

DOCENTIA-ULL: A programme for Evaluating, Promoting and Development of Teaching Performance at the University of La Laguna

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1. GENERAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE DOCENTIA PROGRAMME

In March 2007, the DOCENTIA Programme was launched by the university evaluation agencies in Spain. The aim of this Programme is to satisfy the university demand for a model and procedures for **ensuring the quality of educational provision** by university academic staff and for promoting its development and recognition.

As far as programmes developed specifically for reviewing tuition in other European High Education Area (EHEA) countries are concerned, we have had to investigate initiatives on an individual university level as we have not encountered any global initiatives being developed by quality assurance agencies in other countries. This is largely due to the **tradition in Europe of the assessment of educational provision being the responsibility of the universities themselves**, who also manage the recruitment and teaching activity of their own teaching staff.

DOCENTIA was designed to take into account the increasingly relevant role the universities play in the evaluation of their teaching staff. For this reason the programme aims to **promote the enhancement of educational provision** through teaching assessment processes conducted by the universities themselves, which are more likely to be adapted to their local needs. It is the underlying assumption that the decisions adopted by the universities following the evaluation (staff training, economic incentives, recognition, promotion, etc.) will contribute towards an **enhancement in the quality of university teaching**.

The reference framework for this programme is to be found in the EHEA Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines (ESG) where it states that *"institutions should have ways of satisfying themselves that the staff involved in teaching students is qualified and competent to do so."* A further important reference is to be found in a Spanish Government Royal Decree (1393/2007), which sets out the arrangement of officially recognised university teaching in Spain and which indicates that *"the Quality Assurance System must have teaching staff evaluation and improvement procedures in place."* Finally, the Conference of European Ministers responsible for higher education, held in Louvain in April 2009, indicates *"the importance of the teaching mission in universities and the need for a reform in the syllabus centred on enhancing learning outcomes."* The university quality assurance system must be compatible with diversity, innovation and improvement, and institutions of higher education are expressly requested to pay special attention to enhancing the quality of their educational provision.

The importance of the DOCENTIA Programme is also made evident by **the links it has established with other activities** that Spanish universities are participating in today. The assessment procedure being designed by each university within the framework of this programme:

- Is part of the general university's internal quality assurance system framework (AUDIT Programme¹), as the teaching staff is one of the key factors in promoting quality assurance.
- Forms part of the documentation of application for new qualifications drafted by the university which is assessed for the university quality agencies (VERIFICA Programme²).
- Allows universities to prepare reports on the teaching merits of teaching staff on an individual basis whereby any positive assessment obtained by the staff on an individual level is made evident and applicants may present this to demonstrate of the quality of their work when applying for access to university teaching posts under the ACADEMIA Programme³ and when teaching staff are being appraised for recruitment purposes.

2. THE DOCENTIA PROGRAMME

2.1 The following are the goals of the DOCENTIA Programme

- To provide a **reference framework, a model and procedures** for approaching the evaluation of teaching performance.
- To support **teaching staff development**, such as their personal and professional advancement.
- To facilitate the **decision making process** in relation to the evaluation.
- To contribute towards the necessary **change in university culture** which the teaching assessment process will bring about.
- To foster a **culture of quality** to bring the work of the teaching staff into line with the aims of the institution.

All these aims entail an **increased responsibility for the universities as a consequence of their greater autonomy and decision making capacity**, as it is the universities themselves who decide on what basis they are to assess their teaching staff and on the subsequent decisions to be taken.

2.2 Methodology

The evaluation model defined in this programme considers three strands, or divisions, for the examination and appraisal of the teaching work: **Tuition planning, development of educational provision and outcomes**. Information is gathered on these aspects mainly through Self-evaluation reports prepared by the lecturer undergoing the assessment, a report drafted by academic managers and the information provided by students by means of surveys, although the model allows the use of other sources provided that their validity can be verified. **The aim is to promote the participation of all stakeholders, allowing them to become sources of information for the system**. This increases the reliability of the data as it is possible to correlate the evidence on the same subject gathered from different information sources.

The programme is to be developed in various stages from the **design and acknowledgement of the assessment procedure** through to its **certification**, including an **experimental** phase for all models during which the universities assess their teaching staff and put the performance of the procedures they have designed to the test.

2.3 Key findings following the evaluation of the designs and critical points for the implementation of DOCENTIA

¹ AUDIT: <http://www.aneca.es/actividadesevaluacion/evaluacionense%C3%B1anzas/audit.aspx>

² VERIFICA: <http://www.aneca.es/actividadesevaluacion/evaluacionense%C3%B1anzas/verifica.aspx>

³ ACADEMIA: http://www.aneca.es/actividadesevaluacion/evaluacionprofesorado/acreditacion_nacional.aspx

- **86% of universities** in the Spanish University System, both public and private, **participated** in the first DOCENTIA cycle, highlighting the tremendous reception the programme has had.
- **82% of universities** focused their assessment procedures on **teaching enhancement and the promotion of their teaching staff**, in full compliance with the philosophy of the DOCENTIA programme.
- If their procedures are to truly achieve an **enhancement in the quality of their teaching staff**, during the experimental stage, universities must ensure that their designs achieve the aim for which they were devised.
- Universities have generally encountered difficulties in clearly defining the decision making processes deriving from the **outcomes of the teaching performance evaluation**. Special emphasis must be placed on the **fulfilment of the improvement plans** and on incentivising the continuous improvement of those teaching staff obtaining positive appraisals.
- It is essential that **students participate in the assessment process**, not only by filling out questionnaires, but by becoming involved in the whole process from its inception and as recipients of the final results.

2.4 Implementation and follow-up

The DOCENTIA programme is currently in the **experimental implementation stage** of evaluation process design, which is to last two years. The purpose of this stage is to introduce amendments and improvements in response to needs within the broad context of its application and those arising from the follow-up of the process.

3. PRESENTATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LA LAGUNA EXPERIENCE

The University of La Laguna (ULL) intends to initiate the application of its own version of the DOCENTIA programme for appraising the work of the teaching staff. The programme has been developed specifically as a support Programme for the assessment of the educational provision by the teaching staff.

The DOCENTIA programme constitutes a commitment by the ULL towards enhancing quality in teaching and to its permanent quest for excellence. The development of this programme will entail the application of a series of procedures to allow transparency in the quality assurance systems in university education, in accordance with European regulations on higher education. Its major goals are to achieve continuous improvement in the education programmes and the professional development of the teaching staff.

3.1 Goals of the DOCENTIA Programme at the ULL

The key goals for the DOCENTIA Programme at the ULL are as follows:

- To develop a system for appraising the work of teaching staff to ensure teaching quality.
- To acknowledge the effort and the quality of the work of the teaching staff in order to enhance their performance and reward excellence.
- To provide an assessment system to allow the teaching staff to gain accreditation for their teaching skills.
- To promote reflection on the teaching methods and the introduction of innovative methods to improve the quality of teaching.
- To provide a reliable procedure for capturing information for diagnosing the state of the ULL education, for drafting reports on the matter, for detecting any malfunctioning aspects and for developing support programmes to train and professionally enhance the teaching staff.

3.2 Procedure

During the 2008-09 academic year, the task of training the technical staff was undertaken and the Evaluation Handbook was prepared and drafted. After being commented on by the different university sectors the Handbook was approved by the ULL Board of Governors. Following the approval of the Handbook by

ANECA in October this year, the ULL is to commence the assessment of its teaching staff. Participation in this initial experimental stage will be voluntary, but will be restricted to lecturers with 5 or more year's teaching experience at the ULL, regardless of their type of contract or professional status. It will finalise in October 2010, at the same time as the Evaluation Model is to be certified by ANECA.

As from that date and after the amendments and improvements to the initial process have been implemented, the assessment, to be conducted in yearly cycles, will become compulsory for all teaching staff at the ULL every five years, in accordance with the schedule and regulations established to this effect. The Model may be subject to modification or extension during subsequent reviews in order to guarantee its coherence, enhancement and quality. This review will be given the approval of the competent bodies of the ULL management.

3.3 Evaluation model

Divisions of the evaluation model. The model underpinning this Programme contemplates three areas of focus for evaluating the educational provision: 1. Tuition planning; 2. Development of educational provision and 3. Learning outcomes. In addition to these three divisions there is the cross-divisional aspect of the teaching role, classified as a zero division or a prerequisite, meaning that if the lecturer does not carry out the functions that define it, no quality assessment of it needs to be conducted. All of the above must also take account of the particularities of the ULL in which the teaching staff work.



Contexto institucional	Institutional Context
EVALUACIÓN	ASSESSMENT
DESARROLLO	DEVELOPMENT
PLANIFICACIÓN	PLANNING
RESULTADOS	OUTCOMES
DEDICACIÓN	COMMITMENT

Each of these three areas is divided, in turn, into several sub-divisions, featuring a series of indicators, each carrying a specific weight in the assessment process. Table 1 sets out the three areas of focus and their sub-divisions together with a general description of the contents of each indicator and its number of points in the evaluation out of a total score of 100 points. The assessment outcome is classified as favourable when the subject obtains 50 points or above in the overall score and is classified as excellent if 80 points or above are achieved.

Table 1

Division and sub-division	General Description	Points (Max.)
DIVISION 1. TUITION PLANNING		25
1.1 Participation in Academic management bodies	Provision of information about leadership of and participation in institutions, departments, on professional boards or committees concerned with educational related activities.	9
1.2. Tuition planning	Provision of information about the regularity and updating of course programmes/ teaching guides, their suitability, review and level of information contributing to the enhancement of teaching quality.	8
1.3 Coordinating activities	Provision of information about the coordination tasks both relating to the course and between the subjects of the qualification, or about the	8

	coordination of exchange programmes.	
DIVISION 2. DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROVISION		35
2.1 Ordinary teaching activities	Formal aspects of ordinary teaching activities will be assessed: timetables, tutorials, exams, delivery of results, as well as progress in the programme, corrective measures, etc.	20
2.2 Complementary teaching activities	Activities centred on enriching the subjects, both in their content and in the teaching methods, are to be indicated.	15
2.3 Special teaching activities	Teaching activities not forming part of ordinary activities but which contribute towards enhancing the learning experience will be assessed. 0 Courses: participation in Experimental Pilot Projects on the European Credit System; organisation of events such as workshops, seminars and courses; activities in relation to the transition from secondary to university education, etc.	
DIVISION 3. OUTCOMES AND INNOVATION		40
3.1 Quantitative evidence	Levels of success, efficiency and abandonment will be measured, the latter two in relation to the average for the qualification.	10
3.2 Qualitative evidence	Student satisfaction survey Satisfaction survey among Academic Leaders	20
3.3 Training and innovation in teaching	Training, innovative projects, course design, etc.	10
3.4 Others	Other teaching related merits such as prizes and academic distinctions gained, teaching experience in other prestigious institutions, etc.	

Assessment Criteria. The following criteria have been taken into account when defining and appraising the above aspects:

Suitability: The tuition must conform to the requirements set down by the ULL in regard to organisation, planning, teaching practice and the evaluation of student learning. These requirements must be in line with the goals set out in the study plans and be consistent with university strategy.

Satisfaction: Teaching staff performance at the ULL should produce a favourable opinion among the other participants involved in educational provision (academic managers and students).

Efficiency: Taking account of the resources available to the teaching staff, tuition at the ULL should allow the students to develop the skills described in the syllabus.

Improvement focused: Teaching at the ULL should be approached from the perspective of promoting learning among the staff through the teaching itself, either through self-study or regulated training by other agencies. This should be undertaken with a willingness to introduce changes which may affect the way in which the tuition is planned and carried out and how the results are evaluated.

Corrective factors. The teaching plan and the teaching workload will act as correcting factors when conducting an appraisal of the three divisions of the model. Their aim is to standardise the differing realities of the teaching activity among university teaching staff. For example, corrective coefficients have been defined for indicators such as content, subject type and level, and for the credit load of the subjects that make up the educational offer, in order to add value to the score for younger teachers, a heavier workload and a greater academic diversity. The resulting values of the different strands and their sub-division indicators will be weighted by the **teacher correcting factor**, except for the success, efficiency and abandonment rates and the student survey which will be weighted by the **subject factor**. If, when calculating any of these factors, a value of less than one is obtained, the value of one shall be adopted.

Participants in the Assessment Process. The participants involved in the assessment process are as follows:

Teaching staff: They are to carry out a Self-evaluation report on their teaching performance and provide supporting evidence in accordance with the three aforementioned areas on which the assessment is based.

Academic Leaders: Deans and/or Institution managers should evaluate the extent to which the performance of the teacher is adapted to the teaching task. They should produce a report providing an overall assessment relating to the appraisal of the teaching performance of the teacher as a whole.

Students: They will give their opinion through surveys on their degree of satisfaction with the teaching performance delivered by their lecturer.

Teaching Performance Assessment Panel of the ULL: This group is to issue a report based on an evaluation of the supporting evidence supplied by the lecturer, the relevant academic representative and the students.

Assessment and Quality Enhancement Unit (AQEU): Will assume the tasks of providing technical support and assistance to the various bodies involved in the assessment process.

Analysis and Planning Board: Will assist the teacher in extracting the data stored on the academic management and human resources data bases at the ULL.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Teaching Staff and Teaching Quality. Secretariat for Training, Assessment, Quality and Innovation in Education: Will be responsible for the coordination between the participants in the assessment process and for monitoring the results.

Guarantee Committee: This Committee is in charge of reviewing and resolving the appeals lodged against the decisions of the Assessment Panel.

Information Sources and Procedures. The supporting evidence required for assessment on each aspect will be obtained via three information sources and procedures: a) Self-evaluation report by the teaching staff; b) Reports from the Dean and/or Institution Manager and, c) The results of the student surveys.

Teaching Performance Assessment Panel. The Teaching Performance Assessment Panel will be made up of:

- The Deputy Vice-Chancellor with the responsibility for quality, who will chair the panel.
- The Secretary, who will be a member of the Assessment and Quality Enhancement Unit.
- Five teaching staff, one for each subject area, from tenured PhD lecturers at the ULL with over 15 year's teaching experience.
- One member proposed by the Canary Island Agency for Assessment and Accreditation who may not be a member of the Assessment and Quality Enhancement Unit nor of the University of the ULL, and with accredited experience in teaching assessment.

The Panel members from the ULL will be appointed for a 4 year term by the Board of Governors. The Panel should take account of all the information collected through the different sources and procedures established for the purpose in this handbook. They may request as much evidence as they deem necessary from the AQEU, or when required, from the interested party him/herself or from any other available source. Once it has examined all the information, the Panel shall conduct an overall appraisal under the terms described in this handbook. They shall proceed to issue a favourable, unfavourable or excellent result and issue the corresponding confidential report to be delivered to the interested party.

The teacher involved may request a review from the Assessment Panel itself, following the established procedure. In the event of an unfavourable result, or whenever they consider it necessary, the Panel will present the lecturer with proposals on how to make improvements to his/her teaching performance. The interested party may also propose to undertake actions aimed at correcting those aspects which s/he considers

to be in need of improvement. This proposal must be submitted to the Assessment Panel for review and, if approved, will be monitored by the AQEU and will be subject to another review in the following cycle of assessments.

Guarantee Committee. The Guarantee Committee will be responsible for reviewing and resolving any appeals against the assessment procedures and/or the application of the procedures by the Assessment Panel set out in this handbook. It will be composed of the Vice-chancellor and five teaching staff, one for each of the subject areas, elected by the Board of Governors from tenured PhD lecturers at the ULL with over 15 year's teaching experience. This Committee is in charge of reviewing and resolving any appeals lodged against the decisions of the Assessment Panel. The decisions of the Guarantee Committee exhaust all administrative remedies.

Outcomes of the Teaching Assessment. The Assessment Panel, after taking account of all the information supplied by each of the information sources, shall issue an overall report which may be "Favourable", "Unfavourable" or "Excellent".

In order to obtain a Favourable or Excellent appraisal of his/her teaching performance the lecturer must exceed the following minimum requirements: 1. Obtain a final grade of more than 14 points on the second aspect (Educational provision); 2. Obtain an average grade higher or equal to 2 (over 5) on the question "Overall I am satisfied with the teaching work of this teacher" of the student satisfaction survey.

Unfavourable: An unfavourable result is obtained when the minimum requirements are not achieved, or when the overall score is less than 50 even if the said requirements have been met.

Favourable: Having achieved all the minimum requirements and the overall score from all sources of information is at least 50 points out of the total.

Excellent: The Assessment Panel shall consider a lecturer to be excellent when s/he obtains an overall score exceeding 80.

Depending on the results, the Panel should propose and/or recommend improvement measures in order to assist in the enhancement and continuous improvement in the teaching staff who have undergone the assessment process.

The results of the assessment process will be presented statistically in a general report to be distributed among the university community through the websites of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Teaching Staff and Educational Quality and of the Assessment and Quality Enhancement Unit. This report will also include the recommendations and proposals made by the Panel to the teaching staff who have undergone the assessment, as a reference for the rest of the staff members.

REFERENCES

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