

# **Latin American Consensus for the Internationalization in Postgraduate Education**

## **CONSENS Project**

### **Deliverable 1.1**

#### **Student-centered learning and quality variables in LA postgraduate courses**

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## 1. Introducción

Through the development of “preparation” workpackage N° 1, “Ex ante evaluation and baseline”, the CONSENS project planned to achieve:

- 1) The definition of common strategic areas for the socio-economic development of the countries involved, and situational “diagnosis” of the postgraduate programmes comprised in such areas, as well as their contribution to the internationalization of higher education in the countries of the region.
- 2) The analysis of the critical variables approached by the project referring to student-based learning (learning outcomes, competencies and credits) and quality in postgraduate programmes, with the corresponding legislation in force, in terms of accreditation.
- 3) The elaboration of the baseline document “Student-centered learning and quality of postgraduate programmes in LA HEIs: their contribution to postgraduate education internationalization”.

In this context, the present Deliverable 1.1, “Student-centered learning and quality variables in Latin America postgraduate courses” is the first product, that was executed in a timely manner.

The six LA HEIs, along the first and second months, defined:

- Four criteria related to Student Centered Learning (SCL) and Quality Assurance in postgraduate education (CONSENS Criteria).
- Ten CONSENS postgraduate courses were defined in which to apply the four criteria. 10: 4 Specializations, 5 Masters and 1 Doctorate.

## **2. Four CONSENS criteria related to Student Centered Learning and Quality Assurance in postgraduate education**

The CONSENS project trims down the internationalization process of LA HEIs, focusing on the interuniversity and intergovernmental agreements necessary to consolidate this internationalization in the academic area of the universities, and within it, in postgraduate careers. To this end, two substantive strategies have been chosen to achieve a postgraduate training of excellence on which there is a common recognition and valuable international experiences that can be taken into account: student-centered learning and quality assurance.

The acronym of the project aims to express the indispensable raw material that allows to establish interuniversity bridges. The consensus on learning based on the student, specifically in what refers to learning outcomes, skills and credits, as well as in relation to quality assurance, will be put into action in at least one postgraduate degree of each university member of the consortium. This approach to the project aims to provide practical tools that facilitate the replication of experience in other graduate careers, contributing to consolidate and enhance two of the most common strategies of the internationalization of higher education: international mobility with academic recognition and international joint programmes.

### **A. Student-centered learning approach**

The student-centred learning (SCL) approach gained political recognition during the Bologna Process. SCL requires:

- Empowering individual learners.
- New approaches to teaching and learning.
- Effective support and guidance structures.
- Curriculum focused more clearly on learners' necessities.

Curricular reform will thus be an ongoing process leading to high quality, flexible and more individually tailored education paths.

Academics, in close cooperation with student and employer representatives, will continue to develop learning outcomes and international reference points for a growing number of subject areas.

From the Bologna Process, student-centered learning has been recognized as a process of qualitative transformation for students at higher education programmes, aimed at enhancing their autonomy and critical thinking through a result-based approach.

Given its growing popularity in the world, CONSENS project represents an opportunity to valorize, in the scenario of Latin American countries, the European experiences of student-centered learning, its good practices and learned lessons which, among others, those related to:

- The development of the student's abilities for autonomous and group work: capacities for planning tasks and establishing priorities as part of their autonomous work habits, or, those capacities to interact in competitive and effective work teams.
- The time of dedication (in the classroom and outside it) to achieve the expected results: both in preparing, planning and executing the activities, as well as in training and developing skills for cooperative work in a work team.
- The adaptation of the university environment to the methodology of student-centered learning: this implies the existence of proactive teachers in relation to teaching innovation, university research and extension, the adequacy of material resources (physical spaces, teaching tools and flexible schedules) and a strong institutional support.

Taking this into account, the concept of student-centered learning can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Conviction that learning is an active, not a passive, process.
- 2) Emphasis placed on analytic and critical learning.
- 3) Student's greater responsibility and accountability.
- 4) Student's greater autonomy.
- 5) Reflexive approach of learning and teaching processes, both of the student and the teacher.

That is why student-centered learning is not limited to a specific teaching method. It is rather a cultural change in higher education institutions (HEIs). Cultural change that is especially induced by means of three tools considered to be pillars of this change, and that in Europe have been, and continue to be today, an object of intensive treatment in the framework of the intergovernmental activities of the Bologna process:

- 1) **Expected Learning Outcomes (objectives)**, as a disaggregated means of identifying what the learner is expected to know as a result of the learning process (cognitive, procedural and attitudinal knowledge), in order to identify such specific activities which facilitate the acquisition of said knowledge.
- 2) **Competences**, as a precise way of achieving the learning outcomes. Competences are defined as the ability of using, in an integrated manner, one's knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities both in work or study situations and in one's professional and personal development.
- 3) **Credits**, as the appropriate conceptual and operational framework to assess the volume of learning in postgraduate courses and degrees, based on the defined learning outcomes in said courses and careers and the student's workload.

## **B. Quality assurance**

Quality assurance is widely recognized as a true and necessary way to improve the results of postgraduate higher education. Quality assurance implies that several variables of the content of programmes, the structural resources, of the teaching and learning processes and their outcomes, will be monitored by means of indicators which are suitable to assess outcomes in terms of performance and impact.

### 3. CONSENS postgraduate courses in which to apply the four criteria

| Denominación   | Especialización | Maestría | Doctorado | Universidad |
|--|-----------------|----------|-----------|-------------|
| Maestría en Administración y Gestión pública.  |                 | 1        |           | UNIBE       |
| Doctorado en Educación   |                 |          | 1         | UNIBE       |
| Especialización en Administración Hospitalaria (EAH), presencial   | 1               |          |           | ISALUD      |
| Especialización en Administración Hospitalaria (EAH), a distancia  | 1               |          |           | ISALUD      |
| Gestión del Patrimonio y Turismo Sostenible (GPYTS)  | 1               |          |           | UNLU        |
| Gestión de la Tecnología y la Innovación (GTec)  | 1               |          |           | UNLU        |
| Maestría en Administración Pública   |                 | 1        |           | UBA         |
| Programa de Postgrado en Ingeniería de Recursos Hídricos con 3 Énfasis<br>a) Énfasis Hidrología (H), b) Énfasis Mecánica de Fluidos e Hidráulica (MF) c)<br>Énfasis Planificación y Gestión de Recursos Hídricos (GRH) |                 | 1        |           | UNA         |
| Maestría en Administración y Gestión Hospitalaria  |                 | 1        |           | UNIGRAN     |
| Maestría en Ciencias de la educación   |                 | 1        |           | UNIGRAN     |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>4</b>        | <b>5</b> | <b>1</b>  |             |



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