Higher education in the Spanish education system comprises university education and non-university education, including advanced vocational training and advanced artistic education.

**Advanced vocational training**

In the case of non-university higher education, the Directorate-General for Vocational Training of the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Autonomous Communities, wants to promote a Quality Plan with the following main objectives:

- the establishment of the Spanish Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Training (in line with the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework)
- the launch of the Vocational Training Quality Network of the education system.

**Spanish Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Training**

It is taking shape, since 2007, in line with the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training. It is a reference tool to supervise and contribute to the constant improvement of the quality of this type of provision, basically defined by common instruments, descriptors and quality indicators developed by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, in collaboration with the Autonomous Communities and the most representative social agents.

Its **general objective** is to guarantee and improve the quality of vocational training of the education system regarding systems (administrations involved) and institutions providing vocational training.

In this regard, **strategic lines** of action, focusing on the following points, are proposed:

- organise a system for the coordination of quality that safeguards and systematically develops quality in education and educational services, both at pedagogical and administration level
- converge with European recommendations regarding the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training as established by the European Parliament and the European Council
- implement the Spanish Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Training of the education system.

**Vocational Training Quality Network**

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, together with the education authorities, has established its structure and organisation:

- so that vocational training becomes a quality reference
- to strengthen the culture of improvement and quality assurance and innovation
- to propose strategies and coordinate planning, development and evaluation actions and
measures in order to improve the quality of education and services, and develop procedures for
the monitoring and evaluation of the continuous improvement of vocational training.

For more information, see todoFP.es: Calidad en FP [1].

Awards for Quality in Vocational Guidance and Training

In August 2011, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport announced these Awards for the first
time. In view of the good results achieved, a second edition was announced in March 2014 and a third
one in August 2015.

Objective of the Awards:

- acknowledge the work and effort of teachers, teams of teachers and students, educational
  institutions and companies who are engaged in the search for innovative and quality
  educational and professional responses
- encourage the improvement of vocational guidance in educational institutions, so that, thanks
to quality information and guidance, school success is guaranteed, equity is promoted, greater
social cohesion is achieved and access to training opportunities are increased.

The nominations for the Awards are promoted by educational institutions and correspond to projects,
works and experiences carried out by teachers, individually or in collaboration with the educational
institution, teams of teachers, or teams of teachers and students.

Types of Awards:

- awards for quality and innovation in vocational training of the education system: they are
  promoted by Spanish publicly-funded educational institutions providing vocational training
- awards for quality and innovation in vocational guidance of the education system: they are
  promoted by secondary schools, specific vocational training institutions, adult education
institutions and integrated vocational training institutions, provided those nominations
 correspond to the work carried out by counsellors or teams belonging to the Counselling
Departments.

The call plans to disseminate the work of the award winners, so that it serves as a model or reference
for other educational communities and fosters the overall improvement of the education system. For
more information, see todoFP.es: Premios a la Calidad e Innovacion en Orientación y Formación
Profesional 2015 [2].

National and international vocational training competitions

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, in collaboration with the Autonomous Communities and
the Cities of Ceuta and Melilla, promotes, encourages and organises the national competition
Spainskills and the participation of Spain in the international competitions Worldskills
Internacional and Worldskills Europe.

University education

Quality assurance has specific features due to the autonomy granted to Spanish universities and the
fact that education authorities, both regional and national, are held accountable.

In this regard, various initiatives and programmes have been implemented in order to improve
evaluation and the quality of the university system.
**Act on Universities (2001)**

It establishes that quality promotion and assurance of Spanish universities, both at the national and international levels, is an essential aim of university policy. This evaluation has the following objectives:

- measure the performance of public university education and accountability towards society
- the transparency, comparison, cooperation and competitiveness of universities at the national and international levels
- improve teaching and research practice, as well as university management
- inform public authorities for decision-making within the scope of their powers
- inform society in order to promote excellence and student and teacher mobility.

These objectives must be achieved by establishing certain common criteria for quality assurance, which facilitate the evaluation, certification and accreditation of:

- studies leading to the award of official certificates which are valid throughout the country
- studies leading to the award of diplomas and certificates designed by universities and other higher education institutions
- activities, programmes, services and management of higher education institutions
- teaching, research and management activities of university teachers
- other activities and programmes that may be carried out as a consequence of teaching and research quality promotion by public authorities.

**National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation** [3] (ANECA)

It is set up in 2002 as an external evaluation mechanism that, independently, reinforces the quality, transparency, cooperation and competitiveness of universities. Its functions are:

- accreditation and evaluation of university teachers
- evaluation of university degrees
- improvement of quality
- monitoring of results and report at university level
- evaluation of research activity
- participation in procedures for the standardisation and recognition of equivalences of Spanish university qualifications and correspondence of academic levels.

**Proposal for the Reform and Improvement of the Quality and Efficiency of the Spanish University System** [4]

In order to contribute to modernising university higher education, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport set up in 2012 a Commission of Experts for the reform of the Spanish university system, whose objectives were to:

- implement systems for the external evaluation of the teaching and research activity
- promote quality research.
- encourage the specialisation of universities in different areas of knowledge.
- rationalise the degrees offered through the establishment of an efficiency standard, taking into account the number of students
- promote private investment
- overcome the deficit in the transfer of knowledge and technology to the productive sector
- encourage internationalisation and increasing participation of universities in the globalised knowledge society.
In 2013, the document 'Proposals for the Reform and Improvement of the Quality and Efficiency of the Spanish University System', presenting the findings of this working group, was handed over to the Minister by this Commission. There are five main points in the document:

- selection of teaching and research staff
- quality assurance
- university governance
- university funding
- university studies and degrees.

This report has been considered as the starting point for a dialogue process with all the key players involved in university life on the measures to be adopted in order to progressively modernise, internationalise and improve the quality of universities.

Since 2006, the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation produces a **Report on the state of the external evaluation of the quality of Spanish universities**. This report provides a situational analysis of the impact of the external evaluation of the quality of the Spanish university system and its evolution with the aim of promoting improvement in both the processes and results of such evaluation.

The 2016 report focuses on:

- improvement of the quality of university education institutions
- improvement of the quality of official university degrees
- improvement of the professional quality of university teaching and research staff.

**Responsible bodies**

**National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA)**

Some of its most important functions are:

- promote the improvement of the teaching, research and management activities of universities
- contribute to the measurement of higher education performance according to objective procedures and transparent processes
- provide public authorities with suitable information for decision-making
- inform society about the achievement of goals in university activities.

In 2003, the Agency became a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA); in 2008, it joined the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR); and, in 2010, it became the first European agency adhering to the Guidelines of Good Practice of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE).

In 2013, the ANECA drew up the **2013-2016 Strategic Plan** [5], a reference document for the establishment of medium-term objectives that will serve as a framework for the annual operational plans and the development of the Agency’s projects in the future.

The strategic and specific goals of this new Plan are:

<table>
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<th>Strategic goals</th>
<th>Specific goals</th>
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[5] ANECA 2013-2016 Strategic Plan
| contribute to the improvement and enhancement of the university system in Spain through the development and application of quality assurance and the accreditation of university programmes and teaching, by bringing added value to both processes and results | • carry out the quality assurance and accreditation of study programmes in compliance with prevailing legislation and the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), providing useful and relevant input for the continuous improvement of higher education institutions  
• carry out the different teacher assessment programmes according to rigorous academic standards and transparency as an essential part of the quality of the system of higher education in Spain  
• develop quality assurance and accreditation programmes together with the involvement of all higher education stakeholders in their design and implementation  
• provide quality assurance programmes with the necessary resources for the quality assurance of end results and outcomes. |
|---|---|
| promote and contribute to the quality enhancement of higher education, fundamentally within the university system, through the setting in motion and implementation of programmes that place the Agency in the position of being a leader both in Spain and internationally | • maintain the fulfilment of the essential requirements to continue being member of organisations and international networks, and preserving the international prestige reached by the Agency all along these years  
• provide leadership in policies of quality management in higher education in Spain through the design and implementation of programmes that lead to quality enhancement in the university system  
• coordinate and promote quality assurance initiatives that help the Agency to maintain its position not just as a model in good practices, but also establish it as a quality assurance pioneer in higher education  
• provide the Agency with the necessary instruments so that it generates trust and credibility within the EHEA, and by establishing and maintaining a clear and transparent relationship with all of the stakeholders. |
| provide useful, transparent and reliable information to the different stakeholders in both Spain and abroad | • provide relevant information on the system of higher education that is easily accessible according to the profile of each different stakeholder  
• define an internal communication plan aimed at managing the Agency’s know-how so as to provide all departments and sections with useful, across-the-board information  
• produce reports either independently or in conjunction with other bodies that are active in the university system, based on the analysis of the results and outcomes of quality assurance processes in the system. |
| increase efficiency in resource management for the optimal running of the Agency | • design and implement an internal quality management system that improves process efficacy and efficiency, and that provides information for decision-making in the form of data and indicators  
• pursue a human resource policy that allows for the maximum development of the Agency’s staff in their jobs  
• ensure transparent financial management that works within established budgets, where the main objective is austerity measures in spending, and that allows for the Agency to be managed as efficiently as possible  
• develop the instruments and provide the Agency with the necessary technological resources to ensure it can carry out its functions in an efficient, convenient and economical way. |

Source: Drawn up by Eurydice Spain-Spanish Network for Information on Education (National Centre for Educational Innovation and Research, Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport) on the basis of the
2013-2016 Strategic Plan of the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation.

The Action Plan for 2016[6] contains all the information on the different activities carried out by the Agency, in its diverse areas of evaluation and contribution to the improvement of the Spanish university system, as well as a list of indicators defined to measure compliance with the strategic objectives established in the Strategic Plan.

The correspondence between the activities to be developed by the Agency and its strategic objectives is the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Strategic objectives</th>
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| Evaluation of studies and institutions| • contribute to the improvement of the Spanish university system, by developing and implementing evaluation procedures, as well as those leading to the accreditation of university studies and teachers, providing added value, in both the process and the result  
  • promote and contribute to the improvement of the quality of higher education, mainly in the university system, through the launch and implementation of programmes that help position the Agency as a national and international referent  
  • provide the different interest groups with useful, transparent and reliable information, both at the national and international level  
  • increase efficiency in the management of the resources that will guarantee optimum operation of the Agency. |
| Evaluation of teachers                | • contribute to the improvement of the Spanish university system, by developing and implementing evaluation procedures, as well as those leading to the accreditation of university studies and teachers, providing added value, in both the process and the result  
  • promote and contribute to the improvement of the quality of higher education, mainly in the university system, through the launch and implementation of programmes that help position the Agency as a national and international referent. |
| International institutional relations and communication | • contribute to the improvement of the Spanish university system, by developing and implementing evaluation procedures, as well as those leading to the accreditation of university studies and teachers, providing added value, in both the process and the result  
  • promote and contribute to the improvement of the quality of higher education, mainly in the university system, through the launch and implementation of programmes that help position the Agency as a national and international referent  
  • provide the different interest groups with useful, transparent and reliable information, both at the national and international level. |
Evaluation of quality

- contribute to the improvement of the Spanish university system, by developing and implementing evaluation procedures, as well as those leading to the accreditation of university studies and teachers, providing added value, in both the process and the result
- promote and contribute to the improvement of the quality of higher education, mainly in the university system, through the launch and implementation of programmes that help position the Agency as a national and international referent
- provide the different interest groups with useful, transparent and reliable information, both at the national and international level
- increase efficiency in the management of the resources that will guarantee optimum operation of the Agency.

Resources which are not directly attributable to the activities

- increase efficiency in the management of the resources that will guarantee optimum operation of the Agency.

Source: Drawn up by Eurydice Spain-Spanish Network for Information on Education (National Centre for Educational Innovation and Research, Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport) on the basis of the Action Plan for 2016 of the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation.

Agencies of the Autonomous Communities responsible for the evaluation of university education

Together with the ANECA, they contribute to the improvement of quality through the coordination and development of the evaluation, certification and accreditation of university studies, teachers and institutions. For that purpose, they provide university institutions with evaluation tools, although institutions themselves are in charge of drawing up and carrying out their own evaluation plans.

General Assembly for University Policy

It is the body for consultation, coordination and cooperation of the general university policy of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport.

Without detriment to the powers conferred on the university coordination bodies of the Autonomous Communities, it has the following functions:

- establish and assess the general guidelines of university policy, its organisation in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and its interrelationship with scientific and technological research policies
- draw up, inform, consult and advise on the general organisation and long-term programme of university education, which covers the necessary human, material and financial resources for the public university services
- approve coordination criteria regarding evaluation, certification and accreditation activities, aimed at promoting and guaranteeing the quality and efficiency of universities
- suggest and assess measures in order to promote collaboration between universities and companies
- coordinate the drawing up and monitoring of reports on the application of the principle of gender equality at university.

Every two years, the Assembly draws up a report on the situation of the university system and its funding, putting forward proposals to improve its quality and efficiency with the aim of ensuring
financial sufficiency and the right to education in conditions of equality.

It is comprised of five members appointed by its President, apart from those in charge of university education in the Governing Councils of the Autonomous Communities.

**Social Council in each university**

This body, by which society participates in university life, supervises universities' financial activities and the performance of their services. It approves an annual action plan with the aim of promoting relations between universities and their cultural, professional, economic and social environment at the service of the financing and quality of university activity.

In order to develop its functions, it is informed and advised by the ANECA and the evaluation bodies of the Autonomous Communities.

**Services Inspection in each university**

It is in charge of ensuring that all university institutions, departments, services and units operate correctly, structurally, functionally and administratively, as well as monitoring and controlling university activity.

**Approaches and methods for quality assurance**

- **National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation** (ANECA): it coordinates and promotes the evaluation of the different aspects of the university system: studies, institutions and teachers.
- **education authorities through their evaluation agencies**: they ensure compliance with basic quality standards in the design and implementation of studies, as well as among those taking part in a hiring process or a process to enter the civil service.
- **universities**:
  - they submit an annual report of their teaching and research activities to the Autonomous Community they depend on as well as to the General Assembly for University Policy.
  - they conduct an internal assessment of their activities, the work done by their teachers and the results of their students within their institutional improvement plans.
  - their Services Inspection verifies compliance with institutional responsibilities, as well as the organisation of teaching and non-teaching staff, and is in charge of opening information and disciplinary proceedings and processing applications for reports and procedures to monitor and evaluate the performance of the teaching staff.

**Programmes of the ANECA for the evaluation of studies**

The ANECA develops its activity, i.e., evaluation, certification and accreditation by means of different programmes:

- **VERIFICA**: it evaluates the proposals of study plans designed in line with the European Higher Education Area.
- **MONITOR**: it provides universities with an external appraisal on the implementation of their official degrees with a view to using this appraisal as an additional element to improve the training offered.
- **ACREDITA**: it evaluates official university degrees before they are accredited. This evaluation is cyclical and has a double objective: check if degrees, once they have been implemented, are being developed in accordance with the initial project description and evaluate their main
results

- INTERNATIONAL QUALITY LABEL: it offers the possibility of obtaining, apart from the national accreditation, an international quality label of renowned prestige: EURACE for degree programmes in Engineering and Euro-Inf for degrees in Computer Science.

Programmes of the ANECA for the evaluation of institutions

Participation in both programmes is voluntary.

- DOCENTIA: its aim is to support universities in the design of their own mechanisms to manage the quality of the teaching practice of university teachers and to contribute to their development and recognition
- AUDIT: its purpose is to favour and promote the development and implementation of internal quality assurance systems at Spanish universities, and establish a procedure leading to the recognition and certification of such systems.

Programmes of the ANECA for the evaluation of teachers

Participation in both programmes is compulsory for teachers who participate in processes for the recruitment or access to the university teaching staff.

- PEP: it evaluates the teaching and research experience and the academic qualifications of prospective teachers in order to have access to the positions of associate teacher, assistant teacher -both requiring a PhD- and private university teacher established by the Act Modifying the Act on Universities (2007)
- ACADEMIA: through Commissions for Accreditation, it carries out the process of curricular evaluation for accreditation in order to have access to the positions of university senior lecturer and university senior professor
- CNEAI: The National Committee for the Evaluation of Research Activity (CNEAI) evaluates the research activity of university teachers and the scientific staff of the Spanish Higher Scientific Research Council (CSIC), so that they receive a productivity allowance.

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Enter the characters shown in the image.