

## **PROCEDURE FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF UNIVERSITY PROGRAMMES (BACHELOR'S AND MASTER'S LEVEL) OUTSIDE THE BASQUE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM**

### **1. REFERENCE FRAMEWORK**

As a result of the experience gained in the evaluation for the renewal of the accreditation of official bachelor's and master's programmes in the Basque University System, and based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area developed by the E4 Group (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), European Students' Union (ESU), European University Association (EUA), European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), in cooperation with Education International (EI), BUSINESSEUROPE and the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR), the Advisory Board of the agency, at its meeting on 11 April 2018, has decided to approve this document, the content of which is set out in the following paragraphs.

### **2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

This protocol establishes the criteria for the accreditation of university programmes (bachelor's and master's level) that so request from the agency. The application will be formalised by signing an agreement establishing the specific details of the procedure to be carried out.

### **3. PURPOSES**

The objectives of accreditation are as follows:

- To ensure the quality of the programme offered in accordance with the established qualification levels and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).
- To guarantee that the quality of the results obtained in the development of university education corresponds to the commitments acquired.
- To ensure the availability and accessibility of valid, reliable, relevant and pertinent public information that helps in the decision-making process of the different users and stakeholders.
- To provide recommendations and/or suggestions for improvement for the programme that support the internal quality improvement processes of the programme and its development, and which will have to be taken into account in future follow-ups and renewals of accreditation.

The accreditation process will therefore make it possible to check whether the programme is being offered in accordance with what was initially established (or in any subsequent modifications that may have taken place) and, furthermore, whether the results obtained and their evolution justify its accreditation. Likewise, the accreditation assessment process will help the programme to identify those aspects to which special attention must be paid with a view to improving its results.

### **4. PROCEDURE FOR THE ISSUING OF REPORTS FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF UNIVERSITY PROGRAMMES (BACHELOR'S AND MASTER'S LEVEL).**

#### **4.1. Receipt of the application at Unibasq.**

Prior to the submission of the documentation, the university responsible for the programme will sign the corresponding agreement with Unibasq for the formalisation of the accreditation procedure. The evaluation procedure will begin with the presentation of the Self-evaluation Report (Annex I), and the evidence that justifies the information contained therein, by the University.

#### **4.2. Establishment of the Panel of Experts**

Unibasq will set up the Panels of Experts that will carry out the assessment of the implementation of the programme and the visit to the centre/sites where the programme to be assessed is taught.

The Experts Panel will act on behalf of Unibasq. The actions of the Panel of Experts shall be governed by the indications established by Unibasq in its Code of Ethics and Guarantees, as well as in the internal rules of procedure contained in this document.

The Panel of Experts shall generally have the following composition:

- A person who chairs it, who will have experience in the processes of issuing a prior report for authorisation, verification, monitoring or renewal of accreditation of programmes as a member of Unibasq or other agency evaluation committees.
- A variable number of academic members, to be determined according to:
  - The number of programmes to be evaluated.
  - The heterogeneity of the academic field of the programmes to be assessed.
- A person to act as secretary during the visit.
- One person to perform secretarial duties at technical level.
- One student member from the academic field of the programme to be assessed, with training in assessment processes.
- A person with expertise in Quality Assurance Systems (QMS).

The Panel of Experts may also include, whenever the University so requires or when the characteristics of the programme so require, a professional member in the scientific-technical field of the programmes to be assessed and/or a foreign expert with experience in assessment processes.

Unibasq will publish on its website the composition of the Expert Panels.

#### **4.3. Receipt and individual review of the programme accreditation dossier by the panel.**

Once Unibasq has verified that the programmes's self-assessment report meets the requirements, Unibasq will provide the Panel of Experts with access to the programmes's accreditation dossier, which will include all the information on the programme necessary to carry out the visit:

- The self-assessment report for the accreditation of the programme, by means of which the University justifies that the results obtained by the programme comply with the planned objectives.
- Evidence to justify the fulfilment of each of the criteria.

The members of the Panel of Experts will study all the documentation of the programme and will carry out an individual review of it. To facilitate this task, Unibasq will provide the panel members with access to an application where they can consult the programme dossier and carry out the corresponding assessment.

#### **4.4.- Sharing of the individual analysis carried out by the panel**

Once the individual review has been carried out, the members of the Panel of Experts will share the main conclusions and their first impressions of the analysis. In the sharing, the Panel of Experts has to determine the aspects to be emphasised in the visit, as well as:

- Additional evidence to be requested: identify additional information or data needed to substantiate aspects that are confusing, contradictory or not supported by evidence.
- Questions and groups to be interviewed: identify the main issues to be clarified during the visit and the group to be interviewed.
- Site visit: the possible visit to specific facilities.
- Agenda proposal: based on the above, an agenda will be drawn up and sent to the University. The programmes under evaluation will be grouped according to their subject matter and/or the centres where they are taught.

#### **4.5. Preparation of the visit by the University**

The University's tasks for the preparation of the visit are as follows:

- Make available to the Panel of Experts the necessary rooms, suitably equipped, in which they can carry out the planned interviews, as well as their own internal meetings to share the information gathered. Likewise, they must provide internet access for the evaluation team.
- Facilitate the travel of the Panel of Experts where necessary.
- Select the people from the different groups involved who are requested by the Panel of Experts and organise the meetings appropriately.
- To attend to the Panel of Expert Persons in any requests they may make regarding the evaluation process. A member of the University will be in charge of receiving the Panel of Experts in order to welcome them

and organise everything necessary to facilitate their performance, as well as to bid them farewell once the visit is over.

- Make available to the Expert Panel any additional evidence requested.

#### **4.6. Implementation of the panel visit**

On the planned dates, a visit will be made to the centre to which the programme/s to be assessed are taught.

During the visit, the groups listed in the agenda will be interviewed and there will be a time interval to review the evidence previously requested by the panel of experts and to hold a public hearing where any person related to the programme who wishes to provide additional information related to the programme can attend.

#### **4.7. Issuance of the Report of the visit by the panel**

The Panel of Experts will draft the Report of the visit. Although the chairperson is ultimately responsible for the drafting of the report, the work shall be distributed among the members of the panel for the preparation of the drafts of the report. The report will be issued on a collegiate basis.

Once the Report of the visit has been finalised, the person chairing the Panel of Experts must send it to Unibasq within a maximum of three weeks (after the visit has taken place).

#### **4.8. Analysis of the programme documentation by the corresponding Evaluation Committee of Study Programmes**

The self-assessment report, the visit report and the rest of the information previously available on the study programme included in the accreditation dossier will be analysed by the corresponding Evaluation Committee previously assigned by Unibasq.

As a result of the analysis carried out, the committee will draw up an Evaluation Report.

This interim evaluation report may be:

- favourable to accreditation or
- with aspects that necessarily need to be modified in order to obtain a favourable report.

All reports, whatever their outcome, shall be reasoned and may include recommendations for improvement.

#### **4.9. Submission of the Interim Report and allegations**

The Interim Report and the Report on the visit drawn up by the Panel of Experts will be sent to the University so that, within 20 working days, it may make any allegations it deems appropriate. In the event that the result of the Interim Report is with "aspects that must necessarily be modified in order to obtain a favourable report", the University may make the appropriate clarifications on the deficiencies detected.

In addition to these clarifications, the University may, where appropriate, attach an Improvement Plan that includes the strategic decision on which changes will be incorporated into the different processes of the organisation, so that they can be translated into an improvement of the deficiencies identified in the Interim Accreditation Report. This plan must allow the control and monitoring of the different actions to be developed, including a sequence, planning and timing for the improvement actions to be proposed.

If, after the expiry of the deadline, no allegations have been submitted, the University shall be deemed to have waived its right to submit them and this report shall become the final report.

#### **4.10. Analysis of allegations by the Evaluation Committee**

After receiving the allegations and, if applicable, the Improvement Plan, the corresponding committee will proceed to analyse them, studying both the clarifications made by the University and the viability of the Improvement Plan proposed. On the basis of these, the committee will decide whether or not to modify its Interim Report.

#### **4.11. Preparation and submission of the Final Accreditation Report of Unibasq**

Unibasq will issue the final accreditation report, which may be favourable or unfavourable to the accreditation of the programme, taking into account the assessment of the requirements for meeting the criteria indicated in section 6 of this document.

The maximum duration of accreditation will be 5 years, with periodic monitoring of the Improvement Plan submitted, where appropriate.

#### **4.12. Resources**

Any communication on grounds for abstention, request for recusal or appeal shall be addressed to the chair of the Ethics and Guarantees Committee, by post (Unibasq, Comité de Ética y Garantías, C/ San Prudencio Nº 8, 01005, Vitoria-Gasteiz), or by e-mail (comite\_etica@unibasq.eus). The sender of the request will be informed of its receipt and whether it should be processed in this way.

If the procedure derives from an appeal against certification, accreditation or assessment decisions issued by Unibasq, the decision shall rule on whether or not there is a formal defect in the procedure used, or whether there is a cause of incompatibility of article 12 of the Code of Ethics and Guarantees, or whether any fundamental right has been violated. If there are grounds for upholding the appeal, the decision shall annul the accreditation, certification or report issued and shall order that the proceedings be restored to the state and time at which the infringement or violation was committed.

### **5. EVALUATION CRITERIA**

The evaluation model is based on three dimensions:

- **MANAGEMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME:** the suitability, management and organisation of the syllabus will be analysed (including the structure of the syllabus and its coherence with the graduate profile and

the expected competences and learning outcomes, access, teaching coordination mechanisms and credit transfer and recognition systems), the transparency and visibility of the study programme in terms of the information provided about it to the different stakeholders, and the effectiveness of the QMS as an instrument for collecting information, analysing it, implementing improvement actions and monitoring them appropriately.

- **RESOURCES.** The adequacy of the academic staff and the material resources, infrastructures and services made available to students will be analysed in order to guarantee the achievement of the learning outcomes defined by the study programme.
- **OUTCOMES.** Aspects related to the outcomes of the study programme and their evolution during its development will be reviewed. In this sense, the mechanisms established by the University to verify the adequate acquisition, by the students, of the learning outcomes initially defined for the study programme will be analysed. The evolution of the different indicators of academic, professional (job placement) and personal (satisfaction with the educational experience) results will also be analysed.

The dimensions are further broken down into seven criteria that allow a sufficient degree of disaggregation to identify the necessary information to facilitate proper analysis. Each criterion is defined by a standard that should be achieved.

Finally, each criterion is specified in one or more assessment guidelines, on which they will be indicated:

- Aspects on which the analysis is based.
- Evidence and indicators to support the formulation of value judgements.

## DIMENSION 1. MANAGEMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

### CRITERION 1. ORGANISATION AND DEVELOPMENT

**Standard:**

**The programme is up to date and has been implemented in accordance with the conditions established in the verified report and/or its subsequent modifications.**

Guideline 1.1: The implementation of the syllabus and the organisation of the programme are coherent with the competence profile and objectives of the study programme set out in the verification report and/or its subsequent modifications.

Guideline 1.2: The defined graduate profile (and its deployment in the curriculum) remains relevant and up-to-date according to the requirements of its academic, scientific and professional field.

Guideline 1.3: The study programme has teaching coordination mechanisms (horizontal and vertical articulation between the different subjects) that allow both an adequate allocation of the students' workload and an adequate time planning, ensuring the acquisition of the learning outcomes.

Guideline 1.4: The admission criteria applied allow students to have the appropriate entry profile to start these studies and their application respects the number of places offered in the verified report.

Guideline 1.5: The implementation of the different academic regulations is carried out in an appropriate manner and allows for the improvement of the values of the academic performance indicators.

### CRITERION 2. INFORMATION AND TRANSPARENCY

**Standard:**

**The institution has mechanisms in place to adequately communicate to all stakeholders the characteristics of the programme and the processes that ensure its quality.**

Guideline 2.1: Those responsible for the programme publish adequate and up-to-date information on the characteristics of the programme, its development and its results, both in terms of monitoring and accreditation.

Guideline 2.2: The information necessary for decision-making by potential students interested in the study programme and other agents of interest in the national and international university system is easily accessible.

Guideline 2.3: Students enrolled in the study programme have timely access to relevant information about the curriculum and the intended learning outcomes.

### CRITERION 3. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM (QAA)

**Standard:**

**The institution has a formally established and implemented quality assurance system that effectively ensures the continuous improvement of the study programme.**

Guideline 3.1: The implemented and regularly reviewed QMS ensures the continuous collection and analysis of information and results relevant to the effective management of the study programme, in particular learning outcomes and stakeholder satisfaction.

Guideline 3.2: The implemented QMS facilitates the process of monitoring, modification and accreditation of the degree and ensures its continuous improvement based on the analysis of objective data.

Guideline 3.3: The implemented QMS has procedures in place to facilitate the evaluation and improvement of the quality of the teaching-learning process.

## DIMENSION 2. RESOURCES

### CRITERION 4. ACADEMIC STAFF

**Standard:**

**The number of academic staff teaching is sufficient and appropriate, in accordance with the characteristics of the study programme and the number of students.**

Guideline 4.1: The academic staff of the study programme meets the level of academic qualification required for the degree and has the appropriate teaching and research experience and quality.

Guideline 4.2: Academic staff is sufficient and adequately dedicated to carry out their duties and serve the student body.

Guideline 4.3: The teaching staff is updated so that, taking into account the characteristics of the study programme, they can approach the teaching-learning process in an appropriate manner.

Guideline 4.4: (Where applicable) The University has implemented the commitments included in the verification report and the recommendations defined in the reports on the verification, authorisation, where applicable, and monitoring of the study programme relating to the recruitment and enhancement of the teaching and research qualifications of the teaching staff.

### CRITERION 5. SUPPORT STAFF, MATERIAL RESOURCES AND SERVICES.

**Standard:**

**The support staff, material resources and services made available for the development of the study programme are adequate according to the nature and modality of the study programme, the number of students enrolled and the competences to be acquired by them.**

Guideline 5.1: The support staff involved in training activities is sufficient and adequately supports the teaching activity of the academic staff linked to the study programme.

Guideline 5.2: The material resources (classrooms and their equipment, work and study spaces, laboratories, workshops and experimental spaces, libraries, etc.) are adapted to the number of students and to the training activities programmed in the study programme.

Guideline 5.3: In the case of distance/ blended learning study programmes, the technological infrastructures and teaching materials associated with them allow for the development of training activities and the acquisition of the study programme competences.

Guideline 5.4: The academic, professional and mobility support and guidance services made available to students once enrolled are in line with the competences and modality of the study programme and facilitate the teaching-learning process.

Guideline 5.5: If the programme includes external/clinical placements, these have been planned as planned and are appropriate for the acquisition of the study programme competences.

Guideline 5.6: The University has made effective the commitments included in the verification report and the recommendations defined in the reports on the verification, authorisation, where applicable, and monitoring of the study programme relating to the support staff involved in the training activities, the material resources, and the study programme's support services.



### DIMENSION 3. RESULTS

#### CRITERION 6. LEARNING OUTCOMES.

**Standard:**

**The learning outcomes achieved by graduates are coherent with the graduate profile and correspond to the MECES (Spanish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education) level of the study programme.**

Guideline 6.1: The training activities, their teaching methodologies and the assessment systems used are appropriate and reasonably suited to the objective of acquiring the intended learning outcomes.

Guideline 6.2: The learning outcomes achieved meet the objectives of the training programme and are in line with their MECES level.

#### CRITERION 7. SATISFACTION AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS.

**Standard:**

**The results of the programme's indicators are congruent with the design, management and resources made available to the study programme and satisfy the social demands of its environment.**

Guideline 7.1: The evolution of the main data and indicators of the study programme (number of new students per academic year, graduation rate, drop-out rate, efficiency rate, performance rate and success rate) is adequate, in accordance with the subject area and environment in which the degree is inserted and is coherent with the characteristics of the new students.

Guideline 7.2: Satisfaction of students, teaching staff, graduates and other stakeholders is adequate.

Guideline 7.3: The values of the indicators of graduate labour market outcomes are appropriate to the socio-economic and professional context of the study programme.

## 6. ASSESSMENT OF THE CRITERIA

Each of the above-mentioned accreditation criteria and guidelines will be assessed on the basis of four levels, where appropriate:

- It exceeds excellently. The standard corresponding to the criterion is fully achieved and, in addition, it is an example that exceeds the basic requirements.
- Achieved. The standard corresponding to the criterion is fully achieved.
- Partially achieved. The standard is achieved at the minimum level, but specific areas for improvement are identified.
- Not achieved. The criterion does not achieve the minimum level required to reach the relevant standard.

The semi-quantitative assessment will only be used in the issuing of the Visit Report in accordance with Annex II.

For the purposes of this procedure, these shall be considered serious deficiencies leading to the issuing of a report against the renewal of accreditation:

- Those that have been reiterated in the Unibasq Monitoring Reports and which, although they need to be rectified, have not been carried out.
- Non-compliance with clear commitments and objectives assumed in the verified report on academic staff, support services and infrastructures.

In no case can accreditation be achieved if a score of "not achieved" is obtained for any of the following criteria:

- Criterion 4. Academic staff

- Criterion 5. Material resources and student support
- Criterion 6. Learning outcomes

The identification of serious deficiencies in other criteria may also lead to the issuing of an unfavourable report.

In accordance with the CURSA protocol approved by the General Conference on University Policy, the assessment of a degree that is taught in several centres of the same University, if serious non-compliance is detected by any of the centres where the degree is taught, an interim report may be obtained with aspects that must necessarily be modified, including the elimination of the participation of the centre or centres where these deficiencies occur. The final favourable report will be obtained with a commitment on the part of the university that, once accreditation renewal has been obtained, if applicable, the syllabus will be modified so that, within a reasonable period of time, the centre in question will be excluded from teaching the corresponding degree.