

## Executive summary

# Cross-sectional assessment report Master's Degree in Educational Psychology



### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Master's Degree in Educational Psychology (MUP) is taught in five of the twelve universities of the Catalan Higher Education System (SUC), three public and two private. The predominant offer corresponds to universities that develop their study programmes in face-to-face format, although the majority of students are enrolled to study online. This fact is one of the many that draw attention to a degree that, in the last three academic years, has ceased to be offered at two other centres, which received an unfavourable report for the renewal of accreditation, and has not been offered at a third university because the proposal submitted did not pass the validation process. The MUP is thus among the degrees with the worst results in the assessment processes carried out by AQU Catalunya.

The indicators included in this cross-sectional report show that the MUP, in comparison with master's degree programmes in the Social Sciences and the SUC as a whole, presents, on the one hand, a more diversified social profile of the student body (for example, in terms of family background with university studies or socio-economic status) and, on the other, values that are lower in percentage terms of the participation of post-doctoral lecturers and tenured teaching staff in the courses taught, in student satisfaction with the training received and in employment outcomes. However, MUP students have comparatively superior performance and a better academic background than those on other master's programmes. New enrolment has grown considerably, although only in online format.

The results of the delivery of the MUP cannot be attributed to the newness of the degree, since both its field of knowledge and the professional activity around which it is structured existed at the beginning of the 20th century. To a certain extent, this attribution may be based on the incorporation of new specialisations, some of which are still in the process of consolidation, and on the existence of educational offers, profiles and professional activities in the same or similar areas of knowledge. It is precisely in the very definition and development of the MUP study programmes where the root causes of the situation described must surely be sought.

The redesign of the now defunct undergraduate degree in Educational Psychology, starting in the 2010-2011 academic year, has been carried out in a complex academic context, in which the planning of university education in the new scenarios promoted by the construction of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the strengthening of areas such as Social Education, master's degrees that expand and diversify the educational offer and professional specialisation in Educational Sciences and, especially, the creation of the specialisation of Educational Guidance within the Master's Degree in Secondary Education Teacher Training with professional competencies converge. In the professional field, the scenario has been equally complex with the emergence of new intervention demands, congruent with emerging personal and social needs, which require more research, with training proposals and evidence-based professional action.

The response of the SUC universities to these challenges has been unequal and poorly coordinated in terms of the specialisation offer, requirements for previous training and credit recognition, definition of learning and graduation profiles, syllabuses or professional competencies, among others. The situation of the MUP calls for a change in the strategy followed in recent years, which, based on this cross-sectional report, could be drawn up by a

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working group or joint committee formed by universities, professionals, graduates, families and other social groups and communities with needs that are usually addressed within the scientific, academic and professional areas of Educational Psychology.

Among the strategic challenges to be faced by the MUP is the development of a reference qualifications framework, in line with the Catalan Higher Education Qualifications Framework (MCQES), to guide the educational offer and its study programmes, as well as the learning and graduation profiles of the degree.

In addition to the above challenge, there is a need to review the curricula offered, so that the specialisations or subjects, based on the advances in knowledge in the Social Sciences, Educational Sciences and, in particular, Educational Psychology, guarantee the correspondence between the graduate profiles and the most relevant aspects of the training undertaken, both within each university and among the universities that offer this degree or may offer it in the future.

The guarantee that graduates acquire the expected and socially demanded training rests on the development of authentic, self-critical and decision-oriented assessment procedures that enable the graduation profiles achieved in the MUP to be determined. This challenge is linked to the need to coordinate a shared task between educational psychology professionals, those responsible for the degree programme and the universities, in order to develop procedures and techniques to check whether the learning outcomes expected for the degree as a whole and for each of its specialisations have been achieved.

One way to ensure the achievement of the expected learning outcomes is to ensure that the master's degree final project (TFM) is prepared with rigour and depth commensurate with the level of qualification granted by the MUP, to which the development of academic guides for teachers, students and assessment commissions on how to address the various tasks associated with its implementation in the field of educational psychology can contribute.

The review of the teaching, learning and assessment approaches on which the development of the MUP is based could also contribute to improving both learning outcomes and student satisfaction, as well as helping to clarify its identity and formative and professionalising quality in the Educational Sciences, with all the complexities that this implies from both a scientific-disciplinary and professional perspective. In this respect, it is worth recommending the adoption of an evidence-based practice approach or, in more general terms, the development of training proposals that follow the postulates of the student-centred teaching, learning and assessment approach. And, undoubtedly, of a professional practice that is congruous with the identity of its graduates, without ignoring the desirable convergence with other educational and social professionals.

The review and improvement or redesign of the support and guidance systems offered to MUP students could provide added value to a master's degree that has educational guidance among its knowledge areas. In this regard, the drawing up of innovative proposals in the field of training and professional career development could help to position the MUP as a benchmark for SUC master's degrees.

Finally, linked to the above, it is worth recommending that those responsible for the MUP review the strategy they follow in relation to the actions that can improve the suitability of MUP-related occupations, and analyse the participation of employers, and the institutions to

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which they are linked, in such relevant issues as the review and design of the MUP, the selection of internship centres and tutors, and careers guidance and the employment outcomes of those graduating from the degree programme.