

QUALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN MEXICO

AN EXPLANATION OF THE DIFFERENT ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED IN ACCREDITATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

Introduction

The objective of this document is to give an answer to the following questions:

- How is quality assured in Mexican Higher Education institutions in general?
- Which methods or procedure will we as Nuffic Neso Mexico use to make clear what the quality of a higher education institution is?

The information presented in this document has been obtained through several meetings and documents provided by different public and private Mexican higher education institutions, the Mexican Ministry of Education (SEP), the National Association of Universities and Institutions on Higher Education (ANUIES), the Federation of Private Higher Education institutions in Mexico (FIMPES), and the National Council for Science and Technology (CONACyT).

Assessment of the quality of Mexican Higher Education Institutions

Assessment of quality of Mexican higher education institutions is quite complex because Mexico lacks a unique national legislation or single entity that regulates activities for evaluation and accreditation of higher education. The instruments that are used have been constituted by agreements among the higher education institutions and the federal government. These instruments serve as a reference on the quality level of Mexican higher education institutions and its study programmes. Nevertheless, there are some other characteristics that should be also taken into consideration. For example, quality can differ between the different faculties and the different study programmes.

This document explains the main instruments that can be used as references of quality.

1. Official recognition of programmes

The Mexican Ministry of Education (Secretaría de Educación Pública, SEP) must award the RVOE (Reconocimiento de Validez Oficial de Estudios) to every programme at the Mexican private higher education institutions before they can start classes. The 'evaluation' is being done on the basis of documents. The RVOE is compulsory in order to issue an official bachelor or master degree diploma. However, the RVOE does not say much about quality.

Public universities are autonomous and they do not require the RVOE in order to start a new study programme. On the [SEP webpage](#) you can browse the RVOE programmes.

2. Evaluation and accreditation of programmes

Responsibility for the evaluation of the programmes of both private and public higher education institutions has been allocated to CIEES (Comités Interinstitucionales para la Evaluación de la Educación Superior). On the other hand, COPAES (Consejo para la Acreditación de la

Educación Superior) is responsible for the accreditation. Both CIEES and COPAES are recognized by the Mexican Ministry of Education.

2.1 Evaluation of programmes

CIEES consists of nine committees (organized by study field). Each committee is formed by distinguished faculty members representing different Mexican regions.

The nine CIEES are:

1. Architecture, design and urbanism
2. Natural and exact sciences
3. Agricultural sciences
4. Health sciences
5. Social and administrative sciences
6. Arts, education and humanities
7. Engineering and technology
8. Distribution, linking and extension of culture
9. Administration and public management

2.2 Accreditation of programmes

The Council for the Accreditation of Higher Education (COPAES) is formed by important parties such as the SEP, ANUIES and FIMPES amongst others. COPAES gives formal recognition to specialized private organisations that give accreditation to academic programmes from both private and public higher education institutions.

The list of the study programmes that are already accredited can be found by field of study or by higher education institution on the [COPAES website](#).

3. Quality of postgraduate programmes

The Padrón Nacional de Posgrado (PNP) is the national register of postgraduate programs administered by CONACyT. The PNP constitutes an instrument of the federal government to recognize good quality postgraduate programmes (Master and PhD).

The postgraduate programmes listed in the PNP have the recognition of academic quality by both the SEP and CONACyT. The list of the postgraduate programs listed in the PNP can be found on the [CONACyT website](#).

4. FIMPES membership

FIMPES is a Mexican organization that has developed procedures for evaluating and certifying the quality of private institutions in Mexico. In order to become a member of FIMPES, the institution's quality is evaluated by the organization. Therefore, this membership can also serve as a reference for quality. Most renowned private higher education institutions are members of FIMPES. In March 2011, 106 institutions have the FIMPES membership.

In addition to this membership, higher education institutions that fulfil the criteria of academic excellence set by the Ministry of Education and FIMPES can be awarded with the title of "Excelencia Académica" (Academic Excellence). In 2011, 33 private higher education institutions in the country have this distinction.

The list of higher education institutions that are [accredited members of FIMPES](#) and the list of the 33 private [higher education institutions with the title of Academic Excellence](#) can be found on the FIMPES website.

5. National rankings

Each year in the spring the most important higher education rankings are published by three different magazines:

- The Reader's Digest University Guide;
- The Best Universities supplement of the "El Universal" newspaper; and
- The Best Universities supplement of the "Reforma" newspaper.

These rankings have been published for several years and are increasingly popular among

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students and institutions. They have become powerful tools that allow students to make a decision about their careers based on more qualitative and quantitative information than before. Another important ranking for business schools is the yearly MBA ranking published by the Expansión magazine.

"The best universities"

As usual, each ranking has distinct focus areas, methodologies, regions and participating universities. Therefore the term "the best universities" cannot be concluded from these rankings. However, it does give a good overview of the best performances by several universities in several study fields. If you are interested in more information, or the complete rankings for a specific study field, please contact Nuffic Neso Mexico to request this information.

Each of these rankings uses distinct methodologies to determine the top universities. Most data used for these rankings is not quantitative, but rather qualitative information gathered from surveys. All three rankings focus on the potential of graduates obtaining an employment after their career rather than on the academic formation of the student. All use rankings divided into different study fields, but El Universal and Reader's Digest also publish a general ranking of universities.

The most important results of the rankings can be found on the [Nuffic Neso Mexico website for Dutch institutions](#).

Conclusions

The instruments mentioned above can be used as a reference to evaluate the quality of the study programmes at Mexican higher education institutions. However, it is important to take into consideration that the accreditation system by COPAES is not only relatively new but also a voluntary process. Higher education institutions are not obliged to evaluate or/and accredit their programmes in order to award academic titles. The evaluation of postgraduate courses is also a voluntary process. The fact that some courses are not listed in the COPAES list or in the PNP of CONACyT does not necessarily mean that they lack good quality.

The COPAES and the PNP lists show more public higher education institutions than private. Various internal reasons might cause that some good private institutions are not interested in obtaining these recognitions. In order to evaluate quality at private higher education institutions, one should look at the COPAES list, the FIMPES membership, the academic excellence by FIMPES, and the national rankings.

For more information about a particular Mexican higher education institution, please [contact Nuffic Neso Mexico](#).

Sources

- SEP—Mexican Ministry of Education: www.sep.gob.mx
- ANUIES—National Association for Universities and Higher Education Institutions: www.anui.es.mx
- FIMPES—Federation of Private Higher Education Institutions in Mexico: www.fimpes.org.mx
- CONACyT—National Council for Science and Technology: www.conacyt.gob.mx
- CIEES—Interinstitutional Commission for the Evaluation of Higher Education: www.ciees.edu.mx
- COPAES—Council for the Accreditation of Higher Education: www.copaes.org.mx
- Nuffic Neso Mexico—Netherlands Education Support Office Mexico: www.nesomexico.org
- Nuffic—Country Module Mexico: www.nuffic.nl/international-organizations/docs/diploma-recognition/country-modules/country-module-mexico.pdf

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