



HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS INITIAL ACCREDITATION

Framework Document

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(CECA) at its meeting of 31 January 2025]

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1. REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Art. 41 of the Organic Law 2/2023, of 22 March, on the University System establishes:

Article 41.- Creation, modification and suppression of centres and structures

1. The creation, modification and suppression of faculties and schools shall be agreed by the Autonomous Community, at the initiative of the university by means of a proposal and approval of its Governing Council.
2. The creation, modification and suppression of departments, institutes, doctoral schools and other centres or structures shall be the responsibility of the university, in accordance with the provisions of this Organic Law and its implementing regulations, as well as its Statutes.

Article 42.- Assignment of centres

1. The affiliation of university teaching centres shall require the prior conclusion of an agreement with the university, in accordance with the provisions of the university Statutes, and with the regulations established by the Government, which shall also establish the basic requirements to be met by the affiliated centres.
2. The assignment of teaching centres to public universities shall require the approval of the Autonomous Community corresponding to the territorial area in which the centres are located. The proposal shall be submitted by the Governing Council of the university, once the Social Council has been informed and the need justifying the affiliation is known.
3. The centres, which may be public or private in nature, may only be attached to a single university. Exceptionally, this condition may be waived, by law or regulation, if particular characteristics justifying it are found in an institute or in certain types of institute.

Royal Decree 640/2021, of 27 July, on the creation, recognition and authorisation of universities and university centres, and institutional accreditation of university centres stipulates:

Article 13.- Basic conditions and requirements for the assignment and operation of teaching centres attached to universities.

1. The purpose of the affiliation of a centre to a university shall be to provide teaching leading to the award of official bachelor's and/or master's and/or doctoral degrees, as well as, where appropriate, to carry out research and knowledge transfer activities.
2. Centres may be public or private when they are attached to a public university, and private when they are attached to a private university. For these purposes, an affiliated centre may only be affiliated to a single university - although the official degrees it offers may be joint or double degrees with centres of this or other universities.
3. In accordance with the provisions of Organic Law 6/2001, of 21 December, the assignment of university teaching centres shall require the prior conclusion of an agreement with the university, in accordance with the provisions of the Statutes or Rules of Operation and Organisation of the said university and with the provisions of this Royal Decree.
4. Secondment agreements shall be signed by the Rector of the university and the legal representative of the entity that owns the institution that intends to be seconded.
5. The secondment agreement shall include at least the following:
 - a) The list of official university courses to be taught in the affiliated centre;
 - b) the criteria for admission to the courses;
 - c) the provisions relating to the financial arrangements governing relations between the affiliated institution and the university;
 - (d) the rules for the appointment of the headmaster or headmistress of the associated centre and of the management team;
 - e) the determination of the governing bodies of the centre;
 - f) the procedure for requesting from the university the "venia docendi" of its teaching staff;
 - g) the structure, number and typology of the teaching staff that make up and/or will make up the staff of the centre;
 - h) programming for the development and implementation of an internal quality assurance system and the achievement of its certification by ANECA or the relevant quality agency;

- (i) the possibility of providing lifelong learning qualifications;
- j) planning the development of the research activity of its teaching and research staff;
- k) the facilities and main equipment which the institution has or will have in order to fulfil its academic functions adequately and with quality.

6. The distribution of the number of students enrolled in an affiliated centre according to whether they are students of courses leading to recognised degrees or to its own lifelong learning degrees, five years after the start of its affiliation to a university, shall ensure that the number of students enrolled in its own lifelong learning degrees shall not exceed twice the number of students enrolled in recognised degrees.

7. The affiliation of a faculty or school to a university shall require the approval of the corresponding Autonomous Community, except in the case of affiliation to a state university, in which case it shall be the responsibility of the Ministry of Universities. In the case of public universities, the proposal shall be submitted by the Governing Council, following a favourable report from the Social Council. In the case of private universities, the request shall be submitted after approval by their governing body.

8. Approval of the proposal for affiliation shall be subject to registration in the Register of Universities, Centres and Degrees (RUCT), and communication to the General Conference on University Policy by the Ministry of Universities. If the proposal is approved by the Autonomous Community, the latter shall inform the aforementioned Ministry of the affiliation, for the purposes of registration and communication.

9. University degrees corresponding to official courses taught in centres attached to a university shall be subject to the quality assurance procedures established by the university to which they are attached and shall be issued by the Rector of the latter.

10. The teaching staff of centres attached to universities shall meet the requirements established in Article 7, sections 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 of this Royal Decree.

2. EVALUATION PROCESS

3.1. Launch

The University Quality and Foresight Agency of Aragon will initiate the procedure for issuing the evaluation report at the request of the Directorate General of the Department responsible for university education of the Government of Aragon.

This Directorate General will carry out a review of the content of the documentation to be submitted, which is as follows:

- Ascription report:
 - Report stating the academic objectives and the programme of teaching and research activities at the centre.
 - Organisational and operational rules of the centre or whether they are governed by those of the university to which they are attached.
 - Current range of courses offered at the centre (for existing centres) and justification of the new official university courses that will be offered at the centre after the affiliation and how they fit in with this range of courses;
 - Forecast of the total number of places to be filled, year by year, until full capacity is reached; academic year in which the activity will start and timetable for the full implementation of the courses.
 - Teaching and research staff associated with official degrees. Initial allocation and recruitment forecast (forecast of annual increase until the corresponding courses are fully implemented). At least the following information on teaching staff must be included: qualifications, possession of doctoral degree, accreditation, dedication regime and type of contract.
 - The number of administrative and service staff at the beginning of the centre's activity, as well as the forecast of its annual increase until the total implementation of the corresponding courses.
 - Suitable and sufficient infrastructures and resources for the development of teaching and research functions. In particular, the site of the university centre and its location with a justification and specification of the existing and planned

- building and facilities for the start of the activities and until the full implementation of the teaching.
 - Justification of the results of the last three economic implementation reports.
 - Feasibility plan of the centre (estimation of costs and income associated with the implementation of the new degrees).
 - Closure plan in the event that the activity becomes unviable, guaranteeing the operation of the centre at least until the students who, with sufficient academic achievement, have begun their studies, have completed their studies.
- Additional documentation
 - Agreement of the Governing Council or the Board of Trustees of the university.
 - Personality of the promoters and ownership of the centre. If the owner is a legal entity, the updated statutes must be attached. In the case of private universities, proof must also be provided that they have their own legal personality.
 - Commitment to maintain the centre in operation at least until the students who, with sufficient academic achievement, have begun their studies, have completed their studies.
 - Secondment agreement signed between the Rector of the university and the legal representative of the entity.
 - Any other documentation that the requesting University considers to be of interest.
 - Guarantees that ensure, if the centre is private, sufficient funding proportional to both the number of degrees offered and the number of students enrolled. These guarantees shall be justified by the presentation of at least the last three financial reports of execution and shall be accompanied by a viability and closure plan in the event that its activity proves to be unviable.

In order to proceed with the evaluation, the Directorate General shall attach an electronic copy of the secondment report to the request for a report to the ACPUA.

3.2. Evaluation bodies

The Subcommittee for the Evaluation of Centres (SEC) will be the technical body of ACPUA in charge of issuing the corresponding evaluation report for authorisation.

The ACPUA will assess the application through the Centres Evaluation Subcommittee (SEC) and an evaluation panel of experts in the field appointed by the ECSC specifically for each application.

The panel will be composed of at least two experts of recognised standing, one of whom must be an expert in the field and one of whom may have a legal/economic/centre management profile. The panel will also include a PhD student.

All experts shall carry out their main professional activity outside the Autonomous Community of Aragon and shall comply with the requirements defined in the "ACPUA Evaluator Selection Procedure" published on the Agency's website.

The rules of procedure and the composition of the SEC are published on the ACPUA website. Both the members of the SEC and the panel of evaluators shall sign the Agency's Code of Ethics.

3.3. Appointment and challenge of the panel of evaluators

The ACPUA Assessment, Certification and Accreditation Committee proposes the members of the assessment panel. This proposal shall be communicated to the university, which shall have ten working days to make a reasoned objection to the panel.

At the end of the objection period, the composition of the panel shall be made public by means of a Resolution of the Directorate and on the Agency's website.

In case the evaluators do not have experience in this type of evaluation, neither with the ACPUA nor with other agencies, they will be provided with the necessary training in the evaluation protocol to be applied.

3.4. Evaluation

The panel of evaluators will study the documentation submitted by the centre and will proceed to its evaluation according to the following criteria established by the Evaluation, Certification and Accreditation Commission:



If deemed necessary, the evaluation panel may request an interview with the school's management team or propose a visit to the school, before submitting its evaluation report to the SEC.

3.5. Issuance of the proposal for the evaluation report

The SEC, based on the study of the documentation included in the application and the evaluation carried out by the panel of experts, will issue the corresponding Proposal for Evaluation Report following the criteria established by the ECSC, and may, where appropriate, propose recommendations or aspects that could be modified.

This proposal will be sent to the University, which will have twenty working days in which to submit its observations.

3.6. Issuance of the Evaluation Report

Once the allegations, if any, have been analysed, the Subcommittee for the Evaluation of Centres will issue the **Evaluation Report for the affiliation of the centre**, which will be sent to the Directorate General of the Government of Aragon responsible for higher education and to the University.

The final report issued by the Subcommittee for the Evaluation of Centres must be reasoned and conclusive, and must always include a list of strengths, weaknesses and recommendations/opportunities for improvement.

The Agency will then publish the results of the evaluation on its website.

The outcome of the report shall be expressed in terms of:

- **FAVOURABLE:** the University Centre is recommended for secondment.
- **FAVOURABLE CONDITIONED:** deficiencies are pointed out that need to be corrected, which will be subject to special monitoring by the ACPUA.
- **UNFAVOURABLE:** the centre is not recommended for secondment.

3.7. Meta-evaluation of the process

The ACPUA will close the evaluation process by collecting information about the satisfaction of those involved in the process.

The information collected will be forwarded to the ECSC to close the meta-evaluation process, possibly proposing improvements to the process.

3.8. Complaints and appeals

Any complaint or appeal lodged in relation to this evaluation process shall be referred to the ACPUA Guarantees Committee for its knowledge and effects (as foreseen in the "Procedure for processing appeals, complaints and claims, published on the Agency's website").

Document revision history

Rev.	Date	Amendments made
0	08/09/2015	First draft review by the SEC.
1	04/11/2015	Revision of the draft following input from SEC (document sent to DGU).
2	02/12/2015	Revision of the draft following input from universities and DGU.
3	04/02/2016	Approval by the Evaluation, Certification and Accreditation Commission.
4	25/07/2016	Corrected an error in criterion B.3 (the correct percentage of full-time contracted teaching staff is 60% and not 70%).
5	17/07/2020	Revision of content and updating of format.
6	16/02/2024	Adaptation to Organic Law 2/2023, of 22 March, on the University System and Royal Decree 640/2021, of 27 July, on the creation, recognition and authorisation of universities and university centres, and institutional accreditation of university centres.
7	31/01/2025	A PhD student member is included in the evaluation panel.

ANNEX I : Evaluation Protocol

The assessment guidelines for the assignment of a centre are as follows:



Each of the above guidelines will be assessed according to the following scale:

A: Satisfactory

B: Sufficient

C: Insufficient

D: No information (therefore cannot be assessed).

NOTE:

The centres to be attached may be newly created or existing training centres, and this aspect should be taken into account when assessing the different criteria.

Given that affiliated centres can offer official studies and their own studies, the affiliation report must specify the official degrees that will be taught at the centre, as well as their connection with the teaching offer of the university and the centre itself.

The affiliation of a centre to a university shall be linked to the verification of the official qualifications requested by the university for that centre (or to the request for modification of existing qualifications at the university in which the inclusion of the new centre will be requested).

A. Teaching and Students

STANDARD:

The official degrees proposed are coherent with the teaching offer of the university to which it is attached and with that of the centre itself.

The number of places available in the official degrees is adequate.

The offer of own degrees and official degrees is balanced.

SPECIFIC CRITERIA:

A.1. The official degrees proposed to be taught at the faculty are coherent with the teaching offer of the faculty and the university.

A.2. The number of places proposed for each degree programme is justified in the analysis of demand carried out.

A.3. The forecast number of students enrolled in own lifelong learning degrees is twice as low as the number of students enrolled in official degrees.

B. Human Resources

STANDARD:

The centre has sufficient teaching staff to offer official qualifications with sufficient guarantees to comply with the regulations in force (Royal Decree 640/2021).

In those cases in which the faculty is newly created, or in which new degrees are to be introduced, the provisions for the incorporation of new teaching staff made by the faculty must be adequate and comply with the criteria specified in the corresponding regulations.

SPECIFIC CRITERIA:

B.1. The number and qualifications of the teaching and research staff associated with the official degree programmes are in line with the number of students and the needs of the planned training programmes. In the event of not having the necessary staff, the incorporation forecasts are adequate for compliance with the regulations.

- The total number of teaching and research staff shall not be less than the number resulting from applying the ratio 1/25 to the total number of students enrolled in official university studies. .¹

B.2 The following ratios shall be complied with

- 50% of male and female PhDs for all undergraduate degrees.
- 100% of male and female PhD holders for all doctoral studies.

NOTE: The total number of lecturers shall be calculated on a full-time equivalent basis. Non-doctorate lecturers shall have at least a degree, architect, engineer, graduate or equivalent.

The PhDs referred to in the previous sections must belong to fields of knowledge that are coherent with the teaching and research programme of the faculty.

B.3. The number and qualifications of support staff are appropriate to the number of pupils and the needs of the school.

C. Material Resources

STANDARD:

The material resources available are adequate and meet the needs of the training programmes.

SPECIFIC CRITERIA:

- C.1. The centre has sufficient classrooms in terms of quantity and quality to meet the requirements of the training programmes.
- C.2. The centre has sufficient and suitably equipped laboratories and/or teaching facilities to meet the training objectives of the training programmes.

¹ The ratio may be modulated when the centre teaches in the virtual mode, and may vary between 1/25 and 1/50 depending on the level of experimentality of the degrees and the greater or lesser degree of presence - justified exceptions may be established, which in no case may exceed the ratio of 1/100, which must have the express authorisation of the competent administration. This criterion will be applied in the non-face-to-face part of the degrees taught in hybrid mode.

- C.3. The school has sufficient space for extracurricular activities for students, teaching staff and support staff.
- C.4. The centre has student support services appropriate to the needs of the training programmes.

D.Economic Resources

STANDARD:

The centre's current financial situation and its medium-term expenditure and income forecasts guarantee the viability of the centre.

SPECIFIC CRITERION:

- D.1 In the case of existing schools, the school must be in a healthy financial situation, which allows the implementation of the new teaching.
- D.2. Estimates of costs and revenues associated with the introduction of new degrees should be adequate.
- D.3. The financial guarantees provided must ensure sufficient and adequate funding for the centre.
- D.4. The viability and closure plan presented is adequate.