and abilities in work or study situations, as well as in professional and personal development.

BACHELOR'S DEGREE

In undergraduate programs, learning outcomes should align to provide students with a basic and general education in one or more disciplines, preparing them for professional activities.

MASTER'S DEGREE



The purpose of the degree program should be to provide students with advanced, specialised, and multidisciplinary training, or to promote their initiation into research activities.

1. DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY PLAN.

The following should be specified in general terms:

- Which modules and subjects will be taught in each of the modalities (in-person, hybrid, and online)?
- For each module/subject/course in each modality, the specific learning activities and assessment methods should be differentiated.
- The mechanisms in place to verify student identity during the assessment processes should be specified.

2. GUIDELINES FOR SUBMITTING INFORMATION ON DEGREES IN THE HYBRID OR ONLINE MODALITIES.

1) DESCRIPTION, TRAINING OBJECTIVES, AND JUSTIFICATION OF THE DEGREE

- The degree proposal must indicate the teaching modality or modalities in which it will be offered, according to the typologies described in this document.
- The number of places offered in each teaching modality must be identified, including those offered to new students.
- The University's regulations on academic progress must establish the conditions according to the teaching modality and expressly indicate how a change of modality affects students.
- National and/or international references must be provided, specifying the website where the content of the programs and degrees mentioned can be consulted.
- Similarly, the technological references for the virtual learning environment must be justified. That is, the chosen technological option must be justified with references to other software applications.

2) OUTCOMES OF THE TRAINING AND LEARNING PROCESS

Learning outcomes are statements of what a student is expected to know, understand, and be able to do at the end of a training and learning process. Degree outcomes will be acquired primarily through the required courses. The university must specify the main training and learning outcomes expected of graduates.

These include:

- Knowledge or content that has been understood through the assimilation of theories, information, data, etc.
- Skills, attitudes, and values for applying knowledge and using techniques to complete tasks and solve problems.
- Demonstrated ability to use knowledge, skills, and personal, social, and methodological abilities in work or study situations and in professional and personal development.



BACHELOR'S DEGREE

In undergraduate programs, the proposed learning outcomes must align with the objective of providing students with a basic and general education in one or more disciplines, preparing them for professional activities and ensuring their comprehensive development as citizens.

MASTER'S DEGREE

In the case of master's programs, the objective of the degree must be to provide students with advanced, specialised, and multidisciplinary training, geared towards academic or professional specialisation or the initiation of research activities.

DESCRIPTION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

This should include a description of the learning outcomes that all students must acquire during their studies and that are required for the award of the proposed degree.

Universities will classify and order the learning outcomes associated with a degree according to whether they refer to knowledge or content, or skills and abilities.

3) ADMISSION AND RECOGNITION

The University must specify the access requirements and admission procedures for students.

4) CURRICULUM PLANNING

The curriculum must be consistent with the teaching modality proposed for the degree. For each subject and/or course, the required in-person attendance must be indicated.

With the aim of standardising the potentially varied terminology used in curriculum structuring, two levels of grouping have been proposed from an academic perspective: modules and subjects. These units have been defined as follows:

Subject: an academic unit that includes one or more courses that can be conceived in an integrated manner, such that they constitute coherent units from a disciplinary perspective.

Module: an academic unit that includes one or more subjects that constitute an organisational unit within a curriculum.

A module can be defined according to the nature of the subjects or courses it contains. In general, modules can be defined as theoretical, methodological, technological, linked to professional or research practice, etc.

5) ACADEMIC AND TEACHING SUPPORT STAFF.

Given the particularities of these teaching modalities, the University must present the structure, profile, and role of the academic staff involved in teaching the degree program in each modality, as well as their dedication.

The specific faculty member responsible for coordinating and designing the degree program must be clearly identified. This faculty member must be a tenured or contracted professor with a permanent position at the university.



The University must provide information on qualified teaching support staff with experience in online or blended learning environments.

6) LEARNING RESOURCES: MATERIALS AND INFRASTRUCTURE, PRACTICES, AND SERVICES.

The higher education institution must guarantee that faculty (both permanent and collaborating/consulting) have access to teaching and technological support infrastructure at all times.

The Institution will provide specific information on:

- **The technical and material resources available** for achieving the objectives in the "online" and "blended" learning modalities, demonstrating that they support the defined teaching and learning methodology and the expected number of students. In other words, their functionalities must be described.
- How the reliability and security of the system are guaranteed, as well as its availability (redundancies, control systems, maximum number of simultaneous connections, etc.) and access.
- **The mechanisms used to guarantee student identity and control** of the environment to prevent fraud.
- etc.

7) INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM.

An Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS) applicable to the degree program must be in place, which must comply with the criteria and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

To this end, the following must be done:

- Provide the processes and manual (if any) of the IQAS applicable to the degree program.
- Indicate whether it is an institutional IQAS that has been externally certified by an external evaluation agency.
- Identify the relevant public information channels for the curriculum aimed at addressing student needs.

8) EVALUATION.

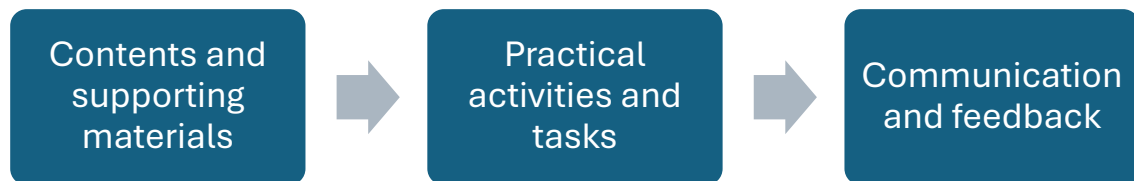
The objective of the evaluation should be to formulate value judgments about the design, organisation, process development and the results of teaching and management, in relation to the objectives of the evaluated units, in order to estimate their usefulness and propose improvement actions. (ANECA, 2010).

What is assessed?	The conceptual, procedural, and attitudinal objectives and content are assessed.
Who assesses?	The teacher or tutor conducts the assessment, and the students also participate.



When to assess?	The assessment process accompanies the learning process itself and is continuous.
How to assess?	The assessment techniques and methods depend largely on the teaching methodology adopted in the course.

The evaluation must be correctly combined and balanced with three fundamental aspects to ensure the success of the training activity.



The evaluation should specify the choice of objectives, defining their functions:

- **Pedagogical:** To what extent have the objectives or goals set at the beginning been achieved? This should be taken into account in the prior planning.
- **Social:** Determine whether the established knowledge and skills have been acquired.
- **Economic:** Analyse the benefits, profitability, or impact of the results obtained from the implementation of the training activity.

Temporal Criterion. Time at which it is carried out		
Initial,	Process	Final Stages
The aim is to understand students' starting points to design actions that take into account their interests, prior knowledge, and other factors.	Analysis during the process allows for the evaluation of the processes as they unfold. This enables improvements to be implemented in case of problems or deviation	Once the process is complete, it is necessary to analyse both the results and the events that occurred. This allows for the establishment of future improvements.
It is possible to include an impact evaluation , an analysis conducted after the final evaluation to assess, over a longer period, the suitability of the results obtained and whether they have contributed to the actual achievement of the expected objectives.		

Temporal Criterion: Conclusions		
Quantitative	Qualitative	Mixed
A search for quantifiable facts and data that can be controlled and observed from the outside.	The facts must be observed from within, taking into account subjective analyses	This involves using data obtained from both of the previously described methods.



C. EVALUATION IN E-LEARNING.

1. **INDICATORS:** To evaluate an online training program, indicators can be established to specify the aspects that must be recorded and observed.

These indicators may include: (Mayorga, 2010):

- Ease of access to course information.
- Enrolment.
- Registration and access to the platform.
- Familiarisation with the platform.
- Downloading and obtaining materials.
- Monitoring of assignment deadlines.
- Completion of assignments in each unit or module.
- Participation in forums and group activities.
- Completion of supplementary activities.
- Completion of unit or module quizzes.
- Completion of the final quiz.
- Program accreditation.
- Assessment of performance by the tutor.

2. **ANALYSIS:** The evaluation will analyse all components of the process:

- **Content.** The objectives, appropriate content, and especially the target audience should be analysed.
- **Online environment or platform.** It is necessary to offer communication environments between teachers and participants that foster debate and collaboration. The use or implementation of visual guides helps and facilitates access.
- **User involvement.** The designs must be intuitive and easy to use, and provide the necessary support or guidance.
- **Teacher role.** The evaluation must include a thorough analysis of the role played by the teachers and other professionals involved. If this role is not fulfilled correctly, the expected outcomes of this methodology and its necessary quality will not be achieved.

3. QUALITY, EFFICIENCY, AND TRANSPARENCY INDICATORS FOR AN E-LEARNING PROJECT.

It is advisable to evaluate content-based e-learning models, distributing the indicators across three main areas:

- A. **INFRASTRUCTURE:** LMS (Learning Management System) platform.
- B. **VIRTUAL CLASSROOM:** Training content.
- C. **ADMINISTRATION:** Tutoring support.

For each area, the main quality, efficiency, and transparency indicators that a project must meet to ensure its success are defined.



A. INFRASTRUCTURE

E-LEARNING PLATFORM:

The LMS platform is the cornerstone of an e-learning project. It interconnects all components of the training: students, tutors, and training content.

It must offer a good user experience and facilitate the tutor's work in comprehensively monitoring student progress.

The infrastructure indicators refer to the LMS platform's technological development and its capacity, availability, security, and interoperability with other services—all relevant factors in the training process.

Main indicators:

- **Availability - Capacity: Quality Indicator.** The e-learning platform (LMS/LCMS) must be available 24/7.
- **Minimum requirements: Quality Indicator.** The technical requirements must be minimal: an internet connection and an up-to-date browser, without complex configurations.
- **Interoperability: Efficiency Indicator.** The platform offers integration systems (web services, APIs) with external tools (ERPs, intranets, etc.).
- **Biometric recognition: Transparency Indicator.** The platform offers biometric student identification through image, video, or keystroke pattern capture.

B. VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

- **Usable, easy to navigate: Quality Indicator.** The virtual classroom offers ample, well-organised features and simple, intuitive navigation.
- **Multi-device compatibility: Quality Indicator.** Training can be accessed from any device: computer, smartphone, or tablet.
- **Asynchronous communication: A quality indicator.** The Virtual Classroom enables asynchronous communication among participants in the training process. The virtual classroom must have functionality for the exchange of private information (queries, exercises) between the tutor and the student, as well as for the exchange of information publicly (announcement boards, forums, etc.).
- **Synchronous Communication - Videoconferencing: Quality Indicator.** The virtual classroom enables synchronous communication among participants in the training process. The possibility of conducting scheduled webinars (virtual live classes) to address and complement different aspects of the course improves the training process.
- **Practical Assignments and Exercises: Quality Indicator.** The virtual classroom has tools for proposing and evaluating practical exercises.
- **Library of Services: Quality Indicator.** The virtual classroom has a space to host supplementary resources. Students highly value links of interest, bibliographies, and similar resources.
- **Student Record: Quality Indicator.** The virtual classroom provides students with their records so they can track their progress in the course at any time.



C. ADMINISTRATION: Management.

- **Compatible with SCORM - LTI - CMI5: Efficiency Indicator.** The platform will allow the import and delivery of courses in SCORM format.
- **Engagement Tools: Efficiency Indicator.** To avoid the feeling of isolation that e-learning can cause, it is very important to design a follow-up plan that engages and motivates participants throughout the course.
- **Detailed Student Report: Transparency Indicator.** The e-learning platform allows recording every student interaction, including access to content, communications with tutors, students, and supervisors, and assessments, enabling personalised progress tracking and certification of the training received.
- **External Communication via Email/SMS: Efficiency Indicator.** The platform allows sending email and SMS communications to students and tutors.
- **Satisfaction Survey: Transparency Indicator.** Gathering information about students' opinions on the training process is invaluable for continuous improvement.
- **Course Status Report: Transparency Indicator.** General information regarding the course status is provided. Timelines and progress status will allow us to support the student throughout the entire process.
- **Tutor Reports: Transparency Indicator.** The platform offers reports to monitor and evaluate tutors' work. This includes their effectiveness and speed in resolving student questions, correcting assignments, and grading exercises.
- **Grades and Records: Efficiency Indicator.** The platform offers tools to configure and present student grades. Tests, self-correcting exercises, self-assessment activities, and those evaluated by experts generate numerical scores and indicators that unequivocally verify that the student has met the established requirements for certification.
- **Diplomas and Certificates: Efficiency Indicator.** The platform can automatically generate and deliver customizable diplomas.
- **LCMS (Learning Content Management System) Authoring System: Efficiency Indicator.** The platform has an authoring system that allows content creation and editing. This functionality enables continuous content updates if the copyright holder has the necessary rights.

IN ADDITION to the regulations, we just discussed, after consulting with e-learning experts in Spain, for a university degree to offer the quality required for good results when delivered online, three main aspects must be considered:

A. Technological environment. The actual connectivity options of users must be taken into account. Access from a computer, tablet, or phone must be planned. Students use whatever they have available or whatever is most convenient for them at any given time to access the content.



B. Content: Basic content, such as PDFs, is not acceptable as the sole option. The specific content shall offer a dynamic and attractive presentation. Mobile web design (responsive design) offers the best viewing experience on the widest variety of devices. The average screen size of phones and tablets is significantly smaller than that of a standard computer, even when compared to laptops. That is why the content must be prepared to adapt to all of them.

C. Teaching staff: It is essential to have staff trained in digital teaching. This is a guarantee of success. The teacher is the one who:

- a. Guides and motivates.
- b. Keeps the course active. Their interaction with the student should not be delayed more than 24 hours from the time it is requested.

SOURCES:

1. GUÍA DE APOYO PARA LA ELABORACIÓN DE LA MEMORIA DE VERIFICACIÓN DE TÍTULOS OFICIALES DE GRADO Y MÁSTER. Abril 2024. AGÈNCIA VALENCIANA D’AVALUACIÓ I PROSPECTIVA.
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3. Guía de Apoyo para la elaboración de la MEMORIA DE VERIFICACIÓN de Títulos Universitarios Oficiales. ANECA