



GUIDE TO THE DESIGN, VALIDATION AND MODIFICATION OF RECOGNISED BACHELOR'S AND MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAMMES

This document complements the *Standards and Criteria for the Quality Assessment of University Bachelor's and Master's Degrees*. It is intended to guide university centres in the internal process of drafting, reviewing and modifying validation reports, and to assist the commissions responsible for assessing compliance with the established standards and criteria.



AQU CATALUNYA

GUIDE TO THE DESIGN, VALIDATION AND MODIFICATION OF RECOGNISED BACHELOR'S AND MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAMMES

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this guide is threefold: to assist university officials in the process of drafting proposals for new officially recognised bachelor's and master's degree programmes, to facilitate the internal review and modification of validated programmes by the institutions offering them, and to serve as an important tool for the external, independent review of these proposals by AQU Catalunya.

As an assessment model, validation involves the *ex ante* accreditation of degree programmes and serves the dual purpose of accountability and continuous improvement. It therefore aims firstly to ensure the quality of bachelor's and master's degree proposals so that they are suitable in terms of content and structure, both for their assessment and for the production of public information on recognised degrees. Secondly, it seeks to promote a dynamic of continuous improvement, identifying strengths and weaknesses and, where appropriate, leading to proposals for improvement to be considered as the degree programme is rolled out.

Since the implementation of the assessment processes for degree programmes adapted to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), AQU Catalunya's role in this assessment process has comprised the following specific actions:

- a) Assuring quality in the design, development and review of bachelor's and master's degrees.
- b) Linking the validation process with the modification, monitoring and accreditation processes for recognised degree programmes.
- c) Assessing proposals from an international perspective, giving priority to ensuring that teaching approaches have been correctly designed in accordance with the criteria set out in the EHEA.¹
- d) Identifying the proposals with an *ex novo* approach, in order to assess more thoroughly the grounds for their creation and the human and material resources required to make them viable and sustainable over time.
- e) Studying the administrative components involved in the scheduling and organisation of officially recognised degree programmes in Catalonia.

By producing a single guide, we ensure that the people drafting and/or reviewing bachelor's and master's degree proposals, the internal university bodies overseeing the process, and the members of assessment commissions all work from the same source of information.

Reference framework and regulations

Below are the main sources used in the preparation of this guide:

¹ [Ministerial declarations and communiqués.](#)

- > *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*.² This is the reference document that institutions and quality assurance agencies are expected to use when designing, implementing and reviewing internal and external quality assurance systems in higher education.
- > *Framework for the validation, monitoring, modification and accreditation of recognised university degrees*.³ This framework defines AQU Catalunya's position with regard to the processes of validation, monitoring, modification and accreditation of recognised degree programmes and establishes a common framework that links these assessment processes.
- > *Standards and Criteria for the Quality Assessment of University Bachelor's and Master's Degrees*.⁴ This document sets out the standards and criteria that AQU Catalunya applies in the quality assessment of university degree programmes.

From a regulatory point of view, this guide conforms to the requirements of Royal Decree 822/2021, of 28 September, establishing the organisation of university education and the procedure for quality assurance, which redefined the organisation and structures of officially recognised university degree programmes. In this respect, universities must draw up and approve the curricula of recognised degree programmes in accordance with the regulations in force. These curricula must be included in the report that universities are required to submit to the Universities Council (CU) for validation, as a condition for their implementation to be approved by the Government of Catalonia, in accordance with the provisions of Article 8.2 of Organic Law 2/2023 on the university system. The degrees to which they lead must be registered in the Register of Universities, Higher Education Centres and Degree Programmes (RUCT), in accordance with Royal Decree 1509/2008, of 12 September.

The assessment process for proposals for new officially recognised degree programmes has been designed by AQU Catalunya to provide the necessary information for their validation and for the Government of Catalonia to approve their roll-out.

Consideration must also be given to **Royal Decree 640/2021, of 27 July, on the creation, recognition and authorisation of universities and university centres, and institutional accreditation of university centres**,⁵ as it deals with the involvement of teaching staff at private universities and private university teaching centres affiliated to universities.

Finally, curricula must respect democratic principles and values and be aligned with the **Sustainable**

² EHEA Ministerial Conference, [*Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area \(ESG\)*](#) (Brussels: ENQA, 2015).

³ AQU Catalunya, [*Framework for the validation, monitoring, modification and accreditation of recognised university degrees*](#) (Barcelona: AQU Catalunya, 2016).

⁴ AQU Catalunya, [*Standards and Criteria for the Quality Assessment of University Bachelor's and Master's Degrees*](#) (Barcelona: AQU Catalunya, 2022).

⁵ Ministry of Universities, [*Royal Decree 640/2021, of 27 July, on the creation, recognition and authorisation of universities and university centres, and institutional accreditation of university centres*](#) (Official State Gazette [BOE] no. 179, 28-07-2021).

Development Goals⁶ of the 2030 Agenda, in order to work towards achieving these goals.

Therefore:

- > Institutions must ensure respect for human and fundamental rights; democratic values; the freedom of thought and academic freedom; tolerance and recognition of and respect for diversity; equity for all; the elimination of discriminatory content and practices; and a culture of peace and participation.
- > They must also ensure gender mainstreaming in all university teaching and, specifically, in the curricula of bachelor's and master's degrees, in accordance with Article 28 of Law 17/2015. Additionally, they must include specific educational content on gender-based violence in the curricula of bachelor's and master's degrees, especially those that may have a greater impact on compliance with the aforementioned law, in accordance with Article 17 of Law 5/2008, of 21 April, on the right of women to eradicate gender-based violence, as amended by Law 17/2020, of 22 December.
- > Institutions must have measures in place to promote universally accessible curricula designed for all that guarantee the rights of people with disabilities, in accordance with the second final provision of the revised text of the General Law on the Rights of People with Disabilities and their Social Inclusion, approved by Royal Legislative Decree 1/2013, of 29 November.
- > Finally, curricula are expected to address climate change, in accordance with Article 35.2 of Law 7/2021, of 20 May, on climate change and the energy transition.

Structure of the guide

The GUIDE TO THE DESIGN, VALIDATION AND MODIFICATION OF RECOGNISED BACHELOR'S AND MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAMMES is divided into two main sections: a first section containing all the information required for degree programme validation and a second section setting out the criteria for requesting modifications.

The first section covers the assessment areas in the same order as they appear in the model report for requesting the validation of curricula of recognised degree programmes (Annex II of Royal Decree 822/2021). These areas have been matched to the items included in *Standards and Criteria for the Quality Assessment of University Bachelor's and Master's Degrees*, which in turn fit with those set out in *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*, both mentioned above. A table showing the relationship between the areas of this guide and the corresponding standards is provided at the end of this section.

The following information is provided for each of the eight assessment areas:

- > Quality standard(s) and sub-standards applicable to the area, coded according to *Standards and Criteria for the Quality Assessment of University Bachelor's and Master's Degrees*.

⁶ United Nations, [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (2015).

- > Corresponding section(s) of the validation report, coded according to the proposed model for completing the report.
- > Criteria that will be taken into account when assessing the level of achievement of the area.
- > References to framework documents and supporting methodological materials that further develop some of the relevant aspects of the assessment.
- > Information needed to complete the report according to the proposed model (format, length, requirements, etc.).

The second section of the guide focuses on curriculum modifications, providing information and guidelines on the types of changes that can be made to a report through the modification process as a result of curriculum monitoring and review. Changes may be either substantial or non-substantial; if they are very substantial, the specific assessment commission may consider the need for revalidation of the degree programme.

Relationship between the areas of the guide, its standards and the corresponding ESG 2015 standards

VALIDATION ASSESSMENT AREAS (RD 822/2021)	ESG 2015	STANDARDS AND CRITERIA FOR THE QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF UNIVERSITY BACHELOR'S AND MASTER'S DEGREES	
1. Description, learning objectives and rationale for the degree programme	1.2. Design and approval of programmes	2. Design and approval of programmes	2.1. Title and characteristics of the degree programme 2.2. Rationale for the degree programme 2.3. Training objectives and graduation profile
2. Outcomes of the teaching and learning process	1.2. Design and approval of programmes	2. Design and approval of programmes	2.4. Learning outcomes
3. Admission, recognition and mobility	1.4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification	3. Student admission, progress, recognition and certification	3.1. Access and admission 3.3. Recognition and transfer of credits and prior learning
4. Educational planning	1.2. Design and approval of programmes	2. Design and approval of programmes	2.5. Structure of the study programme 2.7. Roll-out
	1.3. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment	5. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment	5.1. Teaching method and training activities 5.2. Assessment
5. Academic and teaching support staff	1.5. Teaching staff	4. Academic and teaching support staff	4.1. Profile 4.2. Number of staff 4.3. Training
6. Learning resources: materials, infrastructure, internships and services	1.6. Learning resources and student support	6. Learning and student support resources	6.1. Facilities and infrastructures 6.2. Learning support services and resources
7. Implementation schedule		2. Design and approval of programmes	2.7. Roll-out
8. Internal quality assurance system	1.1. Policy for quality assurance	1. Training programme quality assurance policy	1.1. Degree programme governance 1.2. Regulatory implementation and sustainable development
	1.8. Public information	8. Public information	8.1. Quality of information

VALIDATION ASSESSMENT AREAS (RD 822/2021)	ESG 2015	STANDARDS AND CRITERIA FOR THE QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF UNIVERSITY BACHELOR'S AND MASTER'S DEGREES	
			8.2. Content of information
	1.9. Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes	9. Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of the programme	9.1. Monitoring and review



CURRICULUM VALIDATION

1. DESCRIPTION, LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND RATIONALE FOR THE DEGREE PROGRAMME

The curriculum responds adequately to the subject matter and training objectives of the degree. The learning outcomes correspond to the level of these degrees, in accordance with the Catalan Higher Education Qualifications Framework (MCQES). And the roll-out schedule, allocation of ECTS credits to subjects, and teaching staff assigned are appropriate and acceptable (S2).

Description *(1.1 to 1.9 of the report)*

Much of the information in this area is intended to identify the degree programme and to meet legal and administrative requirements. However, these basic details have important implications as they constitute the information that the institution will make public and available to students and society at large.

The following standards apply to this area:

- > The name and training objectives of the degree correspond to its content, and are consistent with its discipline and with the corresponding level in the MCQES (S2a).
- > The name respects the regulations in force and does not give rise to errors as regards its academic effects, nor to confusion about its content and its professional value (S2b).

The proposed name will be assessed to ensure that it is fully consistent with the learning objectives, graduation profile and curriculum and reflects the learning outcomes achieved by all students, i.e. the compulsory part of the degree. The name must not include concepts that are only studied in a particular mention or specialisation or in optional modules.

It will also be assessed whether the name corresponds to the right level of education (bachelor's or university master's degree), as defined in the Catalan Higher Education Qualifications Framework (MCQES).⁷ In this respect, bachelor's degrees represent the first stage of university education. Their core objective must therefore be to provide students with a basic, general education in the various areas of science, technology, humanities and art, through a teaching-learning process based on knowledge, skills and competences that are specific to the given subject area (or areas). Degrees at this level are expected to prepare students for professional activities and to provide them with a well-rounded education so that they can become contributing members of society.

Officially recognised university master's degrees are intended to provide advanced training in the

⁷ AQU Catalunya, [Catalan Higher Education Qualifications Framework](#) (Barcelona: AQU Catalunya, 2023).

various areas of science, technology, humanities and art, either specialising in a particular subject area or encouraging multidisciplinary study. This training may be for academic or professional specialisation or, where appropriate, for the development of research skills.

In general, a master's degree can have the same name as a bachelor's degree as long as the admission profile for the master's degree is the same as the graduation profile for the bachelor's degree.

Proposed curricula for bachelor's degrees may include one or more mentions, while those for master's degrees may include one or more specialisations. The names of mentions and specialisations must be consistent with the curriculum, the area of knowledge, the intended learning outcomes and, where appropriate, the relevant professional field. Mentions will be assessed to ensure that they are consistently designed as curricular enhancements or specific pathways focusing on a particular educational aspect of the set of knowledge, skills and competences that make up the curriculum, and that they complement the overall educational purpose of the bachelor's degree. Similarly, master's degree specialisations will be assessed to ensure that they provide specific, complementary training in a particular academic or professional field, in keeping with the overall educational purpose of the degree.

The number of places offered must be kept up to date in the report and must match the number of places approved by the competent authority. An assessment will be made of the consistency between the proposed number of places offered and the teaching staff, support staff, material resources and infrastructure stated throughout the report. In all cases, the total number of places offered annually must account for all learning formats and access routes, including transfers, foreign students, double bachelor's or master's degrees, and bachelor's degrees with open academic pathways.

It will be assessed whether the degree programme's area of knowledge is consistent with the curriculum and the intended learning outcomes.

Learning formats must be designed in accordance with all institutional policies and criteria that affect the respective educational model. Particularly for online (virtual) or blended (hybrid) degrees, the report must clearly state the link between the degree and the institution's e-learning strategy, as well as its commitment and support to ensure the availability and suitability of human and material resources to deliver the degree in the particular format. In all cases, the guidelines set out in *Fully online or blended degree programmes*⁸ must be taken into account when defining the learning format (face-to-face, blended or online) and designing the educational proposal.

Finally, where appropriate, the degree programme will be assessed to ensure that it has sufficient human and material resources to be taught in a language other than Catalan and Spanish.

.....
The validation report must include information on:

⁸ AQU Catalunya, [Focus 3. Tools for university quality. Fully online or blended degree programmes](#) (Barcelona: AQU Catalunya, 2023).

- The name of the degree in Spanish, using the formula “Graduado/Graduada en...” for bachelor’s degrees and “Máster Universitario en ...” for master’s degrees. The name may also be given in the language in which the degree is taught.
- Area of knowledge: one of the 32 areas of knowledge listed in Annex I of Royal Decree 822/2021 must be chosen.
- Mentions and specialisations: if applicable, provide the name and number of ECTS credits.
- University responsible for the degree: the university requesting the validation.
- Participating universities: if applicable, in case of joint degrees.
- Joint degree agreement: proposals for joint degrees designed and developed with other universities must be accompanied by the relevant collaboration agreement.
- Centre where the degree is taught (responsible for the degree): give the name and RUCT code.
- Centres where the degree is taught: if there is more than one, give the name and RUCT code for each.
- Learning format: state whether it is face-to-face, blended or hybrid and/or online or virtual.
- Total number of credits: state the number of credits. Bachelor’s degrees can be worth 240, 300 or 360 ECTS credits; university master’s degrees can be worth 60, 90 or 120 ECTS credits.
- Languages of instruction: state the language(s) in which the degree is taught (this is understood to be the main language of instruction, notwithstanding that there may be occasional readings or activities in other languages).
- Total number of places.
- Number of places by learning format (if more than one).

If the degree is taught in more than one centre, the following information must be provided for each one: name and RUCT code, university to which it belongs, number of places offered per learning format, mentions or specialisations taught (if applicable) and language(s) of instruction.

Rationale *(1.10 of the report)*

The following standard applies to this area:

- > The training programme has been designed taking into account stakeholder feedback, is academically and professionally justified and internationally recognised (S2c).

The academic, scientific, professional and social value of the degree will be assessed to ensure that there is a link between the proposal and the priorities of the labour and research market, regional university development policies and the SDGs, among other factors; i.e. the proposal’s alignment with the needs of society and the world of work.

In addition to supply and demand issues, the intrinsic value of the proposal will be assessed to

ensure that it is based on academic relevance, which must be supported by recent external examples from educational institutions offering equivalent degrees or from associations attesting to the proposal's scientific and professional value.

It must be clear that the degree fits in well with the strategic planning of the university and the Catalan university system, and that it has been designed taking into account the opinions of stakeholders and the needs of the community in its subject areas.

The assessment of this section is particularly important for degrees that are new to the Catalan university system, for degrees in areas of knowledge not previously explored by the proposing university or centre, and for degrees that involve more than one university.

If the degree has been validated in the past and is being submitted for revalidation, the institution must provide a statement of the reasons for revalidation and a brief summary of the main changes that have been made.

.....
The validation report must include information on:

- Rationale for the value of the degree (approx. 500 words).
- This section must also include, as a link or annex to the report, the mandatory report on the academic and social need for and viability of the implementation of the recognised university degree, which the autonomous community is required to carry out under Article 26.3 of Royal Decree 822/2021.

Learning objectives and core graduation profiles of the degree programme (1.11 and 1.14 of the report)

The learning objectives and the graduation profile must be well defined and consistent with the subject area of the degree programme and, where appropriate, its professional field. An assessment will be made of the consistency between the learning objectives and the graduation profile, and between these and the learning outcomes proposed in the report.

Learning objectives must be written in terms of teaching intentions, describing what teachers intend to cover in their modules/courses or what the degree programme intends to teach students. If a degree programme offers mentions, dual mentions or specialisations, their learning objectives must also be specified.

Graduation profiles are general statements (usually descriptions, not lists, and usually no longer than one paragraph) about the general characteristics expected of a person completing a particular degree.

A recommended source to consider when writing a degree programme's learning objectives and graduation profile is *Degree programme profiles: Learning objectives, graduation profile and*

*learning outcomes*⁹.

Finally, if the degree programme qualifies graduates to engage in a regulated professional activity, this should also be specified.

The validation report must include information on:

- Main learning objectives of the degree (approx. 250 words).
- Learning objectives of mentions or specialisations (approx. 500 words).
- Core graduation profiles (approx. 250 words)
- Regulated professional activity for which the degree qualifies: state the profession and the relevant Council of Ministers agreement and ministerial decree regulating it.

Specific curricular structures *(1.12 of the report)*

If the degree programme has specific curricular structures, these must be described and their objectives and relevance to the programme must be justified.

The validation report must include information on any specific curricular structures (approx. 250 words).

Specific methodological strategies for teaching innovation *(1.13 of the report)*

If there are specific methodological strategies for teaching innovation, these must be described and justified in terms of their objectives and the role they play in the teaching-learning process to ensure that students achieve the intended learning outcomes of the degree programme.

The validation report must include information on any specific methodological strategies for teaching innovation (approx. 250 words).

⁹ AQU Catalunya, [Focus 1. Tools for university quality. *El perfil de les titulacions: objectius de formació, perfil de graduació i resultats d'aprenentatge*](#) (AQU Catalunya: Barcelona, 2022).

2. OUTCOMES OF THE TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESS

The curriculum responds adequately to the subject matter and training objectives of the degree. The learning outcomes correspond to the level of these degrees, in accordance with the Catalan Higher Education Qualifications Framework (MCQES). And the roll-out schedule, allocation of ECTS credits to subjects, and teaching staff assigned are appropriate and acceptable (S2).

Learning outcomes *(2.1 to 2.3 of the report)*

The information in this area constitutes what we call the degree programme learning profile. The learning profile is fleshed out by defining the learning outcomes that the university expects students to have achieved by the time they graduate.

The following standard applies to this area:

- > The learning outcomes correspond to those established by the MCQES for the educational level of the degree programme (S2d).

The learning outcomes described in the report will be assessed to ensure that they are appropriate to the educational level of the degree programme (bachelor's or university master's degree), as specified in the Catalan Higher Education Qualifications Framework (MCQES), and that they are consistent with the relevant area of knowledge. In this regard, the proposed degree programme should follow the relevant subject *benchmark*,¹⁰ if one exists, as this takes the information provided in the MCQES to a more specific level that is more closely related to it.

The learning outcomes must be achievable through the compulsory courses of the degree programme and therefore identical for all graduates, regardless of the learning format or academic pathway chosen through electives. They will be assessed to ensure that they are distinct enough and do not overlap, and that the number of proposed learning outcomes is reasonable (around 25). These learning outcomes are more general than the ones for individual modules in Area 4. If there are mentions or specialisations, their learning outcomes must also be identified and specified.

Learning outcomes must be expressed in terms of knowledge, skills and competences and line up with the learning objectives of the degree programme. Unlike learning objectives, learning outcomes are not dependent on teachers, but on students and their willingness or ability to learn. They are statements of what students are expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate at the end of a period of learning.

Learning outcomes will be assessed, as formulated, to ensure that they meet the following criteria:

¹⁰ [Subject benchmark statements methodology](#).

they must be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound, inclusive and public. They must also ensure a universal design for learning that gives all students an equal opportunity to succeed. Two important sources of information in this respect are *Degree programme profiles: Learning objectives, graduation profile and learning outcomes* and *Assessment of learning outcomes*.

Finally, the learning profile must include the gender perspective by specifying one or more learning outcomes that will stimulate students' critical thinking, deepen their understanding of the needs, behaviours and attitudes of the population as a whole, and equip them with new tools to identify gender stereotypes, norms and social roles (see *General framework for incorporating the gender perspective in higher education teaching*).¹¹

The validation report must include information on the expected learning outcomes (approx. 1,750 words and 25 outcomes):

- Knowledge: the result of assimilating information through learning. Knowledge is the body of facts, principles, theories and practices related to a field of work or study (approx. 600 words).
- Skills: the ability to apply knowledge and use it to complete tasks and solve problems (approx. 850 words).
- Competences: the proven ability to use knowledge and skills (including personal, social and/or methodological skills) in work or study situations and in professional and personal development (approx. 300 words).

¹¹ AQU Catalunya, *General framework for incorporating the gender perspective in higher education teaching* (Barcelona: AQU Catalunya, 2018).

3. ADMISSION, RECOGNITION AND MOBILITY

The student access and admission process is fair, reliable, equitable and public. The mechanisms available within the training programme make it possible to reliably certify students' progress and the achievement of learning outcomes, while at the same time also recognising previously achieved learning outcomes (S3).

Access requirements and admission procedures for students (*3.1 of the report*)

This area contains broad information on the regulations and general procedure for student access to bachelor's and university master's degrees, as well as specific information on the criteria and procedures for admission to the proposed degree programme.

The following standards apply to this area:

- > The processes implemented for student access and admission ensure fairness, reliability and non-discrimination on the grounds of birth, race, sex, sexual orientation, religion, opinion or any other personal or social condition or circumstance (S3a).
- > The criteria and requirements for access and admission are clear and public (S3b).
- > All students admitted have the appropriate profile to achieve the learning outcomes of the degree and their number is consistent with the number of places offered (S3c).

With regard to access, information must be provided on the regulations and procedures applied by the institution based on the educational level of the proposed degree programme. Bachelor's degrees have regulated access routes and requirements, so the information in this section should refer to the relevant regulations (see Article 15 of Royal Decree 822/2021). The information on access to master's degrees must take into account the regulations set out in Article 18 of Royal Decree 822/2021 and, where applicable, state the procedures for conditional enrolment.

With regard to admissions, all proposals should include a well-defined admission profile, especially proposals for master's degrees. An admission profile is a brief description of the personal and academic characteristics that are generally considered appropriate or ideal for undertaking the degree. It is usually the starting point for defining the admission criteria and procedures.

It will be assessed whether the admission criteria and procedures are designed to ensure that admitted students have the intended profile, and whether they are objective, appropriate and relevant to the educational level and intended learning outcomes of the degree programme. They must also guarantee equal opportunities, non-discrimination and universal accessibility for people with disabilities. When it is compulsory, the admission procedure must ensure that students have reached the required level in a third language.

University master's degrees may require bridging courses when the admission criteria allow for the

enrolment of students whose profile does not fully meet the defined admission profile. It will be assessed whether these courses are clearly described (student profiles or types, number of credits and subject[s], whether they are part of the master's degree or not, the associated learning outcomes, etc.), and whether they enable these students to fully achieve the admission profile and thus progress academically through the degree programme without issues. It should also be stated when they need to be taken and passed. In all cases, they must be taken before the second semester and must not exceed 20% of the total master's degree.

.....
The validation report must include information on:

- Regulations and general procedure for student access to the degree (link or annex to the report).
- Criteria and procedure for admission to the degree: give the student admission profile and the admission criteria and procedure (approx. 300 words).
- For bachelor's degrees, specific admissions tests, if any, must be specified, along with their criteria and weighting. Private universities must also describe the tests they use for admission.
- For master's degrees, the student admission requirements and criteria and their weighting must be specified, along with any bridging courses that may be required.

Criteria for credit recognition and transfer *(3.2 of the report)*

This area contains broad information on the general criteria and regulations for credit recognition and transfer and, where appropriate, information on specific recognition criteria for the proposed degree programme.

The following standard applies to this area:

- > The degree programme has relevant regulations for the recognition of students' prior learning, and these are properly applied (S3e).

With regard to credit recognition and transfer, information must be provided on the regulations approved by the institution regarding the relevant procedures and the number of credits that can be recognised or transferred, in accordance with the provisions of Article 10 of Royal Decree 822/2021. All regulations and criteria must be in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention.¹²

If the degree programme has specific criteria for credit recognition, these will be assessed to ensure that they are clearly described, comply with current regulations and are consistent with the intended learning outcomes of the degree programme. This recognition must be appropriate and relevant to the modules or courses in the curriculum.

.....
The validation report must include information on:

¹² [Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region](#) (ETS No. 165).

- General criteria for credit recognition and transfer (link in the report).
- Specific criteria for credit recognition: state the maximum number of credits that can be recognised and justify the cases where credits can be recognised for non-university higher education, university-certified degrees or professional experience.
- In this respect, the limitations described in the regulations must be observed:
 - No more than 15% of the credits of a degree programme can be recognised through professional experience or unrecognised university degrees. This does not apply to degrees that were originally certified by the university and have since been discontinued and replaced by the degree undergoing validation, which may be recognised in full. If this is the case, it must be stated and the curriculum of the discontinued university-certified degree (modules or courses with information on learning outcomes and number of credits) must be attached to the report as a link or annex.
 - No more than 25% of the credits of a degree programme can be recognised through advanced vocational training cycles. In addition, an agreement must be signed between the vocational training centre and the university centre and approved by the university's governing body and the Catalan ministry responsible for vocational training.
 - Credits from bachelor's or master's degree final projects cannot be recognised, with the exception of projects carried out as part of mobility programmes.

Procedures for organising the mobility of incoming and outgoing students *(3.3 of the report)*

With regard to student mobility, information must be provided on the regulations approved by the institution, the mobility programmes available to students, and the agreements signed with other institutions allowing for the mobility of both incoming and outgoing students.

It is also necessary to state whether the degree programme includes specific mobility actions. These actions will be assessed to ensure that they are appropriate and consistent with the learning objectives and learning outcomes of the degree programme, and that they are accompanied by suitable mechanisms for planning, monitoring, assessment and credit recognition.

The validation report must include information on:

- Procedure and regulations for the mobility of incoming and outgoing students (link in the report).
- Specific mobility actions to be offered by the degree programme (approx. 250 words).

4. EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

The curriculum responds adequately to the subject matter and training objectives of the degree. The learning outcomes correspond to the level of these degrees, in accordance with the Catalan Higher Education Qualifications Framework (MCQES). And the roll-out schedule, allocation of ECTS credits to subjects, and teaching staff assigned are appropriate and acceptable (S2).

The training programme encourages students to take an active role in the learning process. This approach is reflected in the teaching method and activities and in the student assessment (S5).

Basic degree programme structure *(4.1 of the report)*

This area covers the design and sequential structure of the proposed degree programme. This design is embodied in the curriculum, which becomes the university's commitment to society, providing a quality educational opportunity that enables students to achieve the stated learning objectives.

The following standards apply to this area:

- > The curriculum is consistent with its discipline(s), learning objectives and learning outcomes, and respects the regulations in force (S2e).
- > The roll-out of the degree course is consistent and appropriate in terms of timing, teaching load, coordination and supervision (S2f).

Ideally, curricula should be structured into modules, i.e. academic units defined according to criteria of subject area or depth and breadth of knowledge. Alternatively, if necessary, they may be structured directly into courses.

The content, duration and educational level of the degree programme will be assessed to ensure that they are subject area-appropriate, internationally recognised, and fully consistent with the learning objectives and learning profile of the degree programme. To this end, the learning outcomes stated in Area 2 (Outcomes of the teaching and learning process) must be specified within the degree programme and clearly identified in its modules/courses (see *Degree programme profiles: learning objectives, graduation profile and learning outcomes* and *General framework for incorporating the gender perspective in higher education teaching*).

The bachelor's/master's degree final projects and academic internships that may be required of students must also be fully consistent with the subject area and educational level of the degree programme.

Bachelor's and master's degree final projects are considered a "key performance", demonstrating

the level of education that students have attained by taking the degree. In undertaking such a project, students are forced to integrate and apply the learning outcomes they have achieved throughout the degree programme, as well as new ones specific to their project, in a professional, creative and innovative manner.

Meanwhile, academic internships are highly recommended for proposals with objectives and graduation profiles where the practical application of learning in a professional environment is an important factor. Certain learning outcomes can hardly be achieved and assessed if not in a professional setting.

For the curriculum as a whole, it will be assessed whether the credits allocated to the modules and the sequence in which they are organised will enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes. It is important that the learning outcomes associated with each module are distinct enough and do not overlap.

The expected workload must be reasonable, realistic and appropriate. Ideally, the structure of the degree programme should also be flexible enough to allow students to follow different curricular paths according to their interests. Curricula should foster student autonomy.

Finally, proposals will be assessed to ensure compliance with the relevant legal regulations, particularly in cases where the degree programme qualifies students to enter a regulated profession.

The validation report must include information on:

- Summary of the degree programme: describe the structure of the curriculum (in semesters or trimesters), detailing the courses and number of credits for each period. The total number of credits for each academic period refers to the credits that students must pass, not to the total number of credits offered, adding up to 60 ECTS credits per academic year.
- Mentions or specialisations: if the degree programme has mentions or specialisations, give their name, the courses that make them up, the semesters or trimesters in which they are taught and how many credits they are worth. Mentions are made up of optional credits. Bachelor's and master's degree final projects and external training placements may be included in mentions and specialisations, provided they are related.
- Mentions have a required minimum and recommended maximum of ECTS credits depending on the type of bachelor's degree they belong to: 48/90 for 240-credit bachelor's degrees, 60/120 for 300-credit bachelor's degrees, and 72/150 for 360-credit bachelor's degrees. Meanwhile, specialisations have a recommended minimum and required maximum depending on the type of master's degree: 9/30 for 60-credit master's degrees, 12/45 for 90-credit master's degrees, and 15/60 for 120-credit master's degrees.
- List of the modules or courses in the curriculum. For each module (or course), the following must be provided:
 - Name.

Curriculum validation

- Total number of ECTS credits:
 - Bachelor's degree curricula will amount to 240 ECTS credits, except for those subject to specific legislation or European Union law, which may amount to 300 or 360 ECTS credits.
 - For university master's degrees, the curricula will comprise 60, 90 or 120 ECTS credits.
- Type: core, compulsory, optional, mixed, academic internship, or bachelor's or master's degree final project.
 - For bachelor's degrees, the core curriculum must account for at least 25% of the total ECTS credits. At least half of these must be in the same area of knowledge as the degree programme. They must be divided into modules or courses of at least 6 ECTS credits each and be offered in the first half of the curriculum. The area of knowledge of core courses must be specified.
 - Where bachelor's degrees include academic internships, these will have a maximum duration equivalent to 25% of the total number of credits of the degree (except for degrees that require a different percentage under European Union law) and will preferably be offered in the second half of the curriculum. For bachelor's degrees with the possibility of a dual mention, the duration of the internship will be between 20% and 40% of the credits.
 - Where master's degrees include academic internships, these will have a maximum duration equivalent to one third of the total number of credits of the degree.
 - Bachelor's degree final projects will be worth at least 6 ECTS credits for all types of degree programme, and at most 24 ECTS credits for 240-credit degrees, 30 ECTS credits for 300-credit degrees and 36 ECTS credits for 360-credit degrees. They must be carried out towards the end of the curriculum and defended publicly in accordance with the regulations laid down for this purpose by the centre or, where appropriate, the university.
 - Master's degree final projects will be worth at least 6 ECTS credits and at most 30 ECTS credits. They must be defended publicly in accordance with the regulations laid down for this purpose by the centre or, where appropriate, the university.
- Timetable: semester, trimester or academic year (for year-long modules) in which the module is taught.
- Format: face-to-face, blended or hybrid, online or virtual.
- Learning outcomes: these must be module-specific and therefore different from (but still related to and consistent with) the learning outcomes of the degree programme. No more than eight learning outcomes should be included per module.
- Courses in each module: give the name of each course, the semester or trimester in which it is taught, its type, the number of ECTS credits it is worth and the language in which it is taught.

In this section, the university must list all the modules or courses it will offer, whether or not

students are required to take them all.

Although current legislation does not specify a minimum number of compulsory credits for university master's degrees, the curriculum must include enough of them to ensure that students achieve the intended graduation profile. Thus, using bachelor's degree programmes as a reference, compulsory credits must account for at least 25% of the total. This means at least 15 ECTS credits for 60-credit master's degrees, 22 ECTS credits for 90-credit master's degrees and 30 ECTS credits for 120-credit master's degrees. The content of these credits must be subject-area specific, not purely instrumental.

Furthermore, according to the criteria established by the Spanish ministry responsible for universities, two bachelor's degrees will be deemed different if they differ by at least 37.5% of their ECTS credits. So, for example, two proposals for 240-credit bachelor's degrees that differ by less than 90 ECTS credits cannot be validated as two different bachelor's degrees at the same university. In the case of master's degrees, this difference will be from 22, 34 and 45 credits for master's degrees of 60, 90 and 120 ECTS credits, respectively.

Learning activities, teaching methods and assessment systems *(4.2 and 4.3 of the report)*

Achievement and certification of the objectives reflected in the degree programme learning profile largely depend on the learning activities, teaching methods and assessment systems proposed. Careful design of these elements should promote student-centred teaching and learning. This area describes the main teaching methods, learning activities and assessment systems and criteria of the degree programme, with particular emphasis on the characteristics of the bachelor's or master's degree final project and, where applicable, academic internships.

The following standards apply to this area:

- > The teaching methods and activities are satisfactorily aligned with learning outcomes (S5a).
- > The teaching-learning process respects and caters for students' diversity and needs, allowing for flexible learning paths, fostering their autonomy and promoting mutual respect in the teacher-student relationship (S5b).
- > The degree has adequate procedures for the assessment of student learning outcomes (S3f).
- > Assessment systems and criteria are varied, promote student participation and are relevant to certifying and distinguishing learning outcomes (S5c).
- > Bachelor's and master's degree final projects and external work placements are monitored and assessed with relevant and appropriate criteria (S5d).
- > The degree has a procedure to check that the students' graduation profile corresponds to the expected profile (S3g).

The learning activities and teaching methods described in the report will be assessed to ensure that they are appropriate to the educational level and subject area of the degree programme and enable students to progressively and consistently achieve the intended learning outcomes of the programme and the modules in its curriculum.

Similarly, the assessment systems and criteria must be consistent with the learning outcomes being assessed and provide evidence of student achievement. The performances expected of students will be assessed to ensure that they are both appropriate to the educational level and relevant to the teaching methods and learning activities described.

Additionally, the proposed learning activities, teaching methods and assessment systems will be assessed to ensure that they are compatible with the learning format of the degree programme and enable all students to achieve the same learning outcomes. In particular, where a degree programme involves a significant proportion of online learning, its design will be assessed to ensure that it is appropriate for distance learning and meets the criteria set out in *Fully online or blended programmes*.

If the programme requires academic internships of all students, it will be assessed whether these internships are relevant to the content of the programme, whether there is a sufficient number of internships for each of the places offered, and whether the programme has effective measures in place to ensure their quality. In certain programmes, especially those with specific regulations on internships, it is important to note that students must be able to come into contact with all the areas covered by those regulations (e.g. hospital or clinical services, areas of professional activity, specialisations, etc.). For information on the characteristics of internship centres and the availability and suitability of the places offered, see Area 6 of this guide (Learning resources: materials, infrastructure, internships and services).

With regard to bachelor's and master's degree final projects, it will be assessed whether they are properly designed and whether the degree programme has an appropriate supervision mechanism and assessment system in place. Either the institution or the degree programme must develop specific guidelines and rules for these projects.

Finally, the degree programme must ensure an inclusive learning environment by applying teaching methods, learning activities and assessment systems that accommodate the inherent diversity of the student body, guarantee the rights of people with disabilities and are designed without gender bias (see *General framework for incorporating the gender perspective in higher education teaching*).

.....
The validation report must include information on:

- The main learning activities and teaching methods: describe the activities and methods that are most relevant to the curriculum and how they relate to the main learning outcomes of the degree programme. The assessment commissions may ask for more detailed information if the nature of the degree programme warrants it (approx. 300 words).

For online or blended degrees, information on the main features of the educational proposal, with particular emphasis on its fit with the underlying institutional educational model, must be

provided as a link or annex to the report.

If there are academic internships, it is necessary to describe their main characteristics, including the type of collaborating centres, the roles and activities to be carried out by students and the main monitoring and supervision mechanisms (approx. 200 words).

For bachelor's/master's degree final projects, it is necessary to describe the type of project (innovative contribution, documentary synthesis, whether experimental work is required, etc.), the timetable, how it will be supervised and validated, the criteria and rules for carrying it out, etc. (approx. 200 words).

- The main assessment systems: describe the systems that are most relevant to the curriculum and justify their suitability for certifying student achievement of the degree programme's main learning outcomes. The assessment commissions may ask for more detailed information if the nature of the degree programme warrants it (approx. 300 words).

If there are academic internships, it is necessary to describe the relevant assessment mechanism, with particular emphasis on how the student is expected to perform and the profiles of those involved in certifying the achievement of learning outcomes, both at the teaching centre and the internship centre (approx. 200 words).

For bachelor's/master's degree final projects, it is necessary to describe the relevant assessment mechanism, with particular emphasis on the main assessment criteria, the profiles of the members of the assessment panels and the composition of these panels (approx. 200 words).

Specific curricular structures *(4.4 of the report)*

Universities may include specific structures in their curricula and develop specific and differentiated methodological strategies for teaching innovation that support the comprehensiveness of the degree programme (e.g. teaching using the flipped classroom approach, learning based on projects or case studies, collaborative and cooperative work, learning based on problem-solving, multilingual competences, teaching organised around the intensive use of digital information and communication technologies, and other initiatives that may be promoted by the university or centre).

The relevance of specific curricular structures and possible teaching innovations will be assessed in relation to the overall educational purpose of the degree programme (educational level, learning objectives and learning profile, area of knowledge, etc.).

.....
The validation report must include information on any specific curricular structures (approx. 300 words).

5. ACADEMIC AND TEACHING SUPPORT STAFF

There are a sufficient number of teaching staff for the training programme, and these are competent and suitable and have opportunities for personal and professional development (S4).

Teaching staff profile *(5.1 and 5.2 of the report)*

This area includes information on the teaching staff and teaching support staff required to roll out the degree programme and meet its teaching needs throughout this process.

The following standards apply to this area:

- > The academic credentials of the teaching staff are suitable for the teaching required by the training programme (S4a).
- > The teaching staff have the necessary accreditation established by regulations (S4b).
- > A sufficient number of teaching staff are allocated to handle the roll-out of the degree programme (S4c).

The degree programme's teaching staff will be assessed on the basis of their recognised teaching and research merits. The suitability of teaching staff should be assessed in terms of their knowledge, teaching skills and qualifications, and their profile must be appropriate to the nature, subject area and educational level of the degree programme and all modules in its curriculum.

Ideally, the teaching staff of a degree programme should include a core of full-time teachers who represent its main areas of knowledge and are able to ensure its implementation and viability.

The involvement of non-permanent or outside teaching staff is particularly relevant in degree programmes with profession-focused objectives and graduation profiles. In such cases, teaching staff with associate or equivalent status will be assessed on the basis of whether they have recognised professional experience in the field of the degree programme.

For university master's degrees, teaching staff will be assessed on whether they have relevant research merits and whether their research activities are in areas specific to the modules of the degree programme.

In all cases, sufficient teaching staff must be assigned to the degree programme to ensure its proper delivery. The planned time commitments will be assessed to ensure that they sufficiently cover the main academic tasks: teaching and assessment of modules, student-teacher interaction, degree programme management, etc.

From a regulatory point of view, the teaching staff of the degree programme must meet all legal requirements regarding their profile and accreditation. The percentages of permanent teaching

staff, doctoral teaching staff and accredited doctoral teaching staff will be checked to ensure that they are at least those specified in the regulations for each type of centre and educational level. It should also be noted that the teaching staff of private universities and private university teaching centres affiliated to universities may not be public employees of a university teaching body actively posted at a public university, nor full-time teaching and research staff in the same situation, as established in Royal Decree 640/2021.

With regard to degree programmes that are taught largely or entirely online, the teaching staff must have sufficient competence and experience in online or blended learning models and in the use of online teaching technologies, as set out in *Fully online or blended degree programmes*.

The role and basic profile (academic qualifications, professional experience, category, etc.) of all teaching support staff involved in the degree programme must be stated. Their suitability, and whether there are enough of them, will be assessed according to the characteristics and requirements of the degree programme. For degree programmes taught partly or entirely online, the university and/or centres must have staff with experience in e-learning environments to support students and teachers.

As established in Law 17/2015, universities must take measures to ensure gender balance in all subject areas, especially those in which a particular gender is significantly under-represented, with the aim of guaranteeing effective equality between women and men in teaching and research careers.

Finally, if the degree programme does not have the necessary human resources when the proposal is submitted, the validation report must include a plan for the recruitment of new teaching staff and other human resources to make up the shortfall.

.....
The validation report must include information on:

- Teaching staff assigned to the degree: basic profile and teaching role by category, accreditation and a summary of the staff's teaching and research careers (main publications, research groups, theses supervised, etc.).
- The following information must be provided for each teaching staff category:
 - Total number of teachers
 - Percentage of credits to be taught by them
 - Percentage of teachers with/without a PhD
 - Percentage of teachers with accreditation
 - Total number of six-year research periods among the teachers in the category
 - Total number of five-year teaching periods among the teachers in the category

Private universities and affiliated centres must adapt their teaching staff categories to the proposed categories and provide a description of their profile.

- Detailed profile of the teaching staff: provide information on the teaching staff assigned to the

degree programme by subject area or area of knowledge. The information to be provided for each subject area or area of knowledge is as follows:

- Name of the subject area or area of knowledge
 - Number of teachers in the area
 - Number and percentage of teachers in the area with a PhD
 - Number and percentage of teachers in the area with accreditation
 - Total number of teachers in the area by category
 - Modules or courses in which the teachers in the area will be involved
 - Total credits to be taught by the teachers in the area
 - Total credits available in the subject area or area of knowledge linked to the degree programme
- Alternatively, teaching staff information can be broken down and provided for each individual teacher, without the need to name them. Assessment commissions may also request information broken down in this way where the nature of the degree warrants it. The information to be provided for each teacher is as follows:
- Name of the subject area or area of knowledge
 - Category
 - PhD: yes/no
 - Accreditation: yes/no
 - Modules or courses in which they will be involved
 - Total ECTS credits they will teach on the degree programme
 - Main research and teaching merits: summary of their research career (six-year periods, main publications, theses supervised, etc.) and teaching career (five-year periods, etc.).
- Teaching merits of non-accredited teachers and/or research merits of non-doctoral teachers: describe their most relevant teaching and/or research merits.
- The profile of teachers needed but not currently employed and the recruitment plan: if applicable, describe the teachers needed to implement the degree programme but not yet employed at the time of the validation request, and the recruitment plan.
- Basic profile of other necessary teaching support resources: provide information on the non-academic staff who will be involved in the degree programme, including their roles and basic profiles.

6. LEARNING RESOURCES: MATERIALS, INFRASTRUCTURE, INTERNSHIPS AND SERVICES

The degree programme has or has access to adequate and effective guidance services and resources for student learning (S6).

Material resources and services *(6.1 and 6.3 of the report)*

This area includes information on the main material resources for learning (internal and external infrastructures in the centre and in the university), on student support services and on the management of academic internships, if included in the curriculum.

The following standards apply to this area:

- > The material resources available are adequate for the number of students, the characteristics of the degree programme and its educational format (S6a).
- > The available teaching and learning support infrastructures respond appropriately to students' learning needs (S6b).

The facilities and other educational infrastructures available to the degree programme, including those of the centre and of collaborators, will be assessed to ensure that they are sufficient for the number of students and relevant to the delivery of the programme's learning activities. Material resources and facilities for learning include teaching spaces (classrooms and group work spaces), laboratories, computer rooms, library and reading rooms, as well as any scientific, technical, humanistic or artistic equipment required for the degree programme.

Learning support services and resources will be assessed to ensure that they are appropriate to the subject area, teaching methods and learning needs of the degree programme. With regard to documentary and information resources for learning and research, information on their availability and how to access them (both physically and online) must be provided, in particular the teaching materials recommended in the modules of the degree programme.

Information must also be provided on the necessary technological equipment, in particular the virtual campus and any specific software required to carry out the planned learning activities. This infrastructure will be assessed to ensure that it can support the entire student body, is accessible at all times and facilitates appropriate interaction between students and teaching staff. For degree programmes taught largely or entirely online, the technological infrastructure must permit the implementation of online or blended teaching models, include mechanisms to verify students' identity and prevent misconduct, and meet the technical requirements set out in *Fully online or blended degree programmes*.

If all the required material learning resources are not available when the proposal is submitted, the report must give precise details of their characteristics and the mechanisms by which they will be obtained in time for the roll-out of the degree programme.

Finally, as a general rule, all facilities and services must be adapted to the diverse characteristics and needs of students, especially those with disabilities, and equal access must be ensured.

.....
The validation report must include information on:

- Material resources and services (approx. 300 words or link in the report).
- Projected provision of material resources and services (approx. 150 words).

Procedure for managing academic internships *(6.2 of the report)*

This section is for information on the centres outside the university that host students on academic internships, the procedure for managing them and the documents (agreements or undertakings) concluded with the university.

It will be assessed whether the academic internships are carried out in centres that are suitable for achieving the expected learning objectives and whether these centres are equipped with the material resources and infrastructures necessary for carrying out the learning activities planned in the module.

It will also be assessed whether there are enough places for all students. For degree programmes that qualify students for regulated professions, it will be necessary to demonstrate that students can carry out all learning activities required by the regulations.

It must be ensured that the internship centres have suitable tutors to supervise and assess students. In the case of regulated professions, the tutor/student ratio must be observed.

In all cases, evidence of agreements and arrangements with internship centres must be provided. Finally, information must be provided on the mechanisms used to monitor the suitability and quality of internship centres.

.....
The validation report must include information on:

- Procedure for managing academic internships (approx. 150 words or link in the report).
- Agreements and arrangements with internship centres. The assessment commission may request a table showing the internship centres with which there is an agreement, the number of places available per centre and the number of tutors per centre (link in the report).

7. IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

Schedule for implementing the degree programme *(7.1 of the report)*

The implementation schedule for the degree programme and, where applicable, the phase-out schedule for the degree programme it is replacing must be provided.

.....
The validation report must include the implementation schedule for the degree programme (approx. 100 words).
.....

Degree programmes to be phased out and adaptation procedure *(7.2 and 7.3 of the report)*

If one or more degree programmes are to be phased out and replaced by the new proposal, this must be stated.

A description must also be given of the adaptation procedure for students enrolled on the degree programme(s) to be phased out. The procedure must include an adaptations table, the consistency of which will be assessed.

.....
The validation report must include information on:

- Adaptation procedure (approx. 100 words).
 - Degree programmes to be phased out: give the RUCT code and name of the degree programme(s) to be phased out.
-

8. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

The activity of the training programme is integrated into the institution's quality assurance strategy and policies. The chain of responsibility is well established and effective, and key stakeholders are involved in decision-making (S1).

The degree programme suitably informs all stakeholders about the characteristics of the training provided (S8).

Training programmes are reviewed and improved periodically. The review results in an improvement plan that is kept up to date. The planned actions are communicated to all interested parties (S9).

Internal quality assurance system *(8.1 of the report)*

This area includes information on the internal quality assurance system (IQAS) applied to the degree programme.

The following standard applies to this area:

- > The activity of the training programme is integrated into the institution's quality assurance strategy and policies (S1a).

If the centre's IQAS has been certified, this must be stated together with the date of certification.

.....
The validation report must include information on the internal quality assurance system (link in the report).

Means for public information *(8.2 of the report)*

This area includes information on the means used to inform the public about the curriculum and to meet the needs of students.

The following standard applies to this area:

- > The degree programme publishes accurate, complete, updated and accessible information on the characteristics of the training programme and its delivery (S8a).

The means of public information will be assessed to ensure that they provide relevant information to the degree programme's stakeholders, in particular enrolled and potential students. Public

information must be accessible to all stakeholders (students, teachers, families and society at large) and adapted to their different profiles.

Public information needs to be gender-sensitive, broken down by gender where relevant, and careful not to reproduce gender biases and stereotypes. Public information must be adapted for students with disabilities and special educational needs.

.....
The validation report must include information on the means for public information (approx. 200 words).



CURRICULUM MODIFICATION

TYPE AND PRESENTATION OF MODIFICATIONS

Modifications to validated reports of recognised degree programmes will be assessed against the same standards and criteria set out in the first part of this guide for the assessment of validation proposals. Under Royal Decree 822/2021, modifications are classified by type as follows:

1. Non-substantial modifications: minor changes that improve the degree programme and are the result of the monitoring that each centre carries out with the periodicity specified in its IQAS.

2. Substantial modifications: changes that improve the degree programme and are also the result of monitoring or requirements arising from previous assessment processes, but which go beyond the scope of non-substantial modification because they alter aspects of the structure, nature and/or objectives of the degree programme or other aspects of the report.

There is also a third category, a subset of substantial modifications:

3. Substantial modifications requiring revalidation: changes that significantly affect the structure, nature and/or objectives of the validated degree programme and cannot be requested through the modification process. These changes can only be made by requesting validation of a new degree programme and phasing out the existing one.

The assessment commission will assess whether the submitted modifications represent a significant change to the degree programme and, if this is the case, will propose the validation of a new degree programme.

The institution should only modify its recognised degree programmes as a result of the analysis and conclusions of the monitoring process carried out by the centres offering them, i.e. approximately every three years.

In exceptional and duly justified cases, a centre may submit urgent and necessary modifications that are not the result of a monitoring process. In such cases, the centre should present all substantial and non-substantial modifications, distinguished as such, with the appropriate justification. In this regard, all requests for substantial and non-substantial degree programme modifications, whether from institutionally accredited centres or not, must be accompanied by the mandatory reports from their IQAS justifying the need for the proposed modification.

The table below lists, by area, all the possible changes that can be made to a degree programme and the process by which such a change must be requested or notified.

Description, learning objectives and rationale for the degree programme

Area	Type of notification
1.1. Name	<p>Substantial modification. A partial or insignificant change in the name of the degree programme constitutes a substantial modification.</p> <p>Validation. A significant or total change in the name of the degree programme will require it to be phased out and revalidated.</p>
1.2. Area of knowledge	<p>Substantial modification. In general, if a degree programme changes from one area of knowledge to another, this must be reported as part of the substantial modification process.</p> <p>Validation. A significant change in this regard may require the degree programme to be phased out and the new one validated.</p>
1.3. Mentions and specialisations	<p>Substantial modification. The addition or modification of mentions and specialisations must be reported as part of the substantial modification process.</p>
1.3. Distribution of credits for mentions	<p>Substantial modification. Changes to the number of credits for degree programme mentions or specialisations must be made through a substantial modification process. This is only possible if the total number of optional credits for the degree programme is unchanged and if it is done in accordance with the percentages set out in the educational planning section below.</p>
1.4. University (the university responsible for the degree and other participating universities)	<p>Validation. If the university responsible for the degree programme or one of the participating universities changes, the old programme must be phased out and the new one validated. Therefore, if a degree programme is no longer to be offered jointly (or is now to be offered jointly), it must go through a new validation process.</p>
1.4. Joint degree agreement	<p>Non-substantial modification. A change in the content of the agreement, provided that the responsible and participating universities remain the same, constitutes a non-substantial modification.</p>
1.5. Centres where the degree is taught	<p>Substantial modification. If the degree programme is to be taught at another centre in the same university that awards the degree, this change must be made through the substantial modification process. If the centre belongs to another university, see area 1.4 (University).</p>
1.6. Learning format	<p>Substantial modification. If changes are made to the learning formats (face-to-face, blended and online), or if certain formats are added or removed, there will be educational planning changes that must undergo substantial modification.</p>
1.7. Total number of credits	<p>Substantial modification. Changes in bachelor's degrees from 180 to 240 ECTS credits (transitional provision one of Royal Decree 822/2021) and changes in recognised master's degrees to 60, 90 or 120 ECTS credits (transitional provision six of Royal Decree 822/2021) can be made through a substantial modification process.</p>
1.8. Languages of instruction	<p>Non-substantial modification. The addition or removal of a language of instruction in certain modules constitutes a non-substantial modification.</p> <p>Substantial modification. If the degree programme changes language and is now to be taught in a single foreign language, it must go through the substantial modification</p>

Curriculum modification

Area	Type of notification
	process.
1.9. Places for new students and distribution by format	Substantial modification. Changes to the number of places for new students must be reported as part of the substantial modification process.
1.10. Rationale	Non-substantial modification. Possible changes to the rationale for the degree programme and the examples used for reference constitute non-substantial modifications.
1.11. Learning objectives	Substantial modification. Changes to the learning objectives of the degree programme constitute substantial modifications. Validation. If the changes to the learning objectives are significant enough to alter the nature of the degree programme, it will need to go through the validation process again.
1.12. Specific curricular structures	Non-substantial modification. Changes to specific curricular structures constitute non-substantial modifications and are updated when a substantial modification is to be made to the degree programme.
1.13. Specific methodological strategies for teaching innovation	Non-substantial modification. Changes to the specific methodological strategies for teaching innovation constitute non-substantial modifications and are updated when a substantial modification is to be made to the degree programme.
1.14. Core graduation profiles	Substantial modification. Changes to the core graduation profiles constitute substantial modifications.
1.14. Professional qualification	Validation. If the degree programme's criteria for professional qualification are changed, the programme must be phased out and the new programme validated, as the curriculum must be changed to meet the guidelines set out in the relevant ministerial decrees.

Outcomes of the teaching and learning process

Area	Type of notification
2. Learning outcomes	Substantial modification. Minor changes that do not alter the learning objectives of the degree programme, such as improving their wording or their structure to avoid overlapping, can be made through the substantial modification process. Validation. Significant changes to the learning outcomes of the degree programme (additions, deletions or significant wording changes) will require revalidation as they change the nature and objectives of the degree programme.

Admission, recognition and mobility

Area	Type of notification
3.1. Access requirements and admission criteria	<p>Substantial modification. Changes to the access requirements and admission criteria of the degree programme must be submitted for assessment through the substantial modification process.</p> <p>Non-substantial modification. The addition or removal of a conditional enrolment procedure constitutes a non-substantial modification.</p>
3.1. Bridging courses	<p>Substantial modification. Changes to bridging courses, including their addition or removal, constitute a substantial modification of the corresponding master's degree.</p>
3.2. Credit recognition and transfer systems	<p>Substantial modification. Changes to credit recognition (including the introduction of such recognition) for official non-university higher education, university-certified degrees and professional experience must be requested through the substantial modification process.</p>
3.3. Organisation of mobility	<p>Non-substantial modification. Changes to the procedure and rules for incoming and outgoing student mobility, as well as to the specific mobility actions of the degree programme, constitute non-substantial modifications.</p>

Educational planning

Area	Type of notification
4.1. Distribution of curriculum credits	<p>Substantial modification. Changes to the distribution of credits across core and compulsory modules and/or courses must be made through the substantial modification process. However, in no case may the learning outcomes and learning objectives of the degree programme be altered.</p> <p>Depending on the changes, the assessment commission may require the degree programme to be phased out and the new programme to be validated.</p> <p>Validation. Changes to the distribution of more than 15% of the credits will require the old programme to be phased out and the new programme to be validated.</p>
4.1. Core courses	<p>Non-substantial modification. Changes to core modules and/or courses that do not exceed 7.5% of the total number of credits of the degree programme constitute non-substantial modifications, provided that the total number of core credits, the area of knowledge, the learning outcomes and the learning objectives of the degree programme remain unchanged.</p> <p>It is not permitted to make changes that affect more than 7.5% of the total number of credits in the period between accreditations without going through the substantial modification process.</p> <p>Substantial modification. Changes to core modules and/or courses that account for between 7.5% and 15% of the total number of credits of the degree programme must be made through the substantial modification process.</p> <p>Validation. Changes to core modules and/or courses that exceed 15% of the total number of credits will require the old degree programme to be phased out and the</p>

Curriculum modification

Area	Type of notification
	new programme to be validated.
4.1. Compulsory courses	<p>Non-substantial modification. Changes to compulsory modules and/or courses that do not exceed 7.5% of the total number of credits of the degree programme constitute non-substantial modifications, provided that the learning outcomes and learning objectives of the degree programme remain unchanged.</p> <p>It is not permitted to make changes that affect more than 7.5% of the total number of credits in the period between accreditations without going through the substantial modification process.</p> <p>Substantial modification. Changes to compulsory modules and/or courses that account for between 7.5% and 15% of the total number of credits of the degree programme must be made through the substantial modification process.</p> <p>Validation. Changes to compulsory modules and/or courses that exceed 15% of the total number of credits will require the old degree programme to be phased out and the new programme to be validated.</p>
4.1. Optional courses	<p>Non-substantial modification. Changes to optional modules and/or courses, including their addition or removal, constitute non-substantial modifications as long as they do not alter the distribution of credits in the curriculum.</p>
4.1. Name	<p>Non-substantial modification. Changes in the names of core, compulsory and optional modules or courses constitute non-substantial modifications.</p>
4.1. Duration	<p>Non-substantial modification. Changes to the duration of modules or courses (three months, four months, six months, one year) constitute non-substantial changes.</p>
4.1. Roll-out schedule	<p>Non-substantial modification. Changes to the roll-out schedule of modules or courses constitute non-substantial modifications.</p>
4.1. Learning format	<p>Non-substantial modification. Changes to the learning format of modules or courses constitute non-substantial modifications unless they are part of a change to the learning format of the degree programme as a whole.</p>
4.1. Learning outcomes	<p>Non-substantial modification. Changes to the wording of learning outcomes (as long as the learning outcomes of the degree programme are not changed), adjustments to the distribution of learning outcomes between modules, and changes to the learning outcomes of optional modules constitute non-substantial modifications.</p> <p>Substantial modification. Changes to the expected learning outcomes of core and compulsory modules and/or courses, bachelor's/master's degree final projects and academic internships must be made through the substantial modification process.</p>
4.2. Learning activities and teaching methods	<p>Non-substantial modification. Insignificant changes to learning activities and teaching methods (i.e. that do not jeopardise the achievement of the learning outcomes or alter the learning format of the degree programme) constitute non-substantial modifications.</p> <p>Substantial modification. Significant changes to learning activities and teaching methods constitute substantial modifications.</p>
4.3. Assessment systems	<p>Non-substantial modification. Insignificant changes to assessment systems (i.e. that do not jeopardise the achievement of the learning outcomes or alter the learning format of the degree programme) constitute non-substantial modifications.</p>

Curriculum modification

Area	Type of notification
	Substantial modification. Significant changes to assessment systems constitute substantial modifications.
4.4. Specific curricular structures	Non-substantial modification. Changes to specific curricular structures and to specific methodological strategies for teaching innovation constitute non-substantial modifications.

Academic and teaching support staff

Area	Type of notification
5.1. and 5.2. Teaching staff profile	<p>Non-substantial modification. Changes to the teaching and support staff of the degree programme constitute non-substantial modifications, provided that they do not affect the proper delivery of the curriculum.</p> <p>Substantial modification. Significant changes in the number and/or profile of teaching staff constitute substantial modifications.</p>

Learning resources: materials, infrastructure, internships and services

Area	Type of notification
6.1. Justification of material resources 6.3. Projected provision of resources	<p>Non-substantial modification. Changes in the provision or type of material resources and/or services that do not significantly affect the delivery of the curriculum constitute non-substantial modifications.</p> <p>Substantial modification. Significant changes in the provision or type of material resources and/or services that affect the delivery of the curriculum constitute substantial modifications. Examples of this include site/location changes and new infrastructures.</p>
6.2. Procedure for managing external training placements	<p>Substantial modification. A significant change in the number or type of internship centres constitutes a substantial modification, as the centres will need to be reassessed to ensure that they are sufficient and appropriate.</p>

Implementation schedule

Area	Type of notification
7.1. Implementation schedule	<p>Substantial modification. Significant changes to the implementation schedule that bring it forward must be reported through the substantial modification process, so that the university can issue degrees ahead of schedule.</p>
7.2. Adaptation procedure	<p>Non-substantial modification. Minor changes to adaptation tables constitute non-substantial modifications.</p> <p>Substantial modification. Significant changes to adaptation tables (recognised credits and courses) constitute substantial modifications.</p>
7.3. Degree programme(s) to be phased out	<p>Substantial modification. Once a recognised degree programme has been implemented, it is no longer possible to phase out another recognised degree programme that led to the current one. If there was an inadvertent failure to communicate that a recognised degree programme was being phased out due to the introduction of another, this must be reported through the substantial modification process and the relevant adaptation table must be submitted for assessment, if applicable.</p>

Internal quality assurance system

Area	Type of notification
8.1 Internal quality assurance system	Non-substantial modification. Changes in the analysis of the implementation and suitability of the IQAS for the improvement of the degree programme constitute non-substantial modifications.
8.2. Means for public information	Non-substantial modification. Changes in the means of informing the public about the curriculum constitute non-substantial modifications.

ANNEX I. CHANGES TO THE NEW EDITION

The main changes to the new edition of the guide are as follows:

- > Some legislative references have been updated: Organic Law 6/2001 on universities is no longer in force, so Organic Law 2/2023 on the university system is cited instead.
- > The documents in the FOCUS series have been included as important references for the preparation of new validation and modification proposals.
- > It now states that changes to the number of places offered to new students, no matter how large, must be made through the substantial modification process.
- > It now states that the conditional enrolment procedure for access to university master's degrees (as provided for in Article 18.4 of Royal Decree 822/2021) may be introduced or eliminated by means of a non-substantial modification.
- > It now states that changes to the distribution of credits across core and compulsory modules and/or courses, no matter how large, must be made through the substantial modification process.
- > An annex has been added listing the main changes to the guide.

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