SELF-ASSESSMENT DOCUMENT FOR RENEWAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL CERTIFICATION BY THE NATIONAL ACCREDITATION COUNCIL – CNA COLOMBIA

BASED ON THE GUIDELINES OF GOOD PRACTICES OF ACCREDITATION DEFINED BY THE INQAAHE (2016 VERSION)

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Bogotá D. C., October 2016

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INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the responsibility of the bodies in charge of higher education quality assurance and the growing importance given to the recognition of accreditation in the international sphere, the National Accreditation Council (CNA, for the Spanish original) is renewing the certification of the Colombia's National Accreditation System as a whole in order to achieve a greater degree of credibility, authority and trust in its management.

Based on a careful self-assessment process (contained herein), the CNA expresses its commitment to the members of the National Accreditation System (SNA, for the Spanish original) and to the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) to keep strengthening the activities of its mission and to follow the Guidelines of Good Practice established by this network for the accreditation bodies.

The self-assessment document is divided into five parts. The first part describes the structure of Colombia's education system, and the legal and constitutional framework of the National Accreditation System; as well as presenting the strategic lines for higher education set out in the 2014-2018 National Development Plan to make Colombia "the best-educated country in Latin America".

The second part addresses the Higher Education Quality Assurance System, which is understood as the set of actions designed to promote and manage a culture of quality and continuous improvement in higher education institutions and programs, as well its impact on the students' education. It also provides an introduction to the National Accreditation System and the higher education institutions that are part of it. Additionally, it mentions the projects carried out by the Ministry of National Education and other institutions of the sector as part of the policies to promote high quality accreditation.

The third part provides information about the progress of the National Accreditation System, especially the results of the activities carried out by the CNA and their impact on the essential quality indicators of higher education in the country.

The fourth part is the core content of the document and it develops the structure of the Guidelines of Good Practice (2016 edition) established by the INQAAHE. To do this, it covers all of the conditions that permit quality assurance of the processes for the CNA's mission and includes relevant information on the activities carried out, mainly during the period between 2012 and 2015.

The last part addresses the strategic institutional context and describes the activities carried out as part of the CNA's action plan, established based on the recommendations of the assessment panel appointed for the first verification visit (2012); on the recommendations that arose from the perception study carried out in 2015; and on the CNA's consultations with agents. Finally, this chapter reports on the continuous improvement plan established by the CNA, which is under development.

It is important to note that this exercise constitutes the CNA's confirmation of its decision to keep improving its assessment practices for accreditation, promoting a culture of quality in Colombia's higher education.

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Historically, in Colombia, education has played a fundamental role in the pursuit of development and social wellbeing, due to its impact on the improvement of quality of life and as the backbone for the country's competitiveness and productivity.

CHAPTER 1 THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN COLOMBIA

In Colombia, education is defined as a process of lifelong, personal, cultural and social training based on a comprehensive concept of human beings, their dignity, rights and duties.

Our Political Constitution establishes the nature of the education service: It is people's right, and a public service that plays a social role. It is the State's responsibility to regulate and perform the utmost audit and oversight of the education service, in order to ensure its quality, the achievement of its goals, and the best moral, intellectual and physical education of students. It also stipulates that adequate coverage of the service must be ensured, along with the necessary conditions for children and young people to access and stay in the education system.

1.1 Structure of the Education System

The Colombian education system is structured in five levels: early childhood education, preschool education, basic education (five years of primary education and four of middle-school education), upper secondary education (two years; ending with the qualification of high school graduate), and higher education.

In turn, the higher education level consists of the undergraduate level, which includes three types of qualification: Professional Technical, Technological and University professional; and the postgraduate level, which consists of specialization, master's degree and doctorate programs, as illustrated in Figure 1 - Levels and Modalities of Education[1].

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are the only entities authorized to provide the public service of higher education in Colombian territory.

The academic nature of HEIs is the main characteristic that defines and identifies the academic field of action to provide higher education programs in one form or another. According to their academic nature, higher education institutions are classified as:

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[1] National Council of Higher Education (CESU, for the Spanish original). 2034 Agreement for Higher Education.

- **Professional technical institutions:** These provide educational programs in operational and practical vocations at the professional technical and specialization levels in technical fields.
- **Technology institutions**: These provide undergraduate programs at the professional technical and technological levels and specializations in technical and technological fields.
- **University institutions or technology schools:** These provide undergraduate programs at the three levels of undergraduate and postgraduate studies in specializations and master's degrees.
- **Universities:** These provide undergraduate programs at the three levels, and all modalities of postgraduate studies. Academic university institutions or technology schools that meet the requirements indicated in Article 20, Law 30/1992, explained in Decree 1212/1993, can achieve this academic nature by legal mandate (Article 20 of Law 30).

Figure 1 Levels and Modalities of Education: Mobility and Qualifications
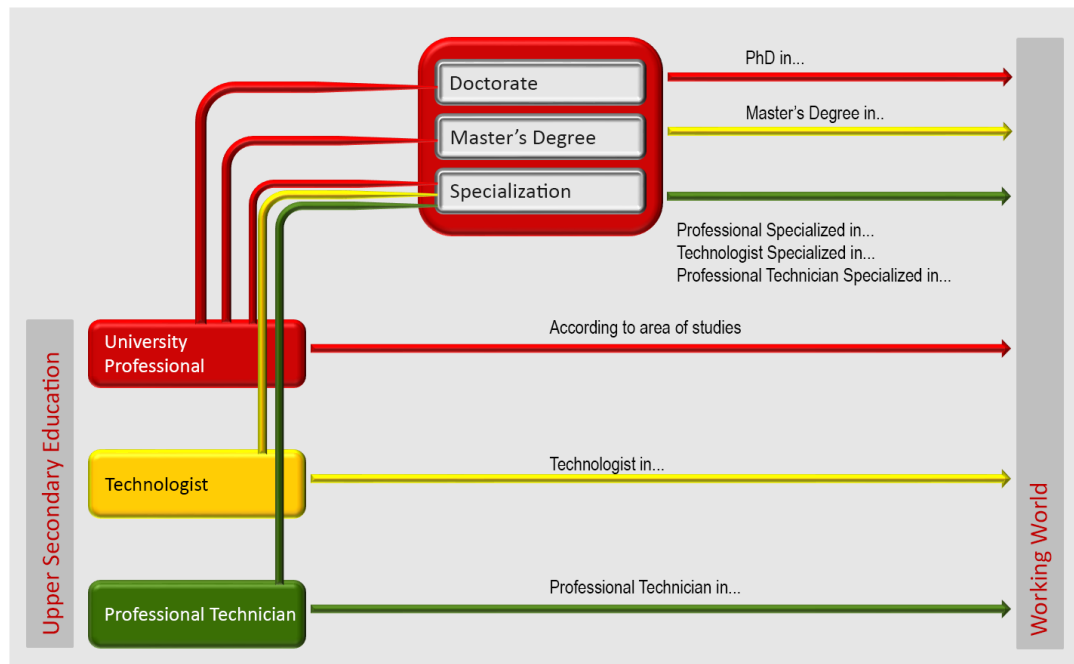
The training categories at undergraduate level in higher education are:

- Professional Technical Training Modality (related to professional technical programs)
- Technological Training Modality (related to technological programs)
- Professional Education Modality (related to professional programs)

In accordance with the academic nature and as provided by Law 30/1992 and Article 213 of Law 115/1994, higher education institutions (HEIs) have the legal capacity to provide academic programs as follows:

Professional technical institutions:
- At undergraduate level: professional technical programs.
- At postgraduate level: professional technical specializations.

Technology institutions:
- At undergraduate level: professional technical programs and technological programs.
- At postgraduate level: professional technical specializations and technological specializations.

University institutions or technology schools:
- At undergraduate level: professional technical programs, technological programs and professional programs.
- At postgraduate level: professional technical specializations, technological specializations and professional specializations.

Universities:
- At undergraduate level: professional technical programs, technological programs and professional programs.
- At postgraduate level: professional technical specializations, technological specializations, professional specializations and master's degree and doctorate programs, provided they meet the requirements indicated in Articles 19 and 20 of Law 30/1992.

In accordance with their legal nature, the origin of the HEIs can be public or private. **Private HEIs** must be organized as non-profit legal entities for the common good, in the form of corporations, foundations or solidarity economy institutions.

Public or state HEIs are classified as public establishments and independent university entities. The former have general protection as a public establishment, and the latter enjoy autonomy and constitutional and legal prerogatives. Autonomous university bodies have special autonomy regarding contracting, special pay scales for their teaching staff, special budget handling and secured special contributions on behalf of the National Government (Art. 87, Law 30/1992). All the public universities comprise the State University System (SUE, for the Spanish original)[2].

According to the figures reported by the National Information System on Higher Education (SNIES, for the Spanish original), the number of higher education institutions that are active in the country is as follows: 40.68% university institutions, 34.18% universities, 16.10% technology institutions and the remaining 9.04% professional technical institutions (see the data broken down in Table 1).

Chart 1. Number of Institutions by Type
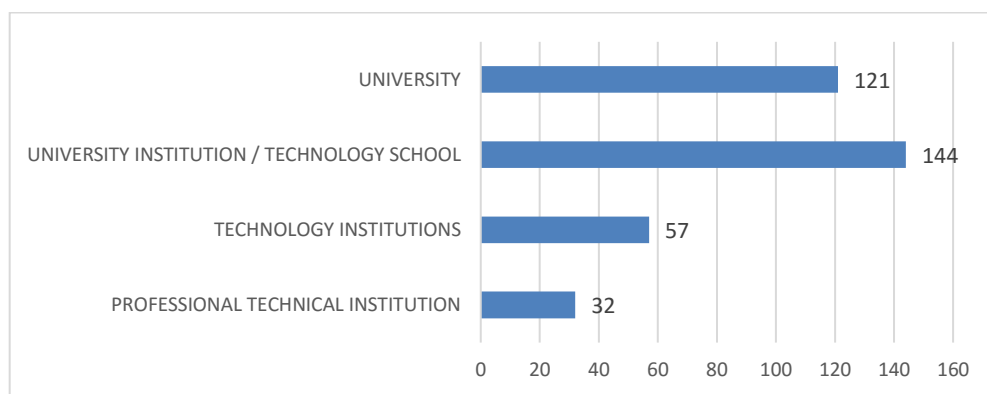
Source: National Information System on Higher Education - Data from Table 1. Cut-off date of information: 2015, preliminary figures - March 2016.

Chart 2. Number of Institutions by Type and Geographical Location
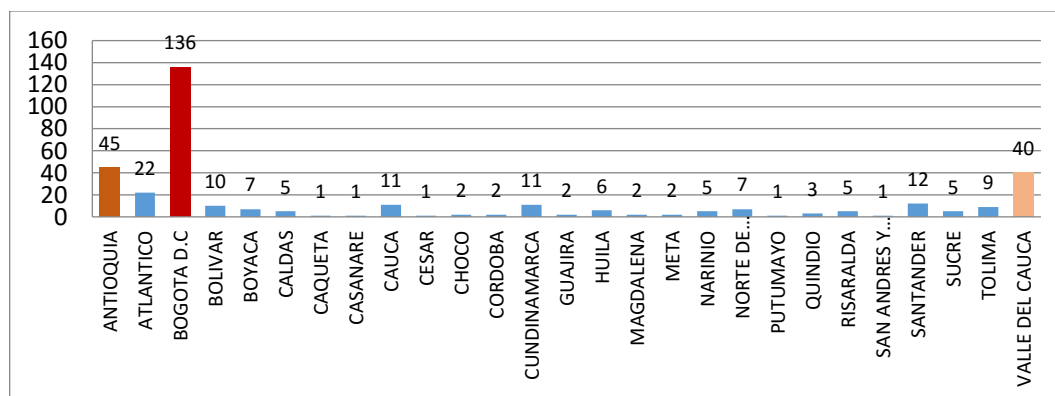
Source: Ministry of National Education - National Information System on Higher Education (SNIES).
Cut-off date of information: 2015.

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[2] Ministry of Education (February 2016). Higher Education Institutions. Retrieved from: http://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1759/w3-article-231240.html

Table 1. Number of Institutions by Type and Geographical Location

DEPARTMENT	PROFESSIONAL TECHNICAL INSTITUTIONS	TECHNOLOGY INSTITUTIONS	UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONS /TECHNOLOGY SCHOOLS	UNIVERSITIES	TOTAL HEIS BY DEPARTMENT
ANTIOQUIA	1	8	25	11	45
ATLÁNTICO	1	3	6	12	22
BOGOTÁ D.C.	15	23	58	40	136
BOLÍVAR	0	2	5	3	10
BOYACÁ	0	0	2	5	7
CALDAS	1	0	0	4	5
CAQUETÁ	0	0	0	1	1
CASANARE	0	0	1	0	1
CAUCA	0	0	10	1	11
CESAR	0	0	0	1	1
CHOCÓ	0	0	1	1	2
CÓRDOBA	0	0	0	2	2
CUNDINAMARCA	0	4	2	5	11
GUAJIRA	1	0	0	1	2
HUILA	0	0	5	1	6
MAGDALENA	1	0	0	1	2
META	0	0	1	1	2
NARIÑO	0	0	3	2	5
NORTE DE SANTANDER	0	2	0	5	7
PUTUMAYO	0	1	0	0	1
QUINDÍO	1	0	0	1	3
RISARALDA	1	0	2	2	5
SAN ANDRÉS AND PROVIDENCIA	1	0	0	0	1
SANTANDER	1	3	5	3	12
SUCRE	0	1	3	1	5
TOLIMA	1	1	2	5	9
VALLE DEL CAUCA	7	9	12	12	40
TOTAL HEIS BY DEPARTMENT	32	57	144	121	354

Source: Ministry of National Education - National Information System on Higher Education (SNIES).

Note: The information provided was reported by the institutions through the SNIES, regarding the data for the 2015, including only main campuses.

1.2 Higher education in the framework of the 2014-2018 National Development Plan

In terms of education, the current government's Development Plan (2014-2018) contains five strategic lines designed to make Colombia the best-educated country in Latin America by 2025. These lines are: (i) Teaching Excellence, (ii) Single School Day, (iii) Colombia Free from Illiteracy, (iv) Bilingual Colombia, and (v) Quality Access to Higher Education.

This aims to ensure that education will be the main tool for social transformation in Colombia, meeting competitive standards of relevance and quality in Latin America and the OECD, to become a fair and peaceful society where all Colombians will have the same opportunities.

Colombia has the challenge of increasing coverage while improving the quality of higher education. To do so, it has worked to establish incentives, so that institutions recognized for their high quality increase their coverage, and so that the other institutions move forward with institutional and program accreditation[3].

The line of Quality Access to Higher Education seeks to provide students with opportunities to acquire knowledge and develop the skills and values necessary to thrive, live in harmony, be productive and continue learning throughout their life, regardless of their origin, and social, economic and cultural situation. The development thereof is based on the coordination of all levels of education (early childhood, preschool, basic, upper secondary and higher) with a common approach based on basic, civic and labor skills. It revolves around four key strategies: Consolidation of the Quality Assurance System at all its levels, implementation of programs

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[3] Ministry of National Education. (2015). 2015 Management and Accountability Report, pp. 6-10

for the promotion of skills, professional development of teachers and management, and the promotion of research.

The Vice-Ministry of Higher Education is part of the current structure of the Ministry of Education, which has two divisions organized as follows:

1. Higher Education Quality Division. In turn, it has two subdivisions:

1.1 Subdivision of Quality Assurance
1.2 Subdivision of Audit and Oversight

2. Higher Education Promotion Division. It also has the following subdivisions:

2.1 Subdivision of Support for the Management of Higher Education Institutions
2.2 Subdivision of Sector Development for Higher Education

Each of the divisions and subdivisions of the Vice-Ministry of Higher Education plays the specific roles indicated in Decree 1306/2009, and they all constitute the administrative offices that carry out the different actions indicated in the legal framework regarding the application of the strategies and programs of the Quality Assurance System, fulfilling the duty of inspection and surveillance, promoting and supporting the management of higher education institutions, and carrying out the strategies that contribute to the incorporation, analysis and dissemination of the system's information.

The main objectives of the **Higher Education Quality Assurance System** are intended for higher education institutions to be accountable to society and the State regarding the education service provided; to provide reliable information to the users of the education service; and to encourage the ongoing self-assessment of institutions and academic programs in the context of a culture of assessment. In turn, this system is comprised of three interrelated components:

1. **Information:** This includes four information systems that support the formulation of the offering, the assessment processes, plans for improvement, promotion programs and the definition of policies. The first is the **National Information System on Higher Education (SNIES)**, which provides reliable data regarding higher education institutions in Colombia and the programs they provide. The second is the **Labor Observatory for Education**, which provides ongoing monitoring of graduates of higher education in Colombia, in order to guide education policies, improvement of the quality and relevance of programs, and students' decisions regarding their studies. The third is the **Higher Education Quality Assurance System (SACES, for the Spanish original)**, which contains information for the qualification certification process of academic programs; and finally, there is the **System for the Prevention and Analysis of the Dropout Rate in Higher Education Institutions (SPADIES, for the Spanish original),** which monitors each student to calculate the dropout risk and prevent it. This information serves as data for the assessment and granting of qualification certifications and quality accreditation certifications for all the sector's institutions.

2. **Assessment:** This component includes the assessment of institutions and programs: (i) upon creation; (ii) to obtain or renew the qualification certification of programs (licensing); and (iii) when the institutions apply for high quality accreditation. All the assessment processes are carried out with the collaboration of academic peers and advisory and supporting bodies. In this assessment component, high quality accreditation has become a tool for the self-assessment, self-regulation and continuous improvement of programs and institutions, as well as the starting point to strengthen university autonomy. In addition, students are assessed before entering higher education and upon completing their undergraduate studies through a skills assessment exam. In the last semesters of undergraduate training, the Higher Education Quality Exams (SABER PRO) are applied. Through these tests, the Ministry of National Education aims to test the students' level of skills in their last year of undergraduate programs in higher education institutions. These tests provide information on the current status of education in the different areas, which provides an overview of the students, programs and institutions.

3. **Promotion:** This consists of the programs of support, technical assistance and guidance for improvement plans; development of projects focused on improving specific quality conditions (for example: infrastructure, research, teacher training, etc.); and promotion of the service in the different levels or modalities of education.

From the promotion perspective, the Ministry of Education aims to strengthen self-assessment processes and the improvement of important roles of higher education, in order for the education service to satisfy the training needs and opportunities of the country's human capital with quality. The strategic activities carried out through this approach are as follows:

➕ Promotion of the improvement of quality of higher education.

- Strengthening of self-assessment processes and improvement of the roles of higher education, in order for the education service to satisfy the training needs and opportunities of the country's human capital with quality.
- Promotion of doctorate education.
- Work to increase human resources for science, technology and innovation in the country, aiming to encourage master's degree and doctorate programs.
- Promotion of the effective use of teacher assessments to improve quality.
- Consolidation of the student, teacher, program and institution assessment system to report on the evolution of the system and its agents.

1.2.1   Promotion of quality higher education and its access

In order to promote access to Quality Higher Education, the Ministry of National Education (MEN, for the Spanish original) implemented important strategies in 2015 to improve the quality conditions of higher education institutions (HEIs), including:

Quality promotion plans, through which public HEIs prioritize the allocation of resources to fund projects in six lines: 1) Teacher Qualification; 2) Retention Activities, 3) Strengthening of Physical and Technological Infrastructure; 4) Research; 5) Regionalization; and 6) Design or Adaptation of Academic Service.

Also, in order to ensure greater resources to improve HEI quality conditions, a new line of credit was created with more favorable financial conditions than the market conditions, in which three lines were prioritized: physical, technological and library infrastructure, teacher training and research[4].

In addition, to improve management of the HEIs, the MEN granted technical assistance in three lines of action: a) Creation and monitoring of contingency plans for HEIs with rejected qualification certifications in active programs with students. b) Creation and monitoring of improvement plans for HEIs with precautionary measures issued as part of the MEN's role of audit and oversight. c) Improvement of the processes necessary to achieve high quality accreditation of the institution or programs in accordance with the guidelines of the National Accreditation Council (CNA, for the Spanish original).

1.2.2   Total coverage and coverage with quality

One of Colombia's biggest challenges to become the best educated country in Latin America by 2025 is to achieve the access of increasingly more young people to quality higher education.

According to the information reported by the higher education institutions (SNIES), in 2015, more than 2.2 million students were enrolled in higher education programs. This indicates an increase of ten percentage points from the 2014 baseline.

Although the HEIs are still adjusting the enrollment report for 2015 based on the results of the audit process, to date, we can report significant progress in the achievement of the proposed goals.

Table 2. Enrollment by Sector, 2010 - 2015

HEI Sector	2,010	2,011	2,012	2,013	2,014	2,015
Public	927,295	1,012,456	1,045,980	1,106,244	1,141,908	1,155,267
Private	746,726	863,866	912,449	1,002,980	1,077,557	1,112,079
Overall Total	**1,674,021**	**1,876,322**	**1,958,429**	**2,109,224**	**2,219,465**	**2,267,346**

Source: Ministry of National Education - National Information System on Higher Education (SNIES).
Cut-off date of information: 2015.
Note: The information provided was reported by the institutions through the SNIES.

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[4] Ministry of National Education (2016). Approaches to the assessment of the Higher Education Quality Assurance System in Colombia. Retrieved from: http://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1759/w3-article-341904.html

Chart 3. Enrollment by Sector, 2010 - 2015
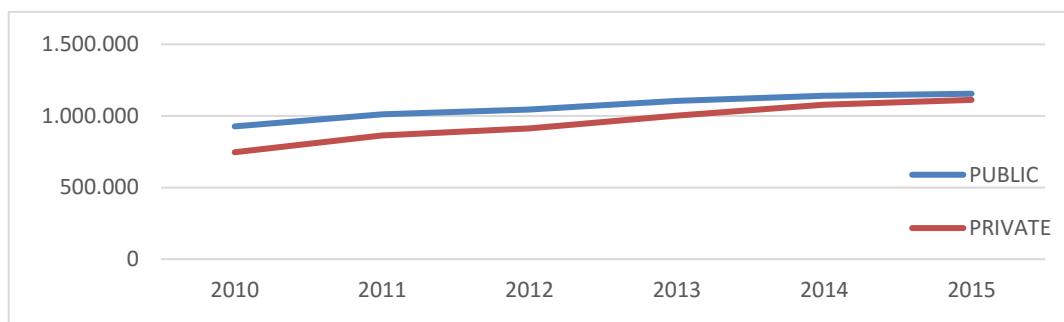
Source: Ministry of National Education - National Information System on Higher Education (SNIES).
Cut-off date of information: 2015.

According to the total level of enrollment reported by higher education institutions, the year with the highest percentage increase in the number of students, compared to the previous year was 2011 with a 12.1% increase. During the 2012 period, an increase of 4.37% was recorded; in 2013, it was 7.69%; in 2014, it was 5.22% and in 2015, it was 2.15%, compared to the preceding year. Although enrollment behavior was similar in public and private HEIs in 2011 and 2012, in 2013, enrollment in private universities showed an upward trend of 10%, which brings it closer to the number of students reported by public institutions.

When comparing these figures to the gross coverage rate, there is still an unsatisfied demand of approximately 51% throughout the country.

Table 3. Enrollment by Academic Level and Area of Knowledge, 2010 - 2015

YEAR / AREA OF KNOWLEDGE	2011 UNDGR	2011 POSTGR	2012 UNDGR	2012 POSTGR	2013 UNDGR	2013 POSTGR	2014 UNDGR	2014 POSTGR	2015 UNDGR	2015 POSTGR
AGRONOMY, VETERINARY SCIENCE AND RELATED TOPICS	57,742	1,188	47,548	1,085	40,815	1,017	45,090	1,128	43,518	1,170
FINE ARTS	73,366	561	75,252	492	80,179	638	78,612	848	75,077	958
EDUCATION SCIENCES	139,349	32,144	141,636	33,705	147,580	32,698	158,218	32,185	164,405	27,373
HEALTH SCIENCES	145,857	9,394	146,805	9,638	150,197	10,449	150,365	12,237	147,209	12,374
SOCIAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES	255,674	20,600	273,278	24,083	296,120	25,572	326,530	28,943	341,951	31,299
ECONOMICS, ADMINISTRATION, ACCOUNTING AND RELATED TOPICS	552,152	31,122	586,861	32,782	647,204	36,180	678,280	41,803	692,541	44,477
ENGINEERING, ARCHITECTURE, URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND RELATED TOPICS	506,199	15,064	533,229	13,885	584,155	15,437	604,799	17,939	622,581	17,764
MATHEMATICS AND NATURAL SCIENCES	32,274	3,636	34,623	3,526	37,136	3,847	38,759	3,729	40,490	4,159
Overall Total	1,762,613	113,709	1,839,233	119,196	1,983,386	125,838	2,080,653	138,812	2,127,772	139,574

Chart 4. Enrollment by Academic Level and Area of Knowledge, 2010 - 2015
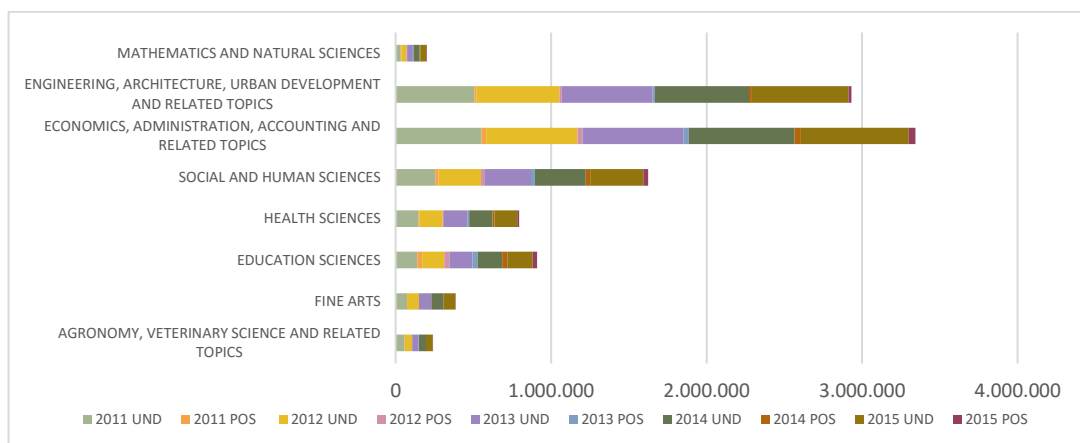
Cut-off date of information: 2015, preliminary figures - March 2016.
Source: Ministry of National Education - National Information System on Higher Education (SNIES).
Note: The information provided was reported by the institutions through the SNIES.

Regarding the area of knowledge, the areas that reported the most enrollment are: economics, management, accounting and related topics, and engineering, architecture, urban development and related topics. As regards enrollment by level of education, the highest concentration was at university level, compared to education at technical and technological levels. On average, only 6.33% of the total students enrolled at the university level pursues specialization studies, and 2.96% goes on to master's degree programs.

Table 4. Enrollment by Level of Education, 2010 - 2015

YEAR Level of Education	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
PROFESSIONAL TECHNICAL	92,941	82,347	78,901	83,575	96,473	89,316
TECHNOLOGICAL	449,686	520,754	539,507	603,688	614,646	617,998
UNIVERSITY	1,045,133	1,159,512	1,220,825	1,296,123	1,369,534	1,420,458
SPECIALIZATION	60,116	80,429	83,388	82,550	86,413	82,623
MASTER'S DEGREE	23,819	30,360	32,745	39,488	47,971	51,884
DOCTORATE	2,326	2,920	3,063	3,800	4,428	5,067
Overall Total	1,674,021	1,876,322	1,958,429	2,109,224	2,219,465	2,267,346

Chart 5. Enrollment by Level of Education
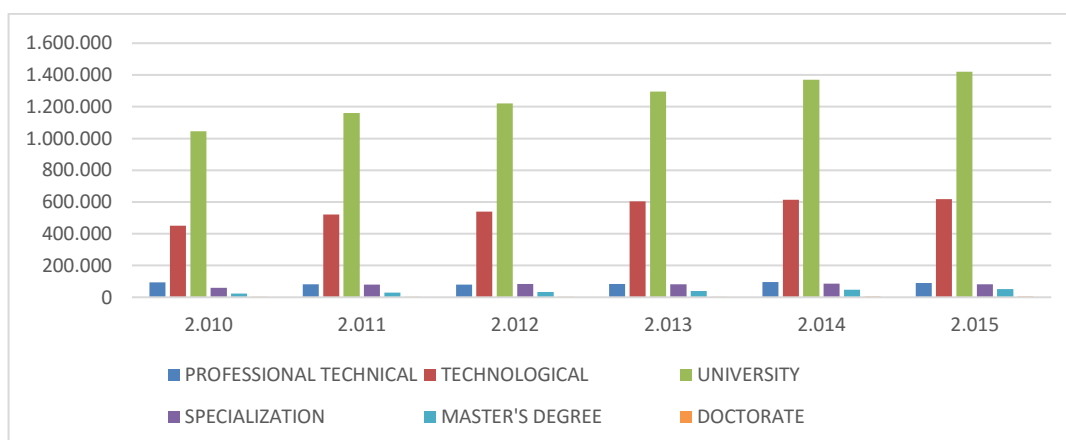
Cut-off date of information: 2015, preliminary figures - March 2016.
Source: Ministry of National Education - National Information System on Higher Education (SNIES).
Note: The information provided was reported by the institutions through the SNIES.

By 2015, there was an estimated coverage rate of 48.5% and more than 70 thousand new places were created. A significant part of these places was opened in higher education institutions and programs with high quality accreditation.

The high quality coverage rate, which indicates the proportion of young people enrolled in programs or institutions with high quality accreditation, is nearly 16%. The goal set for 2016 is to reach a higher education coverage rate of 51.6% and a high quality coverage rate of 17.3%.

1.2.3   Access and retention

In addition to the above, in order to take measures to close gaps in access to and retention in quality higher education between major cities and regions of the country, the Ministry of National Education designed the Master Plan for the Regionalization of Higher Education (PMR, for the Spanish original), which is an instrument that identifies the needs of access to higher education, both in supply and demand, and guides the investment of resources to optimize the regions' access to a relevant academic service of quality.

In addition, the "Looking for a Degree?" program was created as a tool to improve conditions of admission to higher education and to strengthen the social and vocational guidance processes. This program has become a pivotal theme of the joint work of the two vice-ministries, establishing channels of communication with the different agents of the education system (directors, teachers, students and parents of students at the upper secondary and higher education), so that the demand for higher education considers the social, economic, political, cultural and geographical conditions that promote the balanced development of the regions, as well as their different social groups and regional communities.

As part of the analysis conducted in the MEN's 2015 Management Report, it was mentioned that the high student dropout rates demonstrate the low efficiency of the higher education system, and that although student retention and graduation strategies are the central focus of the educational quality policy, coordinated efforts must continue in the sector to achieve the goals of the current National Development Plan: 1. Reduce the annual dropout rate from 10.1% to 8% at university level 2. Reduce the annual dropout rate from 20% to 15% at technical and technological levels.

Therefore, in order to support the creation and adoption of policies, plans and projects related to student retention and graduation, the Ministry designed guidelines to implement a comprehensive retention and graduation project that will enable the HEIs and external agencies - including academic peers - to assess institutional capacity to manage retention in compliance with accreditation requirements.

Additionally, the "Being Smart Pays" (SPP, for the Spanish original) program has been developed, which consists of a plan for 10,000 semester scholarships/loans for low-income students who have achieved excellent results on state tests (outstanding academic performance). This project intends to improve fairness in access to higher education, while boosting the High Quality Accreditation System, because it determines the selection of these students' programs to the supply of accredited HEIs, ensuring that more Colombians will effectively graduate from quality higher education institutions (HEIs).

These scholarships work as forgivable loans that finance the tuition and maintenance of the most outstanding students, with the aim of increasing fairness and access to quality higher education in Colombia. Higher education institutions (HEIs) with high quality accreditation are the only ones that can admit beneficiaries of the SPP program. They are committed to ensuring the success of the program by means of strategies to ensure the graduation of all beneficiaries within the established time, for which various strategies of wellbeing, monitoring and retention have been implemented.

1.2.4   Promotion of research

Regarding the *"Promotion of Research"* strategy, in 2015, nine programs and 46 research projects were monitored in the field of educational innovation with the use of ICT, through which progress has been made in the consolidation of results and products generating new knowledge, such as TV devices, software, articles, books, academic records and educational intervention proposals.

Additionally, results have been achieved in social appropriation of knowledge; in strengthening the scientific community, through the training of undergraduate, master's degree and doctorate students, the creation of partnerships and cooperation networks, and the design of master's degree and doctorate proposals; and in the consolidation of five regional education innovation centers (CIER, for the Spanish original) based on the experience of South Korea.

1.2.5   National higher education system

The National Higher Education System (SNET, for the Spanish original) is one of the current government's most important proposals, which is included in the 2014-2018 National Development Plan. Its objective is to promote the quality of post-secondary education through a new institutional framework that integrates the different levels, bodies, strategies and instruments. It includes the creation of the National Qualifications Framework

(NQF) and a National Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (SNATC, for the Spanish original) to foster student mobility.

The SNET has been defined as an organized set of pillars, levels and paths of post-secondary education that involves the direct beneficiaries, the educational institutions and their education service, within the set of regulations that govern it, as well as the Quality Assurance System, as the cross-cutting foundation. It also establishes new relations between the different components of the education system in order to adequately and fully meet the different social demands and those of the job market. These new relations will increase the country's inclusion, equity, competitiveness and productivity.

The central objective of the SNET is to achieve a systematic approach to improving the provision of higher education in terms of relevance and quality, which values the importance of the role and contributions of each part of society that forms part of the system (beneficiaries, providers, regulators and examples), in order to improve the living conditions of the population through greater access, social mobility, dignification, recognition and diversification of options in higher education; and promote lifelong learning, by consolidating differentiated pillars and paths, and improving people's access, participation and progress in education and the world of work.

The above results in the following specific cross-cutting objectives of the system:

- Provide and facilitate differentiated educational options in accordance with the regional and national needs and interests.
- Provide alternatives for ongoing updates regarding adjusted and differentiated conditions of quality for each training path.
- Ensure mobility by recognizing previous learning and standardization through credit systems.

Mostly regarding the educational programs immersed in the dynamics of the productive sector:

- Design and implement the training processes based on a joint construction between the educational and productive sectors, and their respective professional associations and councils.
- Promote the importance of skills-based training and the recognition of the qualifications of the educational offering, as well as coordination between levels of qualification.

The underlying principles of the SNET are: inclusion, lifelong learning, flexibility, mobility, recognition, transparency, objectivity and traceability.

This new institutional framework aims to facilitate paths for student mobility throughout the education system. In addition, it allows the establishment of the quality conditions based on which the educational offering will take place in each of the new pillars and levels.

The SNET pillars include:

University Education: This consists of the education service within the science (exact, natural and social sciences), technology, humanities and arts university disciplines, which can be classified as basic and applied. Basic disciplines mainly focus on the generation of knowledge for critical and historical analysis of social dynamics or the generation of new scientific knowledge that contributes to the development of new technologies. Applied disciplines use, design and adapt technologies with the aim of resolving complex problems related to the operation of society as a whole.

Technical Education: This consists of the education service that involves training with a highly practical component focused on specific vocations in the job market. This educational path leads to qualification and training using a skills-based approach. The levels of the technical path involve more extensive and contextualized practical training in the curricula. Practical know-how can also be scientific/technological and/or experience-based.

In order to progress in the creation of the SNET, the Ministry of National Education has proposed work around three central strategies: a) The structuring of professional education in order to strengthen technical and technological education. 2) The implementation of the National Qualifications Framework to facilitate the construction of a common language between education and the world of work using a skills-based approach. 3) The organization of an information system of the provision of post-secondary education[5].

In order to be able to achieve the objectives of the National Higher Education System, the main policy components have been established to resolve the main causes of systematic fragmentation of higher education. Each component defines the most important aspects that will guide the development of the SNET over time: 1)

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[5] Ministry of National Education (2016). The National Higher Education System. Retrieved from: http://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1759/w3-article-355208.html

system structure; 2) National Qualifications System (SNC, for the Spanish original); 3) educational offering and institutions; 4) quality system; and 5) institutional framework and governance.

Figure 2. Structure of the National Higher Education System
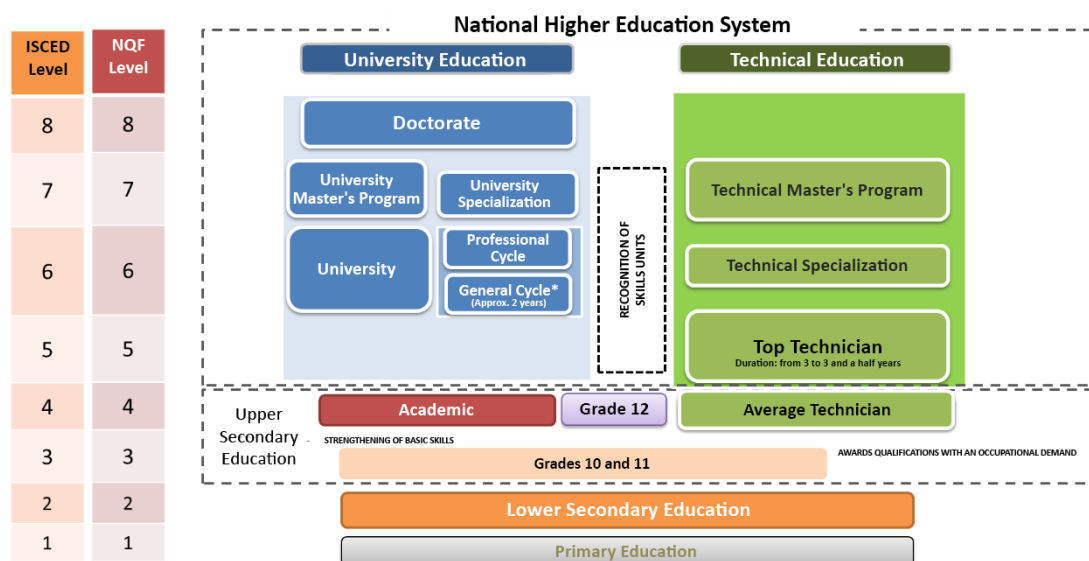
Source: Ministry of National Education.

This project is progressing in the legal foundation and conceptualization stage. All the stages and components are implemented gradually.

CHAPTER 2 HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM AND THE NATIONAL ACCREDITATION SYSTEM

The consolidation of the current Higher Education Quality Assurance System in Colombia has been the result of efforts throughout the sector in the last 30 years.

The larger supply of higher education recorded since the last decade of the 20th century required the development of strategies to ensure the quality of the programs provided. In response to this challenge, a set of institutions, tools, standards and procedures that comprise the current Quality Assurance System has been gradually built and coordinated.

In this system, quality assurance is understood as the set of actions to promote, manage and constantly improve the quality of the higher education institutions and programs, and their impact on students' education.

2.1 Higher Education Quality Assurance System

The Higher Education Quality Assurance System is comprised of two interrelated components: information and assessment.

The **assessment** component has two levels:

1. Qualification certification: The instrument of the Higher Education Quality Assurance System through which the Colombian government verifies compliance with the minimum quality conditions and approves the provision of academic programs by the higher education institutions. It is a mandatory form of operating license and must be renewed every seven years. The responsible organization is CONACES.

2. High quality accreditation: A public recognition by the Colombian government after a prior assessment process on

Given the importance of higher education for a country's socioeconomic development, there is a clear need to have policies to establish responsibility processes and mechanisms for the review, assessment, accreditation and certification of the quality of higher education.

the quality of the higher education institutions and programs, their organization and operation, and fulfillment of their social role. It is temporary and voluntary, as established by Law 30/1992, and the National Accreditation Council is responsible for its processing.

Figure 3. Organization of Higher Education in Colombia
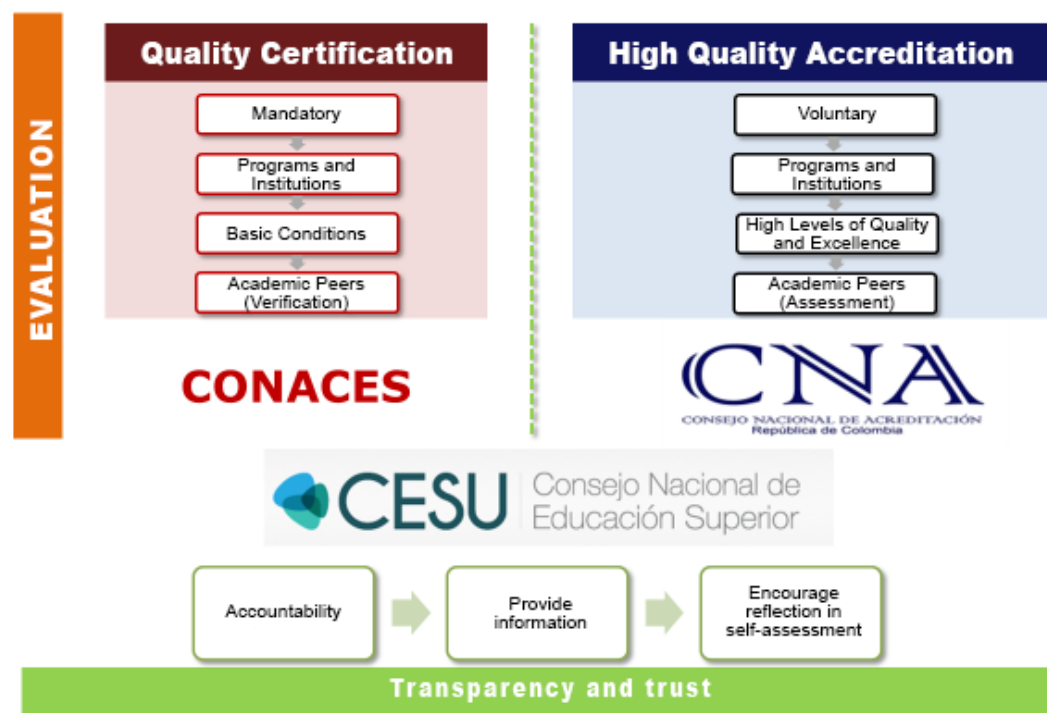
Source: Ministry of National Education.

The **information** component is implemented through five systems.

- **National Information System on Higher Education (SNIES, for the Spanish original):** Its essential objective is to consolidate and disclose information to guide all citizens on the quality, quantity and characteristics of the higher education institutions and programs authorized by the Colombian government.
- **System for the Prevention and Analysis of the Dropout Rate in Higher Education Institutions (SPADIES, for the Spanish original):** This system is the tool to monitor the student dropout figures of higher education. With the data that higher education institutions deliver to SPADIES, the determining behaviors, causes, variables and risks of dropout are identified and assessed. With this information, the students are grouped according to the dropout risk.
- **Higher Education Quality Assurance System (SACES, for the Spanish original):** This system was created so that higher education institutions (HEIs) can carry out the procedures for approval of the qualification certification and other institutional procedures online.
- **SABER PRO:** The annual reports that the ICFES submits on academic performance in the state exams that students take at their end of their higher education studies.
- **Labor Observatory for Education:** The main objective of the Labor Observatory for Education is to provide strategic statistics to those interested and involved in the sector (applicants, parents, professionals, higher education institutions, the productive sector and society in general), about where they are, what they do, and the incorporation of higher education graduates into the Colombian labor market. It provides quantitative information about the employability of the graduates, about the average income for basic areas of knowledge, and qualitative information about the relevance of the training area regarding the graduates' vocation, the time they take to enter the labor market and their mobility, among other information.

This information provides data for assessment, for granting the qualification certifications and for making decisions about the high quality accreditation of the sector's programs and institutions.

Respecting the individuality of each one of the levels, the Colombian education system shares a unified concept about what education quality means from preschool to higher education, as well as the mechanisms to achieve it. This vision comes from the idea that the purpose of the educational processes is to develop some established competencies at a growing level of complexity and specialization. The degree of development of these competencies is verified through regular assessments, so that it can be established how close the achievement of the proposed objectives is and to be able to design actions for improvement. The educational institutions are the main parties responsible for improvement through the application of autonomous management processes intentionally structured according to the objectives known by all of them.

The related organizations that coordinate the Quality Assurance System are:

- **Ministry of National Education. Vice-Ministry of Higher Education:** This supports the creation, regulation and adoption of policies, plans, programs and projects related to higher education; coordinates inter-sectoral relations with all the establishments that participate in the planning, regulation, oversight and control of higher education; and proposes policies to the Ministry of Education to promote and develop higher education, particularly ones to assure and assess the quality of academic programs and institutions, the exercise of audit and oversight, the guidelines to increase coverage, and the improvement of administrative efficiency. In the organizational structure of the Vice-Ministry of Higher Education, the Quality Division and the Subdivision of Higher Education Quality Assurance are responsible for assessing the operating conditions of academic programs and institutions and for granting the respective authorizations.

- **National Council of Higher Education (CESU, for the Spanish original):** It is comprised of representatives of the education sector (teachers, students, institutions, and researchers), the productive sector and the Colombian government. It is an advisory organization of the Ministry of Education in matters related to higher education and its responsibilities include establishing policies on accreditation.

- **National Accreditation Council (CNA, for the Spanish original):** It is an advisory organization for the quality policy and an implementer of the high quality accreditation processes of higher education institutions and programs. The CNA is part of the Colombian education system, which is governed by the educational policies established by the Ministry of National Education and the National Council of Higher Education.

- **National Inter-sectoral Commission for Higher Education Quality Assurance (CONACES, for the Spanish original):** The organization responsible for supporting the Ministry of National Education in the verification of the minimum quality conditions or qualification certification of the academic programs, of the creation of new higher education institutions, of the processes regarding the change of academic nature, and of the institutional redefinition of said institutions. It was created through Decree 2230/2003.

  The commission is organized in halls. According to its nature and area of knowledge, each one has the responsibility to assess and issue opinions with the support of academic peers, regulated by Law 1189/2008, based on which, the Ministry of National Education uses the corresponding administrative act.

  The members of CONACES are selected taking into account their academic qualities and capacity. To apply for the commission, they must meet requirements such as: have an undergraduate and postgraduate academic qualification (preferably a doctorate), more than five years of academic experience in university teaching or research; have accredited publications or articles in nationally or internationally referenced magazines, and have conducted widely recognized research in the respective area.

The sector's entities that provide information to the Quality Assurance System and coordinate its actions include:

- **Administrative Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (COLCIENCIAS):** It promotes and guides policies that strengthen research in science and technology as instruments for the country's development.

- **Colombian Institute for Educational Credit and Technical Studies Abroad (ICETEX, for the Spanish original):** It promotes students' access and completion of higher education through educational loans to fund students' enrollment and maintenance, especially those with limited economic resources.

- **Colombian Institute for the Promotion of Higher Education (ICFES, for the Spanish original)**: It assesses the Colombian education system through exams for students before entering higher education and at the end of their academic programs called **Higher Education Quality Exams (ECAES, for the Spanish original), now SABER PRO.** These are public academic exams regulated by Decrees 3963 and 4216 / 2009.4216 / 2009.

Among the direct agents of the Quality Assurance System, the higher education institutions (HEIs) stand out with their academic programs and the academic peers that carry out the on-site assessment processes for both the qualification certification and the high quality accreditation.

2.2   National Accreditation System

The National Accreditation System (SNA, for the Spanish original) is the set of policies, strategies, processes and organizations with the main objective of assuring society that the higher education institutions that form part of the system meet the highest quality requirements and achieve their aims and objectives. (Article 53 of Law 30/1992).

The accreditation is a testimony by the state about the quality of a program or institution based on a prior assessment process with the intervention of the institution, academic communities and the CNA.

Since it started, this process has been closely linked to the ideas of autonomy and self-regulation, complemented by the accountability required from higher education by the different social sectors. Therefore, it must be stressed that the legitimacy of the system is closely linked to the aims of the same academic community and its interactions with society. Said legitimacy is the result of a long deliberation in which agreements have been gradually achieved about the central points of the system: the model and its phases, the concept of quality, the factors and characteristics, the methodology for self-assessment, assessment by peers, etc. External assessment is understood as a complement to these processes, and, therefore, the acts of accreditation essentially express the institutions' self-assessment capacity.

Accreditation arises from the need expressed in multiple situations to strengthen the quality of higher education and to publicly recognize high levels of quality. It also arises at a critical time in response to the needs of the modern world, which grant central importance to the quality of higher education as a means of development in the country. In Colombia, the accreditation process does not arise in the framework of audit and oversight by the state, but in the promotion, recognition and continuous improvement of quality. In fact, it is currently recognized that the main and most effective investment made in accreditation is not the establishment of the model itself and its assessment processes, but the investment made by the institutions in their improvement plans as a condition to enter the system, or as a result of the self-assessment and reports of the academic peers.

It can be said that in Colombia, accreditation has a mixed nature, as it is comprised of government components and those of the universities themselves. Regarding the former, taking into account that it is governed by the law and CESU policies, it is financed by the state and the acts of accreditation are issued by the Ministry of Education. Regarding the latter, the process is led by the institutions themselves, the academic peers and by the CNA, comprised of practising academics from the different HEIs[6].

2.3   Higher education institutions in the National Accreditation System

Over the 23 years of the CNA's operation, different higher education institutions have expressed their desire to join the National Accreditation System. This is reported by the following statistical data[7].

Through the National Accreditation Council, the National Accreditation System in Colombia develops the following high quality accreditation processes.

- Accreditation of undergraduate programs across all levels of the education system (professional technical, technological and university professional) in both the in-person and distance-learning categories.
- Accreditation of graduate programs: Master's degree, medical surgical specialization and doctorate programs.
- Accreditation of higher education institutions.
- Renewal of the accreditation of higher education institutions and academic programs.

As part of its mission, the CNA also carries out the necessary processes to establish the initial conditions of entry into the National Accreditation System by higher education institutions and academic programs once they express an interest in joining.

Furthermore, it develops activities to strengthen the accreditation culture and to contribute to the development and discussion of strategic issues for Colombia's National Higher Education System, particularly assessment and accreditation.

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[6] National Accreditation Council (2015): National Accreditation System in Colombia. Accessed at: http://www.cna.gov.co/1741/article-186365.html

[7] Statistical Bulletin - National Accreditation Council, 2015.

In the accreditation of academic programs it reports on their quality, subjecting them to assessment by academic peers who examine whether they meet the quality requirements established by the academic communities of the respective profession or discipline, and their coherence with the nature and purposes of the institution in relation to some quality ideals defined by the CNA model.

In institutional accreditation, quality is recognized by the achievement of the purposes as well as the objectives of higher education; by the capacity of self-assessment and self-regulation; by the social relevance of the postulates of the mission and institutional projects; by the way in which the basic functions of teaching, research and social outreach are achieved; by the academic work's impact on society; and by the development of the administrative and management areas, wellbeing, and physical and financial resources; also in relation to the quality ideals suggested in the council's model.

2.4 Actions and programs to promote accreditation

Through the promotion component, the Ministry of National Education develops actions that promote the institutional strengthening of the assessed programs and institutions; provides support to the HEIs in the development of information systems and the use of new technology in their academic and management processes; supports improvement plans of institutions that have problems obtaining the qualification certification; encourages technical and technological education in the country; and provides technical support in assessment processes; among other strategies for the improvement and assurance of quality in higher education.

2.4.1 Calls for applications by the Promotion Division

The Promotion Division of the Ministry of Education has made three calls for applications to encourage quality and promote accreditation in higher education institutions between 2012 and 2015[8].

Table 5. 2012 Call for Applications

Aim	Select unaccredited higher education institutions that with the support of an accredited HEI can make and implement an action plan that generates capacity to make the institutional accreditation effective or to strengthen the institutional self-assessment and accreditation processes that they have been implementing.
Aimed at	All of the country's higher education institutions (universities, university institutions, and technology and technical institutions) that are not accredited, public as well as private.
HEI candidates	21 public HEIs 36 private HEIs 57 HEIs in total
Methodology	The beneficiary HEIs had to select one of the country's accredited HEIs to support the presentation and development of the draft action plan for the design and creation of the institutional accreditation system and institutional self-assessment model according to the characteristics, size, nature and origin of the institution.
Beneficiary HEIs	34 HEIs in total: 16 public HEIs 18 private HEIs
Funds	COP 2,190,000,000
More information about the 2012 Call for Applications can be found at the link: http://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1759/w3-article-305121.html	

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[8] Ministry of National Education – Data taken from the Promotion Division Report (2015).

Table 6. 2013 Call for Applications

Aim	Select unaccredited higher education institutions that with the support of an accredited HEI can make and implement an action plan that generates an institutional accreditation system, a self-assessment model and some structured support instruments for self-assessment.
Aimed at	All of the country's higher education institutions (universities, university institutions, and technology and technical institutions) that are not accredited, public as well as private.
HEI candidates	38 HEIs in total: 13 public HEIs 25 private HEIs
Methodology	The beneficiary HEIs had to select an accredited HEI, which according to its experience in quality accreditation and the characteristics of the unaccredited HEI, and with the support of an institutional analysis carried out on the supported institution, had to design and create the institutional accreditation system, the institutional self-assessment model, and structured self-assessment support instruments for their implementation.
Beneficiary HEIs	25 HEIs in total: 10 public HEIs 15 private HEIs
Funds	COP 1,757,478,546
More information about the 2013 Call for Applications can be found at the link: http://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1759/w3-article-318589.html	

Table 7. 2015 Call for Applications

Aim	Provide technical support and assistance to unaccredited higher education institutions to create and implement an action plan that allows them to achieve institutional accreditation or undergraduate programs according to the guidelines of the CNA.
Aimed at	All of the country's higher education institutions without institutional accreditation and that wish to accredit their programs.
HEI candidates	13 public HEIs 21 private HEIs 34 HEIs in total
Methodology	The beneficiary HEIs received technical support from Universidad Eafit to create the plan for institutional or program accreditation. It was established that each HEI would be supported by an expert from the Universidad Eafit, who would address the institutional and procedural topics, and play the role of a collaborative peer.
Beneficiary HEIs	11 HEIs in total: 6 public HEIs 5 private HEIs
Funds	COP 390,000,000
More information about the 2015 Call for Applications can be found at the link: http://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1759/w3-article-352709.html	

In 2016, the Subdivision of Support for the Management of Higher Education Institutions shortlisted ten (10) institutions that could receive support for institutional accreditation (it plans to support seven HEIs). The selection included information such as enrollment, position in the Education Performance Indicators Model (MIDE, for the Spanish original), history of accreditation activity, passing the stage of initial conditions with the

CNA, percentage of accredited programs out of those with potential for accreditation, and progress in the support process carried out in previous years.

Impact on the quality of HEIs and programs: Different HEIs have been the beneficiaries of each call for applications. However, it is not easy to accurately measure the impact for the calls for applications in 2012 and 2013, because these processes were not directly designed for program or institutional accreditation, but for strengthening self-assessment processes. However, it is possible to verify the programs that were accredited by the CNA after the calls for applications.

In the calls for applications in 2012 and 2013, 58 HEIs (25 public and 33 private) were benefited, out of which, 29 have achieved accreditation out of a total of 108 programs since 2013.

Regarding institutional accreditation, the Universidad Autónoma de Manizales obtained this recognition in 2015. The Institución Universitaria Tecnológico de Antioquia, Universidad Católica de Pereira, Universidad Simón Bolívar and Universidad de Nariño are currently in the assessment process with the CNA. The Universidad de la Costa and Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios received recommendations from the CNA.

In the 2015 Call for Applications, the activity by each beneficiary HEI is more closely monitored because the process arose as part of direct and personalized support for each institution.

Table 8. Monitoring Activities by Institution

HEI	Type of Support	Actions of the HEI after the Support
Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas	Institutional Accreditation	It is in the stage of the dean's comments
Universidad Sur Colombiana	Institutional Accreditation	The self-assessment report is being rewritten
Universidad Autónoma Latinoamericana	Institutional Accreditation	Request for initial conditions
Universidad Católica de Oriente	Institutional Accreditation	The self-assessment report is being written in order to register it in November 2016
Universidad Tecnológica del Chocó	Program Accreditation	Request for initial conditions
Universidad Francisco de Paula Santander	Program Accreditation	It is being processed in the CNA
Universidad Libre	Program Accreditation	The self-assessment report is being rewritten
Fundación Universitaria Católica del Norte	Program Accreditation	The self-assessment report is being written in order to register it in July 2016
Instituto Superior de Educación Rural – Iser	Program Accreditation	The self-assessment report is being rewritten
Corporación Tecnológica Industrial Colombiana - Teinco	Program Accreditation	The self-assessment report is being rewritten
Fundación Universitaria Colombo Internacional	Program Accreditation	The self-assessment report is being written to register it in June 2016

2.4.2 "Being Smart Pays" program

In 2013 and 2014, an effort was made for the interactive construction of a draft public policy document for higher education excellence in Colombia in the context of peace. This document, called "2034 Agreement for Higher Education", included the guideline on inclusive education with the ideal of "having inclusive and flexible higher education to respond to the educational needs of those who access the higher education system".

Based on this agreement, and on the analysis of the results of the 2012 SABER 11 exams, which indicated that many students with outstanding scores did not access higher education because they did not have the funds for it, the Ministry of National Education created the "Being Smart Pays" program together with ICETEX.

This program consists of granting forgivable loans or scholarships to students of limited resources who achieve outstanding academic results in the state exams for higher education studies in accredited high quality institutions.

These loans are 100% forgivable, provided that the program's beneficiary obtains a professional qualification. With this program, the Colombian government aims to encourage the path of excellence in education, which constitutes one of the most important pillars for the consolidation of peace and equality for all Colombians.[9]

The program's development and achievements are posted on the website: http://www.colombiaaprende.edu.co/html/micrositios/1752/w3-article-348537.html.

2.4.3   COLCIENCIAS calls for applications

Other programs for the accredited institutions are carried out by COLCIENCIAS through different calls for applications, such as the following[10]:

Table 9. COLCIENCIAS Calls for Applications

Year	Call for Applications	Objective
2014	Strengthen the doctorate programs in the country's accredited universities that have doctorate programs with the capacity to accept students in 2015, by financing their doctorate students.	Have qualified human capital to encourage the appropriation, incorporation, transfer and use of scientific and technological knowledge in the different institutions that comprise the National System of Science, Technology and Innovation. Strengthen the doctorate programs of the country's accredited universities. Promote the doctorate training system in the country through the experience achieved by Colombian professionals during their doctorates.
2014	Call for applications for the training of high level human capital for the Chocó Department.	Train highly qualified professionals at doctorate, master's degree and research initiation levels (young researchers) with the capacity to manage regional development processes through science, technology and innovation.
2016	Science, Technology and Innovation Policy: Colombia advances in the construction of a scientific nation.	During the meeting with the deans of the country's accredited universities, COLCIENCIAS disclosed the 2015-2025 Science, Technology and Innovation Policy, which is based on the conviction that science is essential for economic and social development, by promoting the training of high-level human capital, innovation capacity and competitiveness. The four aspects of the 2015-2025 Science, Technology and Innovation Policy are: - Train highly qualified human capital to increase productivity - Strengthen research and technological development - Promote innovative activities in private companies

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9   Ministerio de Educación Nacional. Colombia Aprende. Recuperado de: http://www.colombiaaprende.edu.co/html/micrositios/1752/w3-article-348446.html
10   Administrative Department of Science, Technology and Innovation – COLCIENCIAS. Accessed at: http://www.colciencias.gov.co/search/node/acreditadas

		- Expand scientific research in all of the country's regions. Further information: http://www.colciencias.gov.co/sala_prensa/con-la-pol%C3%ADtica-de-cti-colombia-avanza-en-la-construcci%C3%B3n-de-una-naci%C3%B3n-cient%C3%ADfica

2.4.4   Royalties and the Science, Technology and Innovation Fund

The Science, Technology and Innovation Fund of the General Royalties System was created to increase the regions' scientific, technological, innovative and competitive capacity through projects that contribute to the production, use, integration and appropriation of knowledge in the productive system and in society in general. The fund is a source of financing for regional projects agreed between the regional entities and the Colombian government for the development of activities, such as: Experimental Research and Development (R+D), Scientific and Technological Training and Education, and Scientific and Technological Services.

The governing bodies for administration and decision-making (OCAD, for the Spanish original) of the National Royalties System are responsible for defining the investment projects subject to consideration that will be funded with the resources of the General Royalties System, as well as assessing, making viable, approving and prioritizing the benefit and opportunity of financing them.

The formation of these OCAD has the participation of representatives of the Colombian government, departmental governments, and six universities (four public and two private), which are required to have at least four accredited programs.

Figure 4. Formation and Appointment of the Members of the OCAD – 2012 Science and Technology Fund

Source: COLCIENCIAS.

SELF-ASSESSMENT DOCUMENT FOR RENEWAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL CERTIFICATION
BY THE NATIONAL ACCREDITATION COUNCIL – CNA COLOMBIA

30

The CNA obtained the certificate of alignment with good practices of accreditation granted by the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and the Ibero-American Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (RIACES, for the Spanish original) in April 2012. It also signed the Multilateral Agreement on the Mutual Recognition of Accreditation Results regarding Joint Programmes, after external review by the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA), where the processes implemented by the CNA were validated according to the European Standards of Accreditation.

CHAPTER 3 RESULTS AND IMPACTS OF THE ACCREDITATION OF PROGRAMS AND INSTITUTIONS IN COLOMBIA

An important indicator of the consolidation of the National Accreditation System is the number of undergraduate and postgraduate academic programs and institutions that have obtained accreditation from the state, after having carried out rigorous assessment processes and demonstrated high levels of quality. Therefore, we will present the relevant data about the processes carried out by the CNA over the last five years.

Figure 5. Milestones and Advances of the National Accreditation System
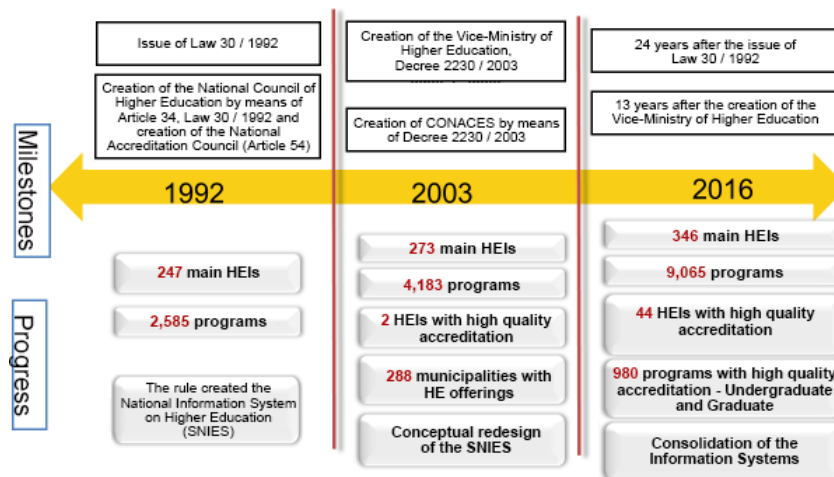
3.1 Accreditation of undergraduate programs

At December 2015, there were 842 undergraduate programs with valid accreditation; 52% corresponds to private institutions and the remaining 48% to public institutions. The number of programs by area of knowledge is listed below:

Table 10. Undergraduate Programs with Valid Accreditation by Area of Knowledge

AREA OF KNOWLEDGE	NUMBER OF PROGRAMS
ENGINEERING, ARCHITECTURE, URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND RELATED TOPICS	293
ECONOMICS, ADMINISTRATION, ACCOUNTING AND RELATED TOPICS	134
SOCIAL SCIENCES, LAW, AND POLITICAL SCIENCE	131
HEALTH SCIENCES	93
EDUCATION SCIENCES	87
MATHEMATICS AND NATURAL SCIENCES	40
FINE ARTS	27
AGRONOMY, VETERINARY SCIENCE AND RELATED TOPICS	22
HUMANITIES AND RELIGIOUS SCIENCES	15
Overall total	842

Source: CNA statistical information.
Cut-off date of information: May 2016.

Chart 6. Undergraduate Programs with Valid Accreditation by Origin of the HEI (at December 31, 2015)

HEI ORIGIN	NUMBER OF ACCREDITED PROGRAMS
Public	406
Private	436
Overall total	842
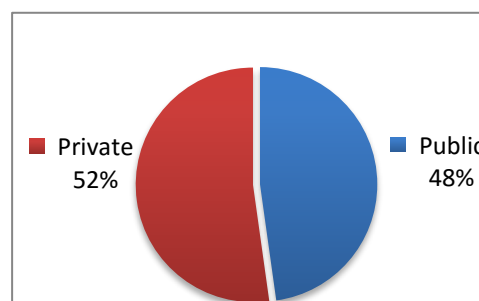
Source: CNA statistical information.

Chart 7. Percentage of Undergraduate Programs with Valid Accreditation by Area of Knowledge
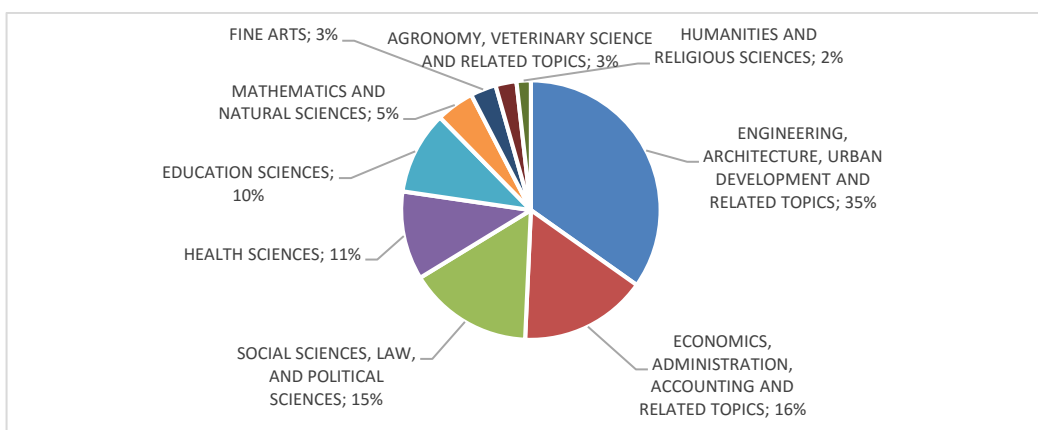
Source: CNA statistical information.

The largest number of accredited programs is in the areas of engineering, architecture, urban development and related topics, as they represent 35% of the total. The programs in the areas of economics, administration, accounting and related topics, as wells as social sciences, law and political sciences follow with 16% and 15%, respectively.

As can be observed below, there is a high concentration of accredited undergraduate programs in the main cities of Colombia: Bogotá with 32.7%, Medellín with 19.2%, Cali with 8.4%, Bucaramanga with 8.4% and Barranquilla with 5.6%.

Chart 8. Number of Institutions with an Accredited Program by Region

Region	No. of Institutions with an Accredited Program	Percentage
CENTER	59	39%
WEST CENTER	16	10%
NORTH	21	14%
WEST	23	15%
EAST	19	12%
SOUTH	15	10%
Overall total	153	100%
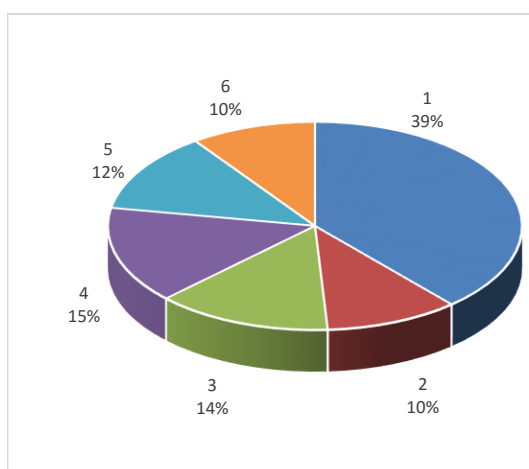
Source: CNA Statistical Bulletin - December 2015.

As can be observed in the following graph, there is a high concentration of accredited programs in the center region. In the other regions, there is uniform distribution, although it is insufficient to respond to the training needs that would greatly benefit from the supply of quality education.

Table 11. Undergraduate Programs with Valid Accreditation by City

CITY	NUMBER OF PROGRAMS	CITY	NUMBER OF PROGRAMS
BOGOTÁ	275	RIONEGRO	5
MEDELLÍN	162	VILLAVICENCIO	4
CALI	71	SOLEDAD	3
BUCARAMANGA	49	DUITAMA	3
BARRANQUILLA	47	SABANETA	3
MANIZALES	30	SOGAMOSO	2
TUNJA	26	FLORENCIA	2
PEREIRA	25	CÚCUTA	2
CARTAGENA	24	SAN GIL	2
IBAGUÉ	17	SINCELEJO	2
PASTO	17	PAMPLONA	2
CHÍA	10	VALLEDUPAR	1
NEIVA	10	BELLO	1
POPAYÁN	9	CAJICÁ	1
SANTA MARTA	8	TOLÚ	1
PALMIRA	7	CALDAS	1
ARMENIA	7	CHIQUINQUIRÁ	1
MONTERÍA	6	NILO	1
MADRID	5	Overall total	842

Source: CNA Statistical Bulletin - December 2015.

According to the nature of the institution that provides these programs, 83% of them is offered by universities, 15% by university institutions, and 2% by technology institutions.

Chart 9. Undergraduate Programs with Valid Accreditation by Nature of the Institution

NATURE OF THE HEI	NUMBER OF PROGRAMS
University	697
University institution	124
Technology institution	19
Technical institution	2
Overall total	842
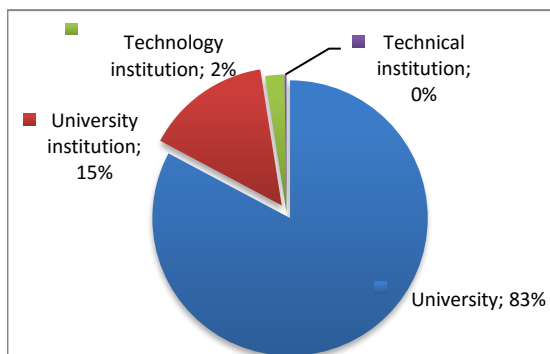
Source: CNA Statistical Bulletin - December 2015.

The in-person category of programs prevails with 99% of the total provided.

Chart 10. Undergraduate Programs with Valid Accreditation by Category

CATEGORY	NUMBER OF ACCREDITED PROGRAMS
In-person	836
Distance-learning (traditional)	6
Overall total	842
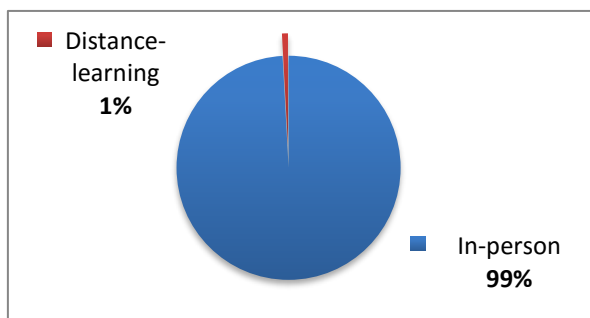
Source: CNA Statistical Bulletin - December 2015.

3.2 High quality accreditation of master's degree and doctorate programs

The currently accredited postgraduate programs are distributed as follows: 79% provided by public institutions, and 21% by private HEIs.

Chart 11. Postgraduate Programs with Valid Accreditation by Origin of the Institution

ORIGIN OF THE HEI	NUMBER OF PROGRAMS
Public	79
Private	21
Overall total	100
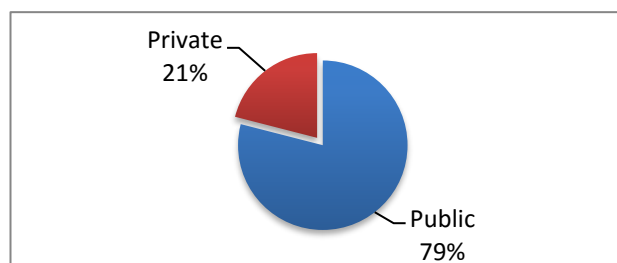
Source: CNA Statistical Bulletin - December 2015.

Regarding postgraduate programs, master's degrees represent 72% of the total accredited postgraduate programs, doctorates represent 21%, and medical specializations represent 7%.

Chart 12. Postgraduate Programs with Valid Accreditation by Level
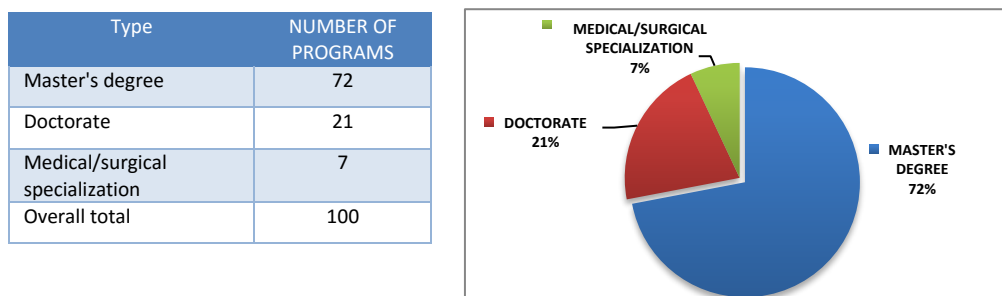
Type	NUMBER OF PROGRAMS
Master's degree	72
Doctorate	21
Medical/surgical specialization	7
Overall total	100

Source: CNA Statistical Bulletin - December 2015.

The accredited postgraduate programs are distributed among the following institutions:

Table 12. Accredited Postgraduate Programs by HEI

HEI	NUMBER OF PROGRAMS
UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL DE COLOMBIA	45
UNIVERSIDAD DE ANTIOQUIA - UDEA	21
UNIVERSIDAD DE LOS ANDES	11
UNIVERSIDAD DEL VALLE	10
PONTIFICIA UNIVERSIDAD JAVERIANA	5
UNIVERSIDAD EAFIT	4
UNIVERSIDAD TECNOLÓGICA DE PEREIRA - UTP	3
UNIVERSIDAD DE MANIZALES	1
Overall total	100

Source: CNA Statistical Bulletin - December 2015.

Chart 13. Postgraduate Programs with Valid Accreditation by City
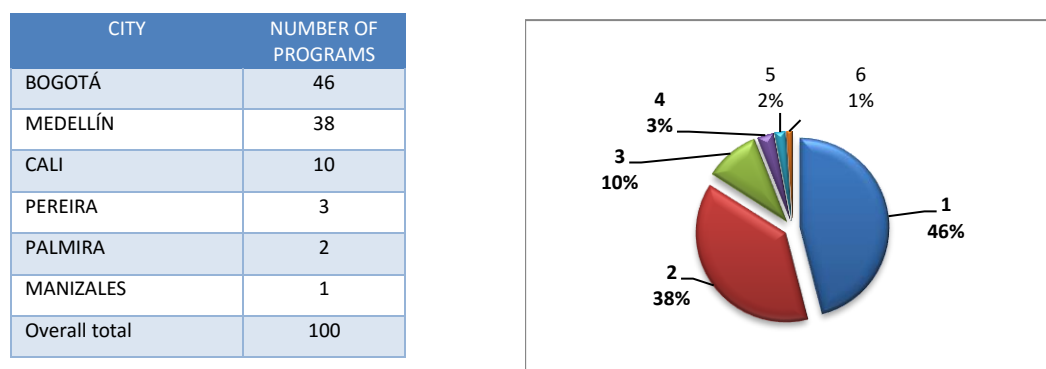
CITY	NUMBER OF PROGRAMS
BOGOTÁ	46
MEDELLÍN	38
CALI	10
PEREIRA	3
PALMIRA	2
MANIZALES	1
Overall total	100

Source: CNA Statistical Bulletin - December 2015.

The accredited postgraduate programs are mainly concentrated in the areas of mathematics and social sciences; engineering, architecture, urban development and related topics; and health and social sciences.

Table 13. Evolution of Postgraduate Accreditation Processes, 2011-2016

INSTITUTION	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Overall Total
UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL DE COLOMBIA		6	15	9	15	2	47
UNIVERSIDAD DE ANTIOQUIA - UDEA	1	9	4	5	2		21
UNIVERSIDAD DEL VALLE			1	1	8	4	14
UNIVERSIDAD DE LOS ANDES	1	1	3	1	5	2	13
UNIVERSIDAD EAFIT					4	1	5
PONTIFICIA UNIVERSIDAD JAVERIANA					5		5

INSTITUTION	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Overall Total
UNIVERSIDAD TECNOLÓGICA DE PEREIRA - UTP		1	1		1		3
UNIVERSIDAD PEDAGÓGICA NACIONAL - UPN						1	1
UNIVERSIDAD DEL NORTE						1	1
UNIVERSIDAD DE MANIZALES					1		1
Overall total	2	17	24	16	41	11	111

Source: CNA Statistical Bulletin - December 2015.

Chart 14. Postgraduate Program Accreditation Processes
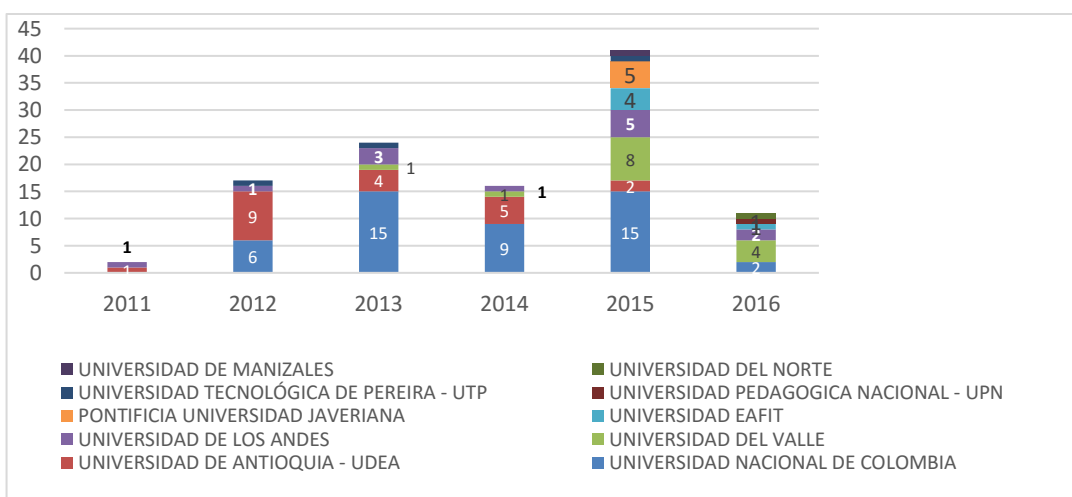
Source: CNA Statistical Bulletin - December 2015.

3.3 High quality accreditation of higher education institutions

By December 2015, there were 38 accredited institutions: 21 private institutions and 17 public institutions.

Chart 15. Institutions with Valid Accreditation by Origin of the Institution

ORIGIN OF THE HEI	NUMBER OF HEIs
PRIVATE	21
PUBLIC	17
Overall total	38
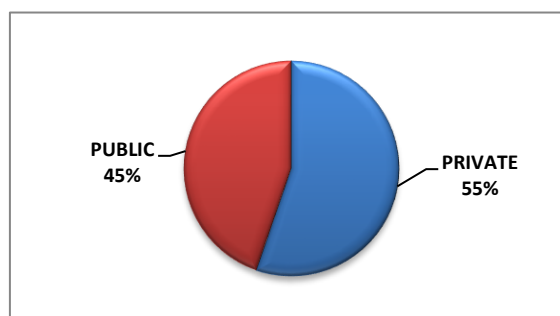
Source: CNA Statistical Bulletin - December 2015.

According to their institutional nature, the accredited HEIs are distributed as follows: 76% universities, 16% university institutions or technology schools, 5% technology institutions, and 3% special regime institutions. As mentioned in the case of undergraduate and postgraduate programs, most of the institutions that have obtained accreditation are located in the cities of Bogotá, Medellín, Manizales and Cali, as can be seen below:

Chart 16. Institutions with Valid Accreditation by Nature of the institution

NATURE OF THE HEI	NUMBER OF HEIs
University	29
University institution	6
Technology institution	2
Special regime institution	1
Overall total	38
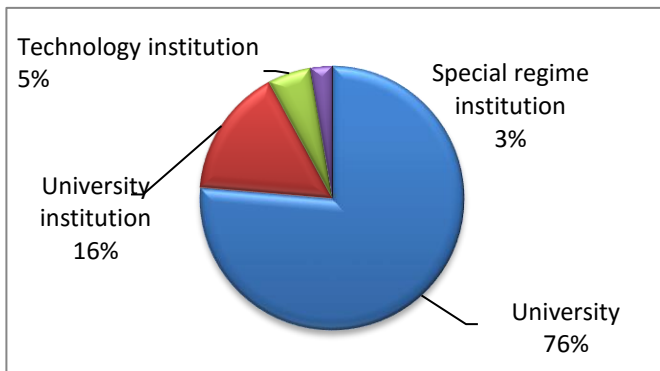
Source: CNA Statistical Bulletin - December 2015.

Chart 17. Institutions with Valid Institutional Accreditation by City

CITY	NUMBER OF HEIs
BOGOTÁ	13
MEDELLÍN	8
MANIZALES	4
CALI	4
CARTAGENA	3
BARRANQUILLA	2
BUCARAMANGA	2
POPAYÁN	1
PALMIRA	1
PEREIRA	1
TUNJA	1
CHÍA	1
MADRID (CUND.)	1
Overall total	42
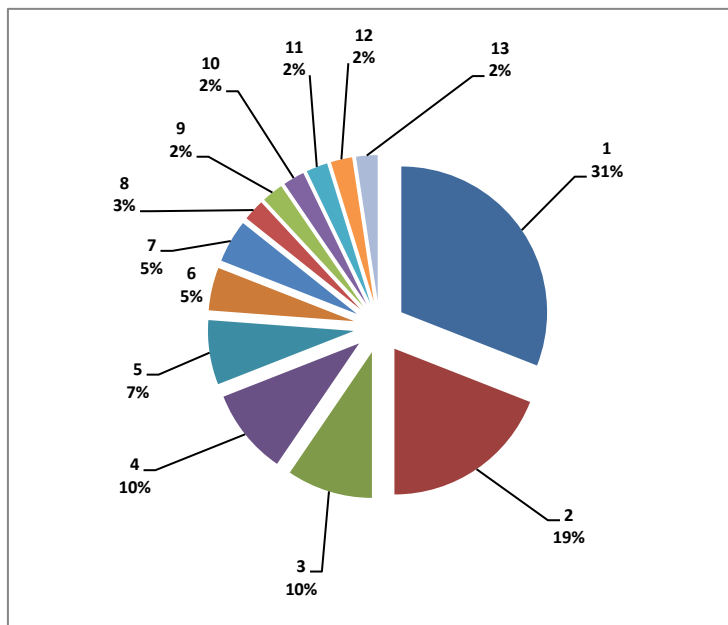
Source: CNA Statistical Bulletin - December 2015.

Note: There is a total of 42 accredited HEIs broken down by city, because it includes three accredited campuses of the Universidad Nacional other than Bogotá (Medellín, Palmira and Manizales) and two of the Universidad Javeriana (Bogotá and Cali).

Figure 6. Location of Accredited HEIs in Colombia

	Atlántico	
Technological Institution:	1	Public HEI: 1
University Institution:	0	Private HEI: 1
University:	1	Total HEI: 2

	Bolívar	
Technological Institution:	1	Public HEI: 1
University Institution:	0	Private HEI: 2
University:	2	Total HEI: 3

	Antioquia	
Technological Institution:	0	Public HEI: 3
University Institution:	2	Private HEI: 4
University:	5	Total HEI: 7

	Risaralda	
Technological Institution:	0	Public HEI: 1
University Institution:	0	Private HEI: 0
University:	1	Total HEI: 1

	Valle del Cauca	
Technological Institution:	0	Public HEI: 2
University Institution:	0	Private HEI: 2
University:	4	Total HEI: 4

	Cauca	
Technological Institution:	0	Public HEI: 1
University Institution:	0	Private HEI: 0
University:	1	Total HEI: 1

	Santander	
Public HEI: 2	Technological Institution:	0
Private HEI: 0	University Institution:	2
Total HEI: 2	University:	0

	Caldas	
Public HEI: 2	Technological Institution:	0
Private HEI: 0	University Institution:	0
Total HEI: 2	University:	2

	Cundinamarca	
Public HEI: 1	Technological Institution:	1
Private HEI: 1	University Institution:	0
Total HEI: 2	University:	1

	Bogotá D.C.	
Public HEI: 2	Technological Institution:	0
Private HEI: 12	University Institution:	2
Total HEI: 14	University:	12

ACCREDITED HEI's IN THE REGIONS

0 1 2 3 4 7 14

Source: Ministry of Education - Data from December 2015.

Table 14. Evolution of Institutional Accreditation Processes, 2003-2016

Type	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Overall total
University	8	1	8	4	4	8	5	38
University institution			1	1	2	2		6
Technology institution			1	1				2
Special regime institution						1		1
Overall total	8	1	10	6	6	11	5	47

Source: CNA statistical information.
Cut-off date of information: May 2016.

Chart 18. Institutional Accreditation Processes
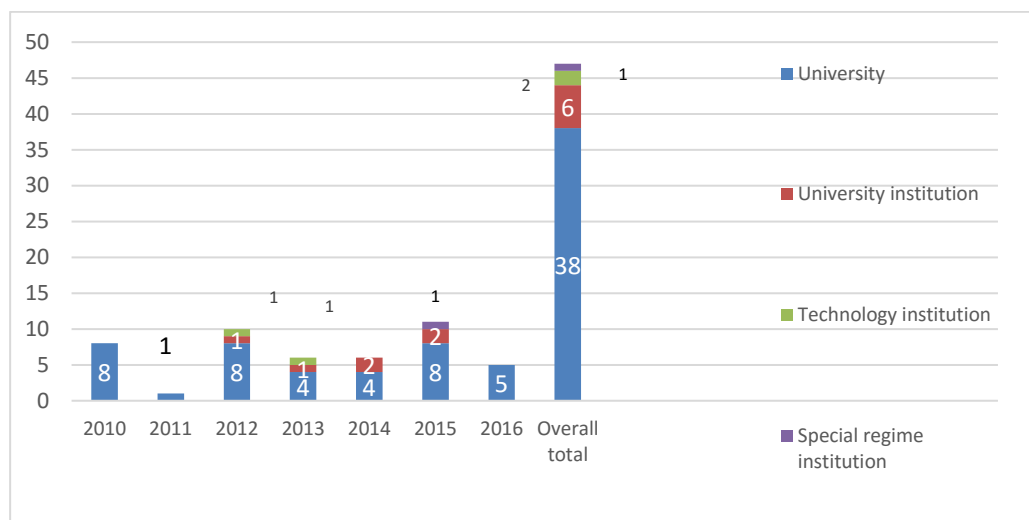
Source: CNA statistical information.

Cut-off date of information: May 2016.

NOTE: There is a total of 47 accredited HEIs broken down by city, because it includes three accredited campuses of the Universidad Nacional other than Bogotá (Medellín, Palmira and Manizales), two of the Universidad Javeriana (Bogotá and Cali), and five of the Universidad Santo Tomás (Bogotá, Bucaramanga, Medellín, Villavicencio and Tunja).

3.4   Accreditation processes underway

Regarding the development of the accreditation processes, the CNA is constantly developing the different stages of the accreditation process. The details of the number of applications underway for undergraduate, postgraduate and institutional programs is presented below in detail (information with the cut-off date of May 2016).

The volume of applications for accreditation processes of undergraduate programs currently in the different stages in the CNA is as follows:

Table 15. Undergraduate Program Processes Underway

The accreditation processes of institutions underway are as follows:

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS	NUMBER OF PROGRAMS
Completed	99
Appointing council members (initial conditions)	0
Processing visit by council members (initial conditions)	70
Awaiting council member report (initial conditions)	0
Approved to start self-assessment	130
In self-assessment	144
Completed self-assessment	27
In shortlisting of peers (external assessment)	60
Adjustment of peers	1
With peers appointed	49
Awaiting report by peers	7
With peers' report	39
Review of external assessment report	20
For comments by the dean	28
For presentation by the council member	98
With opinion	88

Table 16. Institutional Accreditation Processes

HEIs IN PROCESS	NUMBER OF HEIs
Completed self-assessment	3
In shortlisting of peers (external assessment)	1
For comments by the dean	2
For presentation by the council member	1
With opinion	5
Recommended	4

For over a decade, different studies, including the one conducted by the World Bank for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), have recognized that the Higher Education Quality Assurance System in Colombia has the following strengths[11]:

A. It has criteria and mechanisms to assess students, curricular programs and higher education institutions (HEIs).

B. It ensures that the HEIs and the curricular programs meet the following minimum requirements to operate, and admit and qualify students.

C. It contributes to a culture of excellence in the HEIs, as they firstly concentrate their resources and efforts on the accreditation of their curricular programs and subsequently on the accreditation of the institution.

D. It is one of the leading assurance systems in the world that considers the assessment of the students' added value as a central part of quality assurance.

E. It has up-to-date information systems that contribute to the accountability of the HEIs and of the higher education sector as a whole, because they can be consulted by the general public (families, young people, businesspeople, etc.) online and report on different aspects of the HEIs (students registered, admitted to the first year, and enrolled; dropout rates; internal efficiency rates; research; extension; results of standardized exams; and employment rates)[12].

3.5   Impact of accreditation on essential quality indicators

The statistical analysis of the evolution of some quality indicators in higher education institutions also allows an important impact of accreditation to be inferred.

Teaching Staff: Taking into account that education quality firstly supposes having teachers with high levels of education, the following table and graphs show how this factor has progressed over the last five years.

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[11] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – OECD. Report: La educación en Colombia – Revisión de las políticas nacionales de educación [Education in Colombia - Review of National Education Policies] (2016). Retrieved from: http://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1759/w3-article-356787.html

[12] Ministry of National Education – Andrés Bello Agreement (2013). El Futuro del sistema de Aseguramiento de Calidad de la educación Superior en Colombia: Recomendaciones para su fortalecimiento [The Future of the Higher Education Quality Assurance System in Colombia: Recommendations for its Improvement].

Table 17. Teaching Staff in Higher Education Institutions, 2011-2015

Level of Education	2011-1	2011-2	2012-1	2012-2	2013-1	2013-2	2014 - 1	2014 - 2	2015 - 1	2015 - 2
POST-DOCTORATE	255	239	295	343	400	366	178	181	173	204
DOCTORATE	5,706	5,895	6,063	6,285	6,408	6,189	8,715	8,900	9,304	9,574
MASTER'S DEGREE	25,419	25,729	27,546	28,367	27,944	27,598	41,875	42,479	43,856	44,726
SPECIALIZATION	34,789	34,524	36,962	37,557	36,885	36,015	43,468	42,994	44,505	43,927
PROFESSIONAL	43,415	37,688	41,252	41,312	40,082	40,932	41,024	40,158	41,513	41,065
BACHELOR'S DEGREE	2,072	1,962	2,170	2,076	2,049	1,935	1,565	1,577	1,671	1,642
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT	447	426	679	740	1,108	1,029	696	392	182	85
TECHNICAL	1,135	637	1,078	671	965	651	1,054	1,067	1,055	987
TECHNOLOGICAL	933	729	1,095	1,108	969	1,023	1,650	2,120	2,131	1,940
NOT REPORTED	0	0	0	0	0	0	2,830	3,890	4,890	3,948
Overall total	114,171	107,829	117,140	118,459	116,810	115,738	143,055	143,758	149,280	148,098

Source: Ministry of National Education - National Information System on Higher Education (SNIES).
The information provided was reported by the institutions through the SNIES.
Cut-off date of information: May 16, 2016.

Chart 19. Classification of In-house Teaching Staff
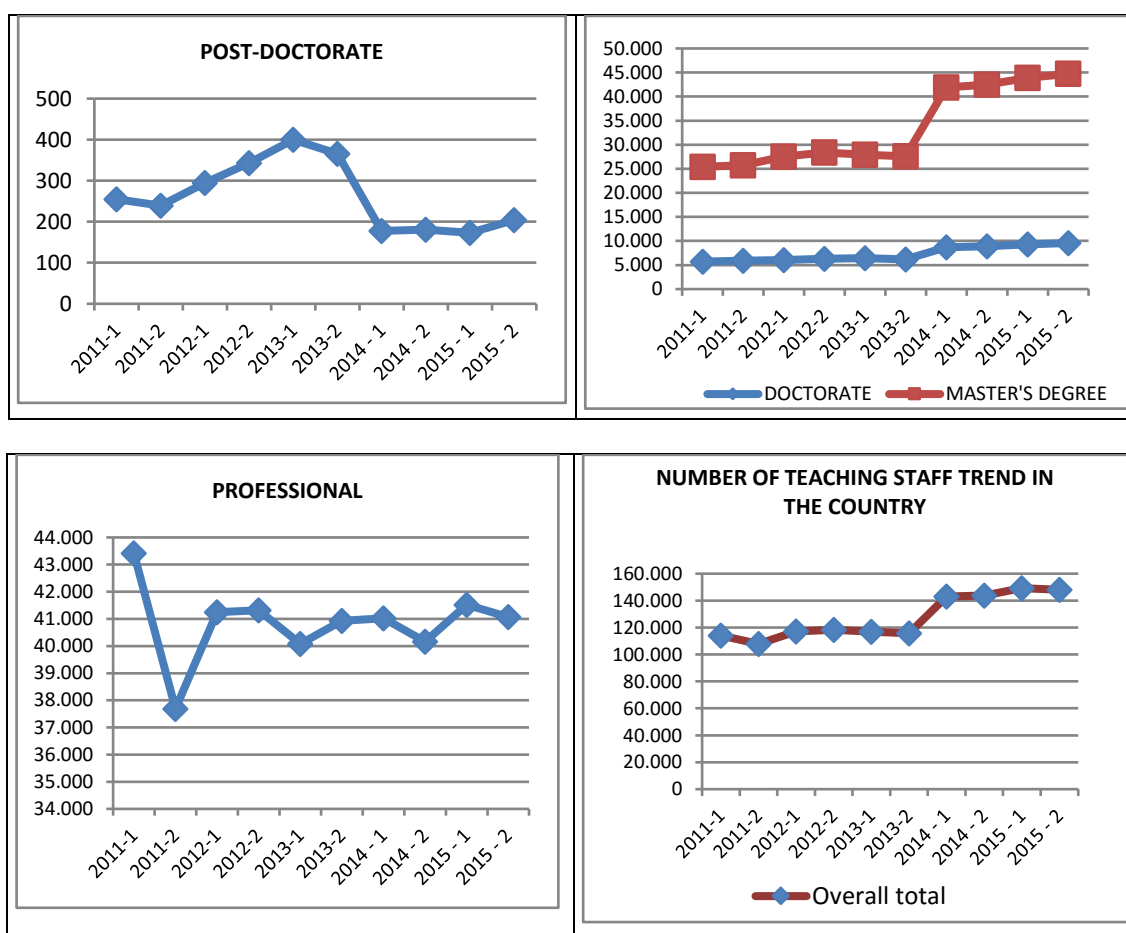
Regarding the type of contract of the teaching staff provided by the HEIs, the type of contract according to their work in 2015 is as follows:

Chart 20. Type of Teacher Contract

TYPE OF CONTRACT			
WORK	Permanent Contract	Temporary Contract	Hours
Full-time	2578	6880	711
Part-time	785	5018	627
Paid on an hourly basis	283	4652	10314
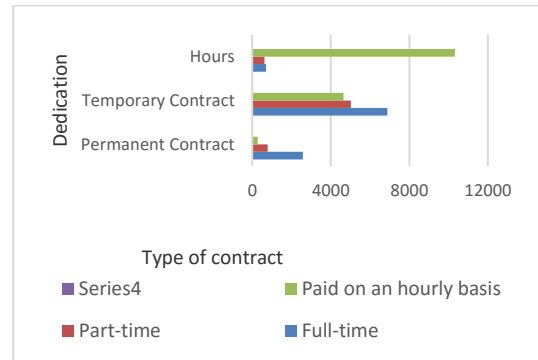
Research: The impact on quality through factors related to research is shown in the number of researchers, research groups, academic production (scientific articles, books, and patents), joint projects with international organizations, membership of international networks, inter-institutional projects and joint university and company projects, which have grown significantly. However, despite this increase, they continue to be below the level of the leading countries in Latin America.

The following table shows the evolution of the research groups recognized by COLCIENCIAS[13]:

Table 18. Classification of Research Groups regarding whether They Are Part of the National Accreditation System

Classification of Research Groups by HEI			
Classification - Group	HEI in the SNE	HEI not in the SNE	Total Groups
A	514	13	527
A1	361	5	366
B	838	73	911
C	1396	316	1712
D	405	186	591
Recognized	112	26	138
Total groups	3626	619	4245

Source: COLCIENCIAS.

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[13] Administrative Department of Science, Technology and Innovation – COLCIENCIAS: Promotes public policy to encourage science, technology and research in Colombia. Coordinates the National Science, Technology and Innovation System.

Chart 21. Research Groups according to Classification

Colciencias Research Groups Classification

% of Groups by HEI	A	A1	B	C	D	Recongnized
IES in the SNE	12%	9%	20%	33%	10%	3%
IES not in the SNE	0%	0%	2%	7%	4%	1%
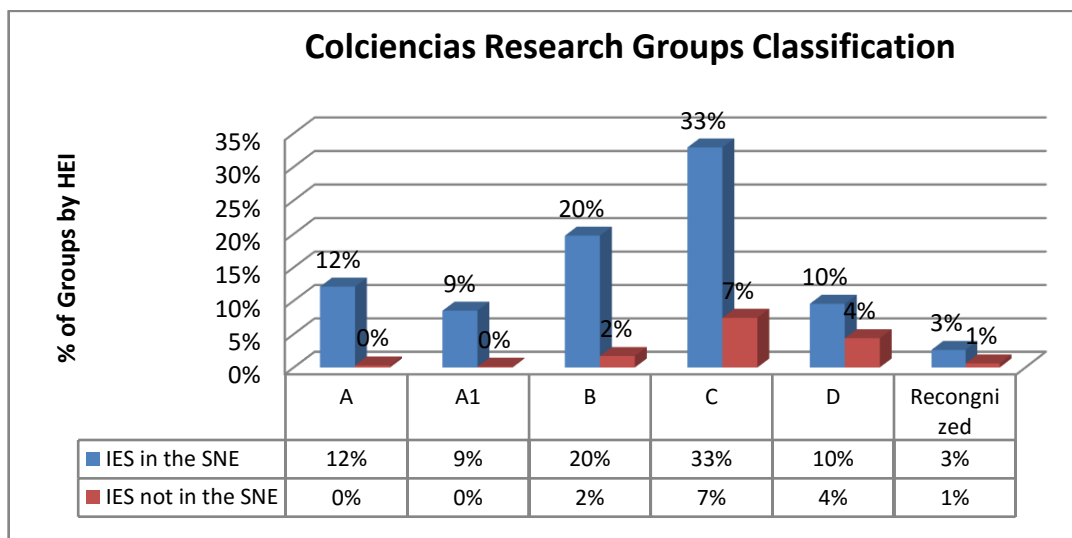
Source: COLCIENCIAS.

It shows that the largest number of research groups corresponds to HEIs in the SNA.

Table 19. Registered Research Groups

Research Groups Registered for Assessment			
Groups Registered for Assessment	HEI in the SNE	HEI not in the SNE	Total Groups
NO	112	26	138
YES	3514	593	4107
Total groups	3626	619	4245

We can also observe that the highest number of research groups for assessment corresponds to groups of HEIs in the SNA, showing the following behavior:

Chart 22. Synthesis of Groups for Assessment regarding whether They Are Part of the SNA

% of Groups	HEI in the SNE	HEI not in the SNE
NO	2%	1%
YES	76%	13%
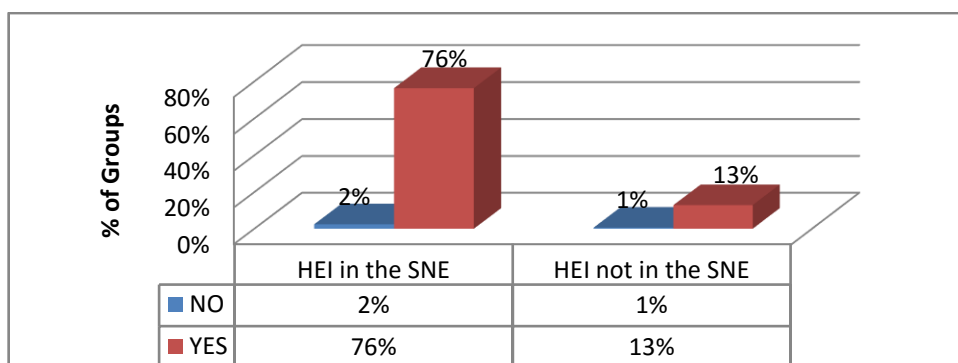
Source: COLCIENCIAS.

It is also important to take into account that there are important structural factors that affect the development and sustainability of research management in the HEIs. For example, the level of training of employed teachers and its relationship to variables such as type of contract, number of teachers per training category and remuneration. The information that the SNIES reports in this respect is as follows:

The employment of teachers with specializations, master's degrees and doctorates shows constant growth, which has a positive impact on the implementation of the higher education institutions' missions.

Impact on Education: The impact of the accreditation processes on the students' performance indicators is also notable, which are assessed through the state SABER-PRO exams. As can be observed in Chart 7, which shows the result of the Quantitative Reasoning Tests, the most outstanding results correspond to the students of accredited HEIs.

Chart 23. Consolidated Results of Qualitative Reasoning Tests – Accredited HEIs – Unaccredited HEIs
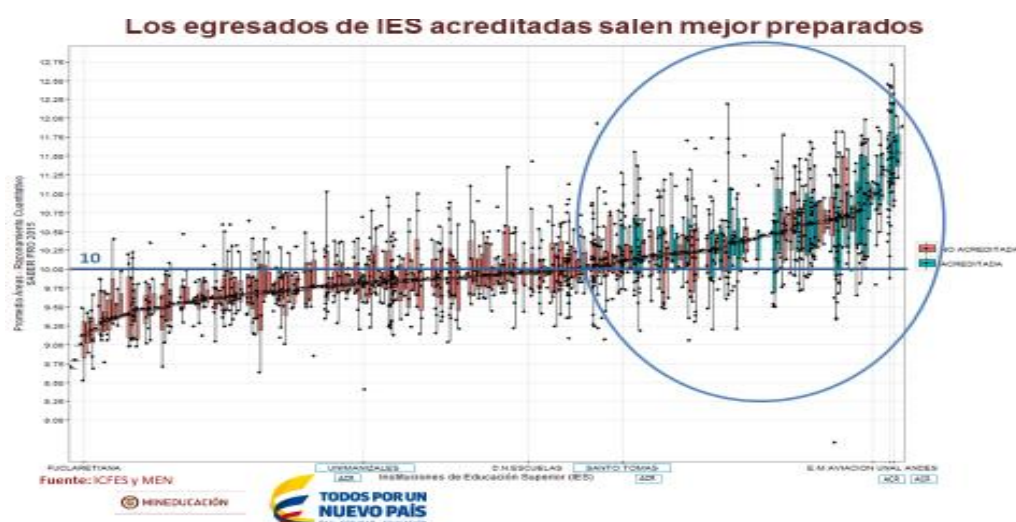
Source: Ministry of National Education – ICFES.
*Cut-off date of information: 2015.

It is important to indicate that the ICFES carries out several analyses to establish each institution's relative contribution to the students' development, for which it compares the results of the SABER 11 exams with the results of the SABER-PRO exams. This kind of correlation also produces positive results in the performance of higher education students in accredited HEIs.

ANNEXES TO CHAPTERS 1, 2 AND 3

Referencia del Anexo	Título del Documento
A1	CNA Inventory of Rules
A2	Law 1753/2005 – 2014-2018 National Development Plan (Everyone for a New Country)
A3	National Council of Higher Education 2034 Agreement for Higher Education
A4	2010-2014 Sectoral Plan, Document 9, Ministry of National Education
A5	State of the Art National Accreditation System and Identification of Roadmaps and Subjects for Research and Development to Improve Quality Conditions
A6	Ministry of National Education - 2010-2014 Sectoral Plan
A7	National Accreditation Council – Document: 20 Years of Commitment to High Quality Accreditation in Higher Education
A8	Guidelines for Institutional Accreditation
A9	Guidelines for Accreditation of Undergraduate Programs
A10	Guidelines for Accreditation of Programs of Accredited HEIs
A11	Guidelines for Institutional Accreditation
A12	Guidelines for High Quality Accreditation of Master's Degree and Doctorate Programs
A22	Academic Peer Training Handbook
A23	Technical Specifications - Assessment of Initial Conditions
A24	Technical Specifications – External Assessment Visit
A25	Technical Specifications – Issue and Reconsideration of Opinion
A26	Code of Ethics for Academic Peers Responsible for External Assessment for High Quality Accreditation
A28	Statistical Bulletin - National Accreditation Council, 2015

CNA External Quality Assurance Structure

The CNA is an organization with recognition and credibility, as well as the trust of the higher education institutions and the public. It has adequate mechanisms to prevent conflicts of interest in the decisions it makes and its staff has the necessary skills to carry out roles of external quality control. The CNA has the necessary resources to carry out its mission.

CHAPTER 4 GUIDELINES

4.1 CNA External Quality Assurance Structure

The National Accreditation Council (CNA, for the Spanish original) is an academic organization that is part of the National Accreditation System (SNA, for the Spanish original), created by Law 30 / December 28, 1992 (Article 53) and regulated by Decree 2904 / December 31, 1994. It reports to the National Council of Higher Education (CESU, for the Spanish original), which establishes its rules, roles and integration (please see Annex 1 – Inventory of Rules).

Its main role is to promote and execute the accreditation policy adopted by the CESU and to coordinate the respective processes. Therefore, it guides higher education institutions so that they carry out their self-assessment; adopt the quality criteria, tools and technical indicators that are applied in the external assessment; appoint the external peers that practice it; and conduct the final assessment.

The CNA plans, organizes and regulates the accreditation process and attests to its quality. Finally, depending on the degree of compliance with the previously established guidelines, the council recommends that the Ministry of National Education accredits the programs and institutions that warrant it, objectively, autonomously and transparently.

From a historical perspective, the first landmark in the existence of the CNA after its creation through Law 30/1992 occurred in 1995, when it was officially incorporated according to the agreement of the CESU, which regulates it and establishes policies for the accreditation of academic programs and higher education institutions.

A period of growth in the demand for higher education was recorded in the nineties, due to a higher number of young people with secondary education. In response, the amount of post-secondary educational institutions and programs increased in the country's different geographical areas. At this time, the CNA arose in response to the need to drive self-regulation processes and to define criteria to ensure the quality of university institutions and their programs.

Accreditation started at a particularly critical time for higher education in Colombia, when the Colombian government, the academic community and society as a whole understood that the country's future was closely linked to the consolidation and enhancement of its higher education system.

Therefore, it can be said that in the nineties, people showed greater concerns about the future of higher education in Colombia, caused by factors including changes in the economic model, which meant

transformations and requirements for training human capital. Parallel to the pressure to achieve greater coverage, the question arose about the quality and relevance of the programs provided. This question led to several reflections, including the educational proposal of the programs, research policies and qualification of teachers in higher education.

The official self-assessment process regarding accreditation practically started in 2000, because it was around this year that the institutions started to assume self-assessment as an initial step to achieve the legitimacy of their programs and institution. Therefore, in 2006, 451 programs of 76 higher education institutions had already obtained the accreditation; and 87 programs had received confidential recommendations to improve their quality. This reveals the degree of credibility that the National Accreditation Council rapidly achieved, above all because it was a voluntary decision of the institutions to subject themselves to an external assessment system based on references of quality.

Between 2004 and 2007, a series of seminars and workshops about quality assessment of higher education was carried out with the support of ICFES in different regions of Colombia. The aim of these events designed for groups of university professors was to agree the most appropriate approaches for the external assessment of skills acquired by students in all degree programs. They addressed the quality assessment of higher education (formerly known as ECAES during the initial stage, and currently as SABER-PRO), established through an exam for students in the last year of their university degree programs. This program was an essential premise for discussions on the quality of higher education, because one of the questions that scholars of the topic had posed was about the correlation between the students' learning results and the self-assessment and accreditation processes.

Currently, for the whole Colombian university community, the essence of accreditation is defined according to the academic institutions' capacity to self-regulate themselves, and to actively participate in their improvement process to ensure the provision of a quality service, on the basis that the established accreditation model permits the full exercise of autonomy.

The exercise of the high quality accreditation processes has allowed the CNA to acquire highly significant experiences for the whole system. This is mainly because it shows significant progress in the quality conditions of programs and institutions. This demonstrates the growing responsibility assumed by the academic community to recognize the quality of the institutions and their programs, not only nationally, but also internationally.

4.1.1   Legitimacy and recognition

The creation of the National Accreditation System is part of the Higher Education Quality Assurance System in Colombia, together with the qualification certification process. It is based on a regulatory framework comprised of laws (Colombian Congress), decrees (Colombian Presidency and Ministry of National Education), and agreements (CESU), which establish the foundations to guide the mission, objectives and processes of the CNA and to define the scope of public policy over said processes.

The establishment of public policy on higher education dates back to the 1886 Constitution, referring to this responsibility regarding public instruction. According to the 1991 Political Constitution, the idea of the right to freedom of tuition opens the way for education to be assumed as "a person's right and a public service that has a social role; through which access is sought to knowledge, science, techniques, and the other cultural assets and values. Education will train Colombians on respect for human rights, peace and democracy; and on the practice of work and recreation for cultural, scientific and technological improvement, and for environmental conservation" (Article 67). A power that the Political Constitution seeks to ensure by establishing further on in the same article "that it corresponds to the state to regulate and exercise the utmost audit and oversight of education in order to ensure its quality, achieve its goals, and provide the best moral, intellectual and physical education for students; to ensure adequate coverage of the service; and to ensure the minimum conditions required for them to access and remain in the education system".

Thereby, the Constitution establishes the need to have a regulatory process of education quality as a fundamental civil right. Additionally, Article 68 of the Constitution declares that "individuals may found educational establishments" and that "the law shall establish the conditions for their creation and management".

Since the 1991 Colombian Constitution, Colombian education has new and substantial regulatory horizons while promoting its democratization and respect for the country's cultural diversity. This leads to the universalization

of basic education, improvement in education quality, and an increase in the coverage of upper secondary and higher education. As legislative development, Law 30 was issued in 1992, which will regulate everything related to university autonomy and the categories of higher education. In this context, "the assessment of teaching quality of the teachers and directors, and the institutional projects arose as strategies to improve the quality of education," (Torrado, 1998: 17).

4.1.1.1 The CNA has an established legal foundation and it is recognized as the competent external organization.

Law 30 summarizes the nature and roles of higher education and, therefore, defines it as "a cultural public service inherent to the state's purpose" with a social role. One of its notable objectives is to provide a quality service to the community, which refers to the academic results, means and processes used, the institutional infrastructure, the qualitative and quantitative dimensions thereof, and the conditions of each institution (Article 6, paragraph c). Therefore, as a cultural public service, higher education is subject not only to promotion, but also to control, audit and oversight by the state (Articles 31 and 32). This is led by the Colombian President, who must: Promote the creation of mechanisms for quality assessment of higher education institutions' academic programs. (Article 31, paragraph h). Additionally, Article 53 of Chapter 5 stipulates the creation of the National Accreditation System for higher education institutions. Its essential task is to ensure society that the institutions that are part of the system comply with the highest quality requirements and achieve their purposes and objectives (see details of the whole regulatory framework in Annex 1 Inventory of Rules).

Accreditation is assumed as a temporary recognition that higher education institutions may apply for on a voluntary basis, with institutional self-assessment being "an ongoing task of higher education institutions that shall be part of the accreditation process," as stipulated in Article 55 of the same chapter. In 1994, Articles 53 and 54 of Law 30/1992 were extended and regulated through Decree 2094, which defines the concept of accreditation (covered in Article 53 of Law 30), as follows:

> *Accreditation is the act whereby the state adopts and discloses the academic peers' recognition of an institution's verification of the quality of its academic programs, its organization and operation, and fulfillment of its social role.*

Article 2 establishes which entities form part of the SNA: CESU, CNA, the institutions eligible for accreditation, and the academic community. Article 3 defines the roadmap that the accreditation process must follow. This starts with self-assessment by the institution, continues with external assessment by the academic peers, and is followed by the final assessment by the CNA. If the result is positive, it is completed with the act of accreditation by the state. If the result is not positive, the process is completed with a series of recommendations sent to the dean of the institution that teaches the program or of the institution seeking accreditation. Additionally, Articles 7, 8 and 9 regulate the procedure outlined in Article 3. Article 7: Once the self-assessment and external assessment documents have been analyzed and the institution has been heard, the National Accreditation Council shall proceed, when applicable, to recognize the quality of the program or the institution, or to make the recommendations it deems relevant. Article 8: Once the aforementioned procedure has been completed, based on the opinion issued by the National Accreditation Council, the Ministry of Education shall issue the act of accreditation. Article 9: In the event that the program or institution is not accredited, once it has responded to the recommendations of the National Accreditation Council, it may request to start a new process after two (2) years. To summarize, in 1992, with the enactment of Law 30, and in 1994, with the extension of some of its articles, the budgets are directly outlined to carry out quality assessment of higher education in Colombia, which is incorporated into the SNA as part of the work toward educational quality.

Table 20. List of Higher Education Regulations and Accreditation Processes of Institutions and Programs

TYPE AND NUMBER	ISSUED BY	SUBJECT	DATE OF ISSUE	STATUS
Political Constitution of Colombia	Colombian Congress	Articles 44, 45, 67, 68 and 69 of the Constitution establish the basic concepts of education in the country.	July 20, 1991	Effective

TYPE AND NUMBER	ISSUED BY	SUBJECT	DATE OF ISSUE	STATUS
Law 30/1992	Colombian Congress	Whereby the public service of higher education is organized.	December 28, 1992	Effective
Law 1188/2008	Colombian Congress	Whereby the qualification certification of the higher education programs are regulated and other provisions are pronounced.	April 25, 2008	Effective
Law 1753/2015	Colombian Congress	Whereby the 2014-2018 National Development Plan (Everyone for a New Country) is issued.	June 9, 2015	Effective
Decree 1860/1994	Colombian Presidency	Whereby Law 115/1994 is partially regulated in educational and general organizational aspects.	August 3, 1994	
Decree 2904/1994	Colombian Presidency	Whereby Articles 53 and 54 of Law 30/1992 are regulated.	December 31, 1994	Effective
Decree 1655/1999	Colombian Presidency - Ministry of National Education	Whereby the "Luis López de Mesa" Order of Higher Education and Certification is created. Honor created by the Colombian government to praise and commend the academic programs of higher education that help to improve the quality of Colombian education through a process of voluntary accreditation.	August 25, 1999	Effective
Decree 2216/2003	Colombian Presidency	Whereby the requirements are established for redefining and changing the academic nature of the public and private, technology and technical professional institutions, and other provisions are pronounced.	August 3, 2003	
Decree 4322/2005	Colombian Presidency - Ministry of National Education	Whereby the "Francisco José de Caldas" Order of High Quality Accreditation for Higher Education is created. Honor created to praise and commend the higher education institutions that through a process of voluntary accreditation, have demonstrated that their academic and administrative activities are oriented toward an ideal of excellence, and therefore, that they have helped to improve the quality of Colombia's higher education system.	November 25, 2005	Effective
Decree 1295/2010	Colombian Presidency - Ministry of National Education	Whereby the qualification certification described by Law 1188/2008 and the provision and development of higher education academic programs are regulated.	April 20, 2010	Effective
Decree 1075/2015	Colombian Presidency - Ministry of National Education	Whereby the Single Education Sector Regulatory Decree is issued.	May 26, 2015	Effective
Decree 2450/2015	Colombian Presidency - Ministry of National Education	Whereby the quality conditions for granting and renewing the qualification certification of the bachelor's degree and education-based programs are regulated, and Single Education Sector Regulatory Decree 1075/2015 is added.	December 17, 2015	Effective
Agreement no. 06/1995	CESU	Whereby the general policies of accreditation are adopted and the contrary laws are revoked.	December 14, 1995	Effective
Agreement no. 02/2005	CESU	Whereby CESU Agreement 001/2000 was revoked, the CNA regulations were issued, and the integration and roles of the CNA were established.	June 23, 2005	Effective
Agreement no. 02/2006	CESU	Whereby new policies for accreditation of undergraduate programs and institutions are adopted and the contrary laws are revoked	December 1, 2006	
Agreement no. 01/2010	CESU	Whereby the National Accreditation Council (CNA) is authorized to design and enact the guidelines for the high quality accreditation of master's degrees and doctorates, and the accreditation ranges are unified for undergraduate, master's degree, doctorate and institutional programs.	February 3, 2010	Effective
Agreement no. 04/2010	CESU	Whereby Article 2 of Agreement no. 2 / June 23, 2005, is amended.	September 10, 2010	Effective

Since 1995 and to date, the dynamics of the regulatory framework regarding accreditation have been responsible for refining, extending and specifying actions regarding the National Accreditation System and the CNA, and their respective processes.

CESU Agreement no. 6/1995 establishes the general policies of the SNA, the accreditation process, its characteristics, and its agents or participants. Subsequently, with CESU Agreement 02/2005 (which revokes a prior agreement of 2000), the regulations of the CNA, the profile of its members and the roles of the CNA are issued, which are provided in Article 8:

"It is the responsibility of the National Accreditation Council to promote and execute the accreditation policy adopted by the National Council of Higher Education and to coordinate the respective processes. Therefore, it will guide the institutions so that they carry out their self-assessment; it will adopt the quality criteria, tools and technical indicators that must be applied in external assessment; it will appoint the academic peers that must practice it; it will respond to their inquiries; it will listen to the institution; and it will make the final assessment, which it shall send to the respective educational institution with the relevant recommendations."

Agreement 02/2006 includes the new policies for accreditation of undergraduate programs and institutions. Therefore, the CESU, protected by Section 1, paragraph b), Article 36 of Law 30/1992, establishes the term for recognition of the accreditation or renewal of the accreditation of programs and institutions for periods of four, six, eight or ten years. Article 2 establishes the conditions for renewal of accreditation: "external assessment visits to the main program as well as to each one of the extensions of the respective programs to verify whether these maintain the conditions of high quality, response to the previous recommendations, and implementation of the plan for improvement." Articles 3 and 4 introduce a new characteristic within the "organization, administration and management" factor:

"The procedure defined by the institution for the extension of programs ensures that the assessed program is provided and developed in extension, complying with the minimum quality conditions of a program of its nature and category (Article 4).

The procedure defined by the institution for the creation, modification and extension of programs ensures that every program provided on the main campus or in extension complies with the minimum quality conditions of a program of its nature and category (Article 4)"[14].

The agreements, guidelines and guides for accreditation of higher education institutions and their programs are cited below.

Table 21. References of Agreements, Guidelines and Guides

INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION				
TYPE AND NUMBER	ISSUED BY	SUBJECT	DATE OF ISSUE	STATUS
Agreement no. 02/2011	CESU	Whereby the criteria are established for the accreditation processes of higher education institutions and academic programs.	5/11/2011	EFFECTIVE
Agreement no. 03/2014	CESU	Whereby the guidelines for institutional accreditation are established. Contains the guidelines for the accreditation process of higher education institutions.	12/16/2014	EFFECTIVE
Guidelines	CNA	Guidelines for institutional accreditation.	November 2006	REVOKED
Guidance	CNA	Guidance for the submission of the self-assessment report for institutional accreditation. http://www.cna.gov.co/1741/articles-186376_Ori_pres_infor_AE_Acred_Inst.pdf		EFFECTIVE

PROGRAM ACCREDITATION

TYPE AND NUMBER	ISSUED BY	SUBJECT	DATE OF ISSUE	STATUS

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[14] Ministry of National Education – Andrés Bello Agreement (2013). State of the Art National Accreditation System and Identification of Roadmaps and Subjects for Research and Development to Improve Quality Conditions.

Agreement no. 03/2011	CESU	Whereby the guidelines are established for accreditation of the programs of institutionally accredited institutions.	7/8/2011	EFFECTIVE
Agreement no. 02/2012	CESU	Whereby the assessment of initial conditions is established for accreditation of academic programs. Establishes the general procedure to start the self-assessment process for accreditation of academic programs.	4/18/2012	EFFECTIVE
Guideline	CNA	Guidelines for the high quality accreditation of master's degrees and doctorates. http://www.cna.gov.co/1741/articles-186359_Lineamiento_Maestria_Doctorados.pdf	May 2010	EFFECTIVE
Guideline	CNA	Guidelines for accreditation of undergraduate programs http://www.cna.gov.co/1741/articles-186359_pregrado_2013.pdf	January 2013	EFFECTIVE
Guideline	National Accreditation Council	Guidelines for accreditation of medical/surgical specialties.	August 2016	EFFECTIVE
Procedure Guide no. 3	CNA	Self-assessment for accreditation of undergraduate programs. http://www.cna.gov.co/1741/articles-186376_guia_autoev_2013.pdf	January 2013	THE 2016 GUIDE IS IN THE APPROVAL PROCESS
Procedure Guide no. 3	CNA	External assessment guide for accreditation of undergraduate academic programs. http://www.cna.gov.co/1741/articles-186376_archivo_pdf_evaluacion_externa.pdf	November 2006	THE 2016 GUIDE IS IN THE APPROVAL PROCESS
Procedure Guide no. 4	CNA	Guidelines for the renewal of accreditation of undergraduate academic programs. http://www.cna.gov.co/1741/articles-186376_guia_5.pdf	November 2007	THE 2016 GUIDE IS IN THE APPROVAL PROCESS
Procedure Guide no. 5	CNA	Guidance for external assessment for institutional accreditation. http://www.cna.gov.co/1741/articles-186376_guia_6.pdf	November 2008	THE 2016 GUIDE IS IN THE APPROVAL PROCESS
Procedure Guide	CNA	Self-assessment for high quality accreditation of master's degree and doctorate programs. http://www.cna.gov.co/1741/articles-186376_Guia_mae_doc_2010.pdf	May 2010	THE 2016 GUIDE IS IN THE APPROVAL PROCESS

DOCUMENTS FOR CONSULTATION BY ACADEMIC PEERS

Document	CNA	Code of ethics for academic peers responsible for external assessment for high quality accreditation. http://www.cna.gov.co/1741/articles-186793_Codigo_Etica_Pares.pdf	2010	EFFECTIVE
CNA Procedure Guide no. 3	CNA	External assessment guide for accreditation of undergraduate academic programs. http://www.cna.gov.co/1741/articles-186376_archivo_pdf_evaluacion_externa.pdf	2006	THE NEW GUIDE IS IN THE APPROVAL PROCESS
CNA Procedure Guide no. 5		Guidance for external assessment for institutional accreditation. http://www.cna.gov.co/1741/articles-186376_guia_6.pdf	Second Edition -2006	THE NEW GUIDE IS IN THE APPROVAL PROCESS
Handbook	CNA	Academic Peer Training Handbook. http://www.cna.gov.co/1741/articles-186376_manual_pares.pdf		
Form or Guide	CNA	Form for the submission of the External Assessment Report for Accreditation of Postgraduate Programs. http://www.cna.gov.co/1741/articles-186363_GuiaPares.pdf	2012	EFFECTIVE

4.1.1.2 The CNA takes into consideration the guidelines issued by the international networks and other associations to create their policies and practices

As part of the processes of international cooperation and participation in international networks, the National Accreditation Council has been strengthening the connections between its national strategies and programs together with mutual interests between international agencies, networks or associations of which it is a member. Consequently, it has been improving knowledge and feedback on the National Accreditation System,

through the preparation of guidelines and procedures to carry out and implement the quality assurance, self-assessment and accreditation processes.

The policies established by the CNA include internationalization as one of the essential components for higher education quality assurance. This policy was ratified through the assessment process that the council was subjected to, and it was the responsibility of the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA). As a result, the Multilateral Agreement on the Mutual Recognition of Accreditation Results regarding Joint Programmes (MULTRA) was signed. Consequently, the CNA promotes the participation of institutions in international quality assessment processes, particularly the quality of internationalization through the ECA standards and in accordance with the criteria of the CeQuint project. During its implementation, it achieved the participation of the Universidad de La Salle, which was assessed in 2014 and certified in 2015, consolidating itself as the first non-European educational and university system to subject itself to this process by the ECA.

Additionally, another example of the consideration and internalization of models and guidelines for quality assurance processes is the participation in the Regional Accreditation System of University Degree Courses (Arcu-Sur). In this process, as a result of cooperation and joint work with the Network of National Accreditation Agencies of MERCOSUR Countries, guidelines have been established for regional accreditation of higher education programs and mutual recognition of the accreditation. One of the notable achievements of the progress in the consolidation of the quality assurance system has been the calls for applications for regional accreditation. As part of which, the higher education programs participate in parallel with the national accreditation processes with the CNA and in the regional accreditation process with Arcu-Sur, for which the CNA has adopted the external assessment forms and criteria leading to the verification and certification of quality defined by Arcu-Sur.

In accordance with the above, Arcu-Sur has been a determining factor in terms of creating institutional policies that influence the practice of the accreditation processes, creating a special procedure for the programs and institutions that are subjected to accreditation or reaccreditation, facilitating the implementation of a self-assessment process with some unique guides and a visit of peers with the capacity to jointly assess the two aspirations of the academic program.

Likewise, the internationalization that the National Accreditation Council has been adapting to has led to it analyzing international trends, and how quality assessment has been addressed in the context of participation in networks and associations such as RIACES, ECA, RANA, ARCU-SUR, and CONSUAN. Consequently, it has generated new guidelines under which:

- The conditions of quality for granting and renewing the qualification certification of the bachelor's degree programs are regulated through Decree 1075/2015.
- The guidelines are approved for accreditation of higher education institutions through Agreement 003/2014.
- The guidelines are established for accreditation of undergraduate programs in January 2013.

In accordance with the above, the National Accreditation Council has an organizational and functional structure that constantly focuses its actions on improving awareness of the international environment, and actively participates in international networks, associations and initiatives that allow it to adapt to global trends and improve the quality assurance and accreditation processes in the dynamic context of internationalization.

4.1.1.3 The CNA has a clear, public policy for the prevention of conflicts of interest, which it applies to its staff, its decision-making body and external auditors.

Since the start of its activities, the CNA has established regulations on ineligibilities and restrictions for the council members and staff of the Technical Secretariat, which were updated in September 2003, when they were approved with the name of "Code of Honor". Subsequently, in 2010, they were amended and received the denomination of "Code of Ethics for Council Members and Staff of the Technical Secretariat of the National Accreditation Council" (http://www.cna.gov.co/1741/articles-186795_Codigo_Etica_CNA.pdf). Section 5 of this document establishes the ineligibilities, incompatibilities, obstacles, objections and conflicts of interest, as follows:

"The CNA's council members will be subject to the system of ineligibilities, incompatibilities and conflicts of interest established in the Political Constitution and in the Civil Procedure Code. In addition to the aforementioned cases, those that correspond to members of the Technical Secretariat according to the type of employment contract they hold shall also be applicable to them.

Agreement no. 02 / June 23, 2005, issued by the National Council of Higher Education (CESU) establishes the following ineligibilities and incompatibilities for the CNA's council members:

a) It is incompatible with the roles of the council members who advise any higher education institution on a personal basis regarding the accreditation process.

b) The appointed persons shall not work as representatives or delegates of any institution or professional association. In addition to the aforementioned guidance, the National Accreditation Council has established that the council members abide by the following guidance regarding the commitments that they may incur regarding the issue of self-assessment and accreditation of higher education institutions and programs.

c) Exercise their role under the recognition and respect of university autonomy and promotion thereof.

d) Maintain strict reservation about the actions or decisions of the National Accreditation Council regarding the accreditation of higher education institutions and programs.

e) Not participate in deliberations and decisions on accreditation regarding the institutions with which the council member has or has had a stable working relationship or employment in the last year.

f) Not lead accreditation and self-assessment processes in the institution they work for.

g) Abstain from giving tips or guidance other than that which the National Accreditation Council has agreed or made public.

h) Not receive professional fees for their participation in national events on self-assessment and accreditation of institutions and programs.

i) Abstain from simultaneously having the role of council member and the role of dean or registered agent of a higher education institution.

j) Generally, the council members commit to not carry out actions that may give an advantage to the higher education institution in its accreditation process.

k) The members of the National Accreditation Council and the staff of its Technical Secretariat must maintain confidentiality of information on the assessment and accreditation processes of programs and institutions until they are completed."

Additionally, and taking into account that as external assessors, the academic peers are responsible for assessment for high quality accreditation, they must be exemplary members of the academic and scientific community. As exemplary and renowned members, the peers must be recognized in the first instance by the way in which they carry out their tasks of their field and of their assessment work. Therefore, the CNA, and society in general expect that the academic peers, in compliance with the responsibility appointed to them by the state, as well as strictly observing the general regulations regarding public ethics, put into practice the criteria of the accreditation model and promote respect for the values and universal examples that comprise the academic ethos.

Similarly, and considering the responsibilities and social effects from the work of the peers, it was deemed necessary to reiterate and describe the ethical guidance that must guide their behavior in their relations with the institutions and programs in the assessment process of which they are the main agent. Therefore, the council has established and published the Code of Ethics that the academic peers who carry out the external assessment of the programs and institutions must follow (http://www.cna.gov.co/1741/articles-186793_Codigo_Etica_Pares.pdf).

In accordance with the Code of Ethics for Academic Peers, they shall be subject to the system of ineligibilities, incompatibilities and conflicts of interest established in the Political Constitution and in the Civil Procedure Code.

Academic peers may incur a conflict of interest when, in exercise of their roles, a conflict arises between their own interests and those of the accreditation agency. Therefore, they must avoid involvement in situations, such as:

1. Acting in accreditation processes fully aware that they are affected by institutional, work, professional or external commercial pressure that could place them in a real or apparent position of conflict of interest.

2. Take part in an activity that may put at risk trust in the competition, impartiality, judgment or integrity of actions by the CNA.

3. With awareness, try to benefit from information that is not available to the general public, and that they have obtained in the exercise of their roles; or not return official documents and confidential copies related to the accreditation activities in which they have participated (p. 6)

4. Take advantage of their opportunity as assessors to promote the interests of the institution or company they belong to.

5. Any situation or activity that contradicts the behavior guidelines established in this code.

Additionally, the academic peers must abstain from intervening in accreditation processes in the following cases.

a) When currently or during the two years prior to the start of said procedures, they have or have had a personal, academic or professional relationship with the institution or academic program that they are going to assess, or any other relationship that may imply ineligibility for the performance of their role as academic peers.

b) When, at the time of assessment, they have a marital relationship or relationship to the second degree of kinship with a director of a higher education institution or of the assessed academic unit.

It is also important to note that axiological quality guidelines have been established in the guidelines for accreditation, which provide guidance for the accreditation process. These guidelines are considered as *references or principles* that govern the work of the National Accreditation Council:

Table 22. Principles

Criterion or Principle	Characteristic
Aptitude	The capacity of the institution and its program to fully comply with the specific tasks that result from its mission, aims and nature; all coherently coordinated in the institutional project (CNA, 2012: 10).
Relevance	The capacity of the institution and its program to respond to the needs of the environment. Needs that the institution or program does not respond to passively, but proactively; understood as the concern to proactively transform the context in which it operates within the framework of values that inspire and define the institution (CNA, 2012: 11).
Responsibility	The existing capacity in the institution and its program to recognize and face the consequences of their actions. Said capacity results from prior awareness of the possible effects of the course of action they decide to undertake. It is a criterion closely related to the objectives accepted as a task or as a challenge. Responsibility is a right (CNA, 2012: 10).
Integrity	Honesty as a constant concern of an institution and its program in fulfillment of their tasks. In turn, it implies a concern for the respect of universal values and references that shape the academic ethos and the observance of the universally accepted values as ones that inspire the higher education service (CNA, 2012: 10).
Fairness	The willingness that moves the institution and its program to give everyone fair treatment. It directly expresses the sense of justice with which it operates. Inside the institution, for example, in the decision-making processes, in the assessment systems and in the ways of recognizing academic merit. In a more general context, in the continuous response to the requirements of principle that arise from the nature of education as a public right, for example, recognition of differences, acceptance of different cultures and their multiple expressions, and no form of discrimination (CNA, 2012: 10).
Coherence	It is established as the degree of correspondence between the parts of the institution and between them and the institution as a whole. It is also the adaption of the policies and means that the purposes have. Additionally, it refers to the existing correlation between what the institution and program say they are and what they actually do (CNA, 2012: 11).
Universality	The most intrinsic dimension of the work by the institution that provides a higher education service. This is the human knowledge that through the fields of action indicated by law serve as the foundations of its identity. In any kind of institution, academic work lies in one or several areas of knowledge, whether they are produced through research, they are reproduced through teaching, or they are recreated, contextualized and disclosed in multiple ways. In all cases, knowledge has a universal dimension that makes it intersubjectively valid. Its validity is not dependent on the geographical context of its production. Consequently, upon institutionalization, knowledge does not lose its requirement of universality. On the contrary, it nourishes the academic work of higher education, of any kind, creating an academic culture. Additionally, from a more external perspective, universality also refers to the multiplicity and extension of the spheres in which the institution's work unfolds. Its meaning may be increased to refer to the geographical sphere over which it exercises influence and the social groups to which it extends its action, among other aspects (CNA, 2012: 10).
Transparency	The capacity of the institution and its program to explain, without any pretext, their internal operating conditions and the results of them. Transparency is the result of integrity and in turn, it is one of its essential ingredients. It is expressed in accountability to their stakeholders and to society in their sphere of influence (CNA, 2012: 10).
Effectiveness	Degree of proximity between the established aims and the achievements obtained by the institution and its program (CNA, 2012: 11).
Efficiency	The measure of how appropriate the institution and program's use of their means is for the achievement of their objectives (CNA, 2012: 11).
Sustainability	Way in which, over time, the program and institution implement activities and actions aimed at achieving the goals and objectives set by each program. These must be part of the institution's development plan.

Source: Official documents of the CNA, as at October 2012.

4.1.2 Mission and aims

The Colombian government's guidance in the last four years is recorded in the information for the National Development Plan (PND, for the Spanish original), which is the framework of reference for the creation of institutional plans.

Education is an essential pillar of the PND, which is understood "as the most powerful instrument of social equality and economic growth in the long term, with a vision aimed at closing gaps in access and **quality of the education system** between individuals, population groups and regions, bringing the country closer to high international standards and achieving equal opportunities for all citizens."[15]

In this context, the CNA uses its strategic framework, which is listed below according to the system proposed by the 2016 INQAAHE Guidelines.

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[15] National Planning Department (DNP, for the Spanish original). Law 1753/2015, whereby the 2014-2018 National Development Plan (Everyone for a New Country) is issued.

4.1.2.1 The CNA has a written mission and set of objectives that explicitly establish that higher education external quality assurance is its main concern and describe the purpose and scope of its activities, which translate into verifiable policies and measurable objectives.

Taking into account that established by the National Council of Higher Education (CESU, for the Spanish original), it is the responsibility of the National Accreditation Council (CNA, for the Spanish original) to promote and execute the Accreditation Policy adopted by CESU, and to coordinate the respective processes. Therefore, it will guide the institutions so that they carry out their self-assessment; it will adopt the quality criteria, tools and technical indicators that must be applied in the external assessment; it will appoint the academic peers who shall practice it; it will respond to their inquiries; it will listen to the institution; and it will make the final assessment, which it shall send to the respective educational institution with the relevant recommendations[16].

In accordance with the above, the CNA has established the mission to[17]:

> *"Help promote high quality in higher education institutions and assure society that the accredited institutions and programs meet the highest quality standards, and achieve their aims and objectives."*

The assessment process maintains its academic nature and it is carried out within a framework of respect for the vocation and identity of each institution, aiming to reinforce the variety and diversity of Colombia's higher education system, which constitutes one of its main characteristics. Likewise, it works to include the National Accreditation System in international events that permit greater visibility and recognition of the higher education institutions that are part of it and facilitate the mobility of the university community.

The foundations of the accreditation process are based on university autonomy and the nature of public service, which are essential pillars of higher education in Colombia. Therefore, it is the higher education institutions themselves that are responsible for improving their quality, without detriment to the state exercising its constitutional roles of audit and oversight.

Accreditation does not intend to standardize higher education institutions or programs. On the contrary, it aims to reinforce variety and diversity in quality, as well as the specific characteristics of each institution.

The vision includes the following elements:

- The National Accreditation System will be consolidated as a benchmark of high quality in the national and international context, which will act in coordination with the higher education system on the execution of policies, adoption of strategies and use and integration of information systems and technology according to the requirements and trends of the globalized world.
- The National Accreditation System will strengthen a culture of continuous improvement based on the autonomy, voluntary nature, inclusion and integration of higher education institutions, in pursuit of greater levels of quality.
- The CNA will continue to be an academically and technically autonomous organization, which by having adopted international assessment criteria of accreditation systems for its international external assessment, ensures the reliability of its decisions and actions in the national and international spheres of higher education.
- The CNA will consolidate a flexible consolidation model that recognizes the disciplinary and institutional nature and characteristics supported by strategies and information systems that permit the follow-up and monitoring of the improvement plans that are a result of the self-assessment and accreditation process.
- Together with the Colombian government, the CNA will adopt mechanisms that encourage the incorporation and maintenance of higher education institutions in the National Accreditation System.

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[16] CESU Agreement no. 002/2005. Whereby the regulations, roles and integration of the CNA are issued.

[17] CNA, Basis for the 2010-2012 CNA Strategic Plan. Accessed at: http://www.cna.gov.co/1741/article-187887.html

🞣 The National Accreditation System and the CNA will be nationally and internationally recognized for their governance and continuous improvement model, transparency of accreditation processes, technical independence and commitment to the quality of higher education. Said recognition will facilitate the establishment of mechanisms for the mobility of human talent and for the transfer of knowledge.[18]

The CNA's essential objectives, which were established in Agreement 04/2013 and have become the references for planning the action plans and other actions that the CNA develops, are as follows:

1. Promote the accreditation processes of higher education institutions and programs in Colombia. To achieve this, the CNA will provide advice, support and training to promote consolidation and ongoing strengthening of excellence.
2. Regularly prepare and update the guidelines for accreditation of the different categories of education institutions and programs that comprise the higher education system in Colombia, according to the needs of the Colombian context. These shall be submitted to the CESU for its review and approval.
3. Recommend the accreditation of Colombian higher education institutions to the Ministry of National Education.
4. Recommend the accreditation of programs provided by higher education institutions in Colombia that have successfully completed the accreditation process to the Ministry of National Education.
5. Strengthen institutional self-assessment as an ongoing task of higher education institutions in Colombia and as an integral part of the accreditation process.
6. Promote the cooperation and exchange of information between higher education institutions in Colombia and abroad.
7. Provide the transfer of knowledge and information of different accreditation systems in the world to enrich the activities of encouragement and qualification of the self-assessment, external assessment and ongoing improvement processes of higher education institutions and programs in Colombia.
8. Promote and contribute to the interconnection of the different accreditation systems so that they support topics such as: international accreditations and certifications, student and staff mobility, recognition of qualifications, standardization of credits, recognition of levels of study, and academic programs.
9. Promote and drive research, reflection and analysis of the current dynamics of higher education from the perspective of assessment and accreditation.
10. Establish multilateral agreements with the world's accreditation agencies to benefit the progress of higher education in Colombia.
11. With the prior positive opinion of the CESU, promote processes of ongoing qualification and improvement of higher education in Latin American countries[19].

This strategic framework established for the CNA is the point of reference for structuring the action plan, which will be discussed in more detail in Section 4.1.3.4 of this document.

4.1.2.2   The CNA has a government structure that is consistent with its mission and objectives, as well as adequate mechanisms that involve the relevant stakeholders in establishing its standards and criteria.

The CNA is comprised of seven academic members of the highest scientific and professional quality of national and international prestige, who are selected from the Colombian academic community by a public call for applications made by the National Accreditation Council. The appointed persons may not be reelected.

The CESU is responsible for appointing the members of the CNA. To be selected as a member of the CNA, it is necessary to meet the following requirements[20]:

🞣 Have a master's degree and/or a doctorate, and demonstrate national and international recognition of academic work or research.

[18] CNA, Basis for the 2010-2012 CNA Strategic Plan. Accessed at: http://www.cna.gov.co/1741/article-187887.html

[19] National Council of Higher Education (CESU) Agreement no. 002/2005, whereby the regulations, roles and incorporation of the CNA are issued.
[20] National Council of Higher Education (CESU) Agreement no. 004/2010. Whereby Article 2 of Agreement no. 2/2005 is amended.

- Demonstrate experience in the management of undergraduate or postgraduate programs or both, or participation in governing or management boards of higher education institutions for no less than three (3) years, or experience in the management of quality assessment processes of higher education institutions for no less than five (5) years.
- Demonstrate research experience and publications recognized by the scientific community by virtue of their quality and national and international contribution, or experience in the management of quality assessment processes of higher education institutions for no less than five (5) years.

More than one member that has an employment contract with the same institution or that is part of its governance or management bodies may not form part of the CNA.

Appointment as a member of the CNA is non-delegable and shall be for personal periods. The appointed persons shall not work as representatives or delegates of any institution or professional association. However, the candidates may recommend different institutions than the one with which they currently hold work or employment contracts.

The CNA's council members have the following roles and responsibilities:

a) Study and approve the external assessment reports submitted by the academic peers.
b) Study the documents of the accreditation processes that are subject to their consideration, and prior to each session, prepare the presentations for analysis and approval by the full council.
c) Attend the ordinary and extraordinary council meetings.
d) Participate in the approval or recommendation of the accreditation processes and in the other decisions and issues recorded in the agendas of each session.
e) Make visits to assess the initial conditions and the support visits requested by the higher education institutions.
f) Participate in the meetings and events required by the Ministry of National Education.
g) Represent the CNA before national and international organizations where it has representation or to which it is invited as an academic institution.

The council elects a coordinator from its members by simple majority vote for a period of one (1) year. The coordinator shall have the following responsibilities and roles:

a) Chair the ordinary and extraordinary meetings of the CNA.
b) Coordinate the agenda of activities for each council meeting.
c) Establish efficient mechanisms to respond to the academic community that presents questions or queries regarding the CNA's processes and programs.
d) Manage the programs and projects that the CNA's Technical Secretariat has under its responsibility.
e) Represent the CNA before national and international organizations where it has representation or to which it is invited as an academic institution.
f) Prepare an annual action plan for the supporting foundations of the CNA and present it at the plenary session.
g) Prepare and propose the annual budget with the Technical Secretariat for the adequate operation of the CNA.
h) Convene the plenary session of the CNA at ordinary and extraordinary sessions when necessary.

4.1.2.3 The composition of the decision-making body and/or its regulatory framework ensure its independence and impartiality.

The main rules for the selection of council members, which aim to ensure their impartiality in this process, are recorded in CESU Agreement no. 002/2005. From the perspective of its action, it has the following elements that ensure its impartiality and independence:

- Selection of council members through a public call for applications, which as well as taking into account the qualities established in Agreement 004/2010, establishes the requirements and conditions to be a member of the CNA. These calls for applications require the CESU's approval in order to be published.
- There is a system of ineligibilities and incompatibilities.
- There is an internal system in which the rights, obligations and prohibitions of the council members are outlined.

Currently, the Council is comprised of seven (7) members, whose profiles are presented in the attached "Internal Structure of the CNA and Governance Processes" report.

As part of the roles established by the CESU, the members of this official body intervene in all the stages of the accreditation process; make visits to academic institutions and programs to assess the initial conditions; provide support to higher education institutions; revise the external assessment reports submitted by the peers; prepare and present presentations about the programs and institutions assigned to them; attend the meetings they are called to; represent the CNA in national and international academic events related to quality, assessment and accreditation of higher education; and hold ordinary sessions once a month for two days, as well as extraordinary sessions when necessary. The council has a coordinator appointed by the same council members to exercise this role for one year, who directs the management of the CNA and the Technical Secretariat.

The CNA is responsible for the final assessment of the academic programs and institutions based on the self-assessment report submitted by the HEI, the external assessment report written by the academic peers, and the dean's comments. It is also responsible for issuing a technical/academic opinion and sending it to the Ministry of National Education for the issue of the administrative act of accreditation; and for communicating the result of the final assessment to the institution, together with the relevant recommendations in the event that they do not warrant a positive opinion for accreditation.

Additionally, the CNA is responsible for studying and resolving the requests for reconsideration in the plenary sessions, whether they are a result of the recommendations to the institutions when they do not achieve accreditation, or of appeals for replacement filed by the Ministry of National Education because of disagreement with the terms of the accreditation.

The Technical Secretariat provides technical support to carry out the session; prepare its minutes; and prepare the draft administrative act or recommendations for the receipt, processing and inclusion in the agenda of requests for reconsideration for accreditation processes of higher education institutions or programs to be analyzed in the corresponding session.

Similarly, it is the operating organization of all of the council's main roles. It is comprised of the appointed employees or by the supporting staff appointed for that purpose by the Ministry of National Education. The responsibilities of said secretariat include annually presenting the draft budget for its operation and development of its main activities to the Vice-Ministry of Higher Education of the Ministry of National Education. Said resources are independently executed by the CNA.

With the support of the CNA, the Subdivision of Quality Assurance processes the administrative acts that grant the accreditation of programs or institutions, and those which resolve appeals for reversal or requests for review of the opinion.

The Subdivision of Quality Assurance of the Ministry of Education ensures the optimum development of this process, ensuring the necessary human, financial, technological and technical resources within the established regulations, policies and guidelines.

4.1.2.4 The organizational structure of the CNA makes it possible to effectively and efficiently carry out its external review processes.

The CNA's basic team is comprised of in-house staff who carry out the mission activities, which ensure the continuity of the processes in the event of any possibility in the support team.

Figure 7. Functional Structure by Process – CNA Technical Secretariat
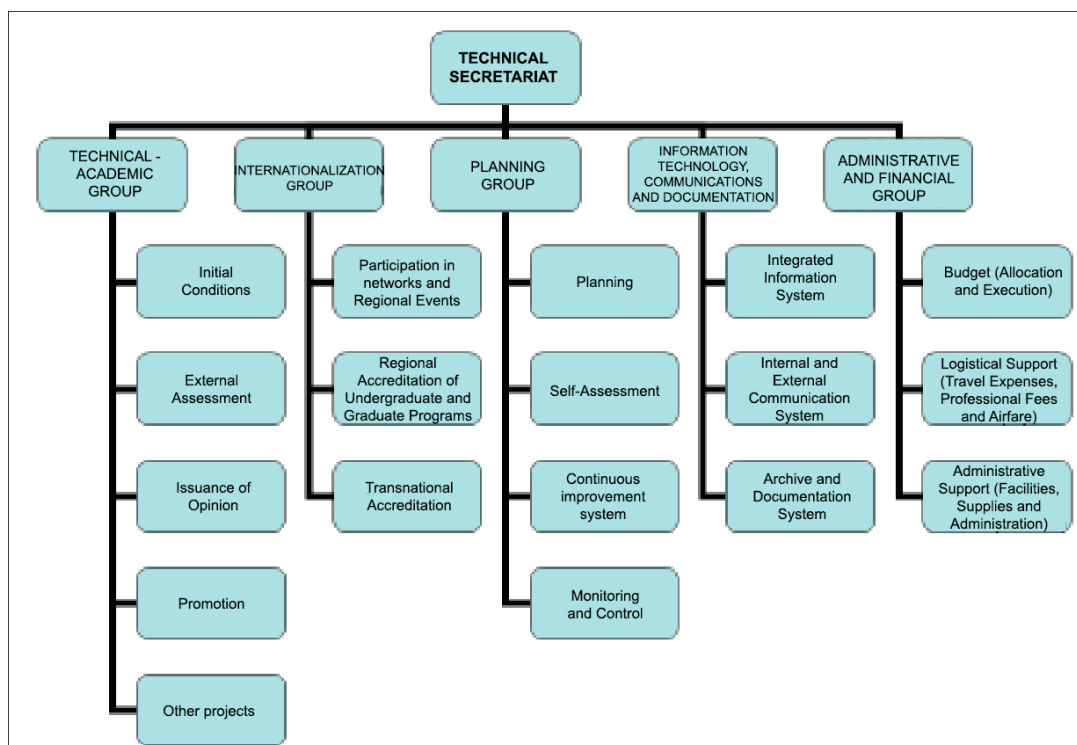
The CNA's Technical Secretariat is comprised of an interdisciplinary group and is organized into work groups according to the areas of the mission:

Technical Secretariat: Coordinates the administrative management of the CNA.

Technical/Academic Group: Responsible for coordinating the different phases of the accreditation process of undergraduate and postgraduate programs and institutions. Therefore, this area is responsible for supervising the processes of initial conditions, external assessment and issuance of opinions. Additionally, it supports the coordination, development and follow-up of the council's sessions and provides technical support to higher education institutions in their accreditation processes.

It is important to mention the management carried out by the Technical Secretariat, and in general, by the council, to support the CNA's professional team. This demonstrates the decision-making that has permitted the mitigation of the risks inherent to the growing volume of applications by HEIs, and in turn, has benefited the knowledge management processes inside the CNA. The most important aspects in which improvements in internal management can be seen are:

- Provides professional support to the council members for the preparation of their presentations, and consequently, the amount of issues they are responsible for is not so overwhelming.
- Promotes compliance with the outlined management plan, since it has appropriate professionals with ample experience in the topics in which the strategic actions have been established.
- Permits a more comprehensive perspective of the processes.
- Promotes the consolidation of the CNA's image both nationally and internationally, since tasks that were previously impossible to perform are now carried out with great aptitude.
- Promotes a greater response capacity.

The importance that the Ministry of National Education has given to this issue through the Subdivision of Quality Assurance is undeniable, because it has had the financial and administrative support to carry out this contracting, respecting the profile established by the CNA. The information related to the roles performed by each one of the team members, as well as their professional profiles, are presented in the attached report "Internal Structure of the CNA and Management Processes"

Additionally, the organization responsible for the external assessment visits is supported by two services contracts. The first was signed with a trust company hired to manage the financial resources corresponding to travel expenses and professional fees of the academic peers who make the visits. The second is with a logistics operator which is responsible for all the activities for the organization and logistics of the visits, such as the

management of itineraries and travel of the peers to the different cities, and the recording and control of the payment of travel expenses and professional fees.

One of the most important stages of the assessment process carried out by the CNA is the external assessment by academic peers. To a large extent, the legitimacy and recognition of the CNA's decisions are based on the work that they carry out. Therefore, the selection, appointment and assessment process is developed in Section 4.1.4.1 of this document.

4.1.2.5 The CNA has a strategic plan that helps it to assess its progress and a plan for future development.

The lines of the mission described in point 4.1.2.1 outline the action plans, which take into account elements of the national and international environment, the contributions of the university community, and the challenges that have arisen as part of the development of higher education in Colombia.

Therefore, the objectives set for the 2012 to 2015 period and for 2016 are described below:

Table 23. CNA Action Plan

Objectives	Strategies – Advances 2012-2015		Targets and Priorities 2016)
	Activities	**Advances**	
International certification of the CNA	International certification of the CNA	Certification granted by the INQAAHE in 2012	**Renewal of the international certification of the CNA:** • Self-assessment process • Visit of the assessment panel • 2012-2017 recertification process
Accreditation of undergraduate programs and institutions	1. Review and adjustment of the accreditation of undergraduate academic programs and institutions in the conceptual documents and methodological guides of the CNA. 2. Establishment of mechanisms that ensure the follow-up of improvement plans of higher education institutions and programs that have voluntarily participated in the accreditation process. 3. Preparation of the official procedure for the response to and processing of requests for reconsideration about decisions adopted by the council and in the framework of the specific characteristics of the Colombian model.	Update of the undergraduate guidelines (2013) and the institutional accreditation guidelines (2015) The best alternatives to carry out this monitoring are under analysis. The technical specifications "Issue and Reconsideration of Opinion" were created for this purpose.	**Optimize the accreditation processes of institutions and programs:** • Encourage institutional accreditation processes in the regions. • Encourage accreditation processes of technical and technology institutions and programs. • Make the interim support and follow-up visits to the accredited institutions. • Strengthen the support and interaction activities with the HEIs.
Accreditation of postgraduate, master's degree and doctorate programs	1. Communication and dissemination of the guidelines for the accreditation of master's degree and doctorate programs in the academic community using different technology and media. 2. Support in the self-assessment stage of the master's degree and doctorate programs that meet the official requirements to request accreditation. 3. Call for applications by the HEIs to start the accreditation process	This dissemination was carried out through its publication on the website, and meetings with institutions, among other means. Evidence of this coordination is found in the statistics on the accreditation process of these programs, which were analyzed in Chapter 3.	Strengthening the accreditation process of medical/surgical specialties: • Processes of agreement, discussion and adjustment with the intervention of the academic community, professional associations and stakeholder entities, which include the Quality Commission of the CESU and the Inter-sectoral Commission, Ministry of National

	of master's degree and doctorate programs.		• Education - Ministry of Health (January-July 2016). • Approval of the guidelines by the CESU - August 2016. • Dissemination process: September 2016
Bank of peers	1. Improvement of the participation of academic peers in external assessment for accreditation, regarding their selection, training and monitoring of their performance.	Strengthening of the bank of peers.	**Reorganization and Strengthening of the Bank of Peers** Strategies to strengthen the bank of assessment peers: • Review the selection criteria for assessment peers. • Extend the database of peers for bachelor's degree programs. • National training program for peers.
Strengthening of the internationalization of the CNA	1. Strengthening of the CNA's Internationalization Policy, which permits greater visibility and recognition of the quality of Colombian higher education. 2. Participation in the projects developed as part of some regional events, and networks of assessment and accreditation of the CNA and higher education institutions incorporated into the system. 3. Drive of cooperation and exchange activities of good practices that are established with counterpart agencies, and with those that have signed agreements with the CNA. 4. Strengthening of the exchange of experiences developed by accreditation bodies that promote awareness and mobility of the community interested in assessment and accreditation processes. 5. Progress in the consolidation of mechanisms that promote the transnationalization of the CNA. 6. Adoption and implementation of quality assurance criteria and guidelines that permit external assessment of the CNA.	The internationalization activities are described in detail throughout this document. **The following stand out:** Since 2012, two new calls for applications have been made to jointly accredit Colombian academic programs with Arcu-Sur. International and national workshops have been held with peers to strengthen the database of Arcu-Sur, as well as joint work for the creation of criteria for the new areas of knowledge in which Arcu-Sur is going to expand (geology, pharmacology and economics). Project to raise awareness and promote a culture of quality in the engineering programs in Colombia: The aim is to inform all the accredited engineering programs about the opportunities for international certification with ABET, ASIIN, EURACE and ARCUSUR.	**Internationalization Commitments** • Participation in networks and regional events. • Regional and international program accreditation
Development of the National Accreditation System	1. Reinforcement of the CNA's interaction and support in the academic community for the development of self-assessment and accreditation processes that strengthen the assessment and accreditation culture. 2. Development of the CNA that permits the inclusion of new institutions and programs into the high quality accreditation process, which involves guidance and technical support actions.	The support actions for institutions are listed in Section 4.2.1.2 of this document.	**Accreditation Guidelines** • Accreditation Guidelines on Medical Specialties • Exploration of relevance for creating other guidelines.

	3. Implementation of technological information and communication mechanisms that permit feedback on the CNA's guidelines, processes and management. 4. Follow-up and monitoring of the impact of accreditation on education and on the higher education institutions in order to show whether it complies with the essence of accreditation and the opportunities to improve its effectiveness. 5. Drive of CNA publications as mechanisms to disclose the academic products, and as a support and guiding **strategy** on issues regarding accreditation.		
Consolidation of the organization of the CNA	1. Strengthening of the Continuous Improvement System of the CNA, coordinating the planning exercises with the Quality Division of the Ministry of Education and with the self-assessment process. 2. Adaption of the CNA's organic structure and in-house staff, which allows it to adequately respond to the established mission and vision, to the expectations of the academic community, and to the current demands of higher education in the national and international context. 3. Improvement of the accountability mechanisms regarding the actions, procedures and results of CNA's management in the academic community. 4. Agreement of legal and administrative instruments that permit adequate budget allocation and its independent execution by the CNA. 5. Follow-up of the implementation of the improvement plan, which is a result of the planning and self-assessment processes and incorporates the expectations of the academic community.		**Internal Improvement of the CNA** • Strengthening of the CNA's technical team • Optimization of the SACES-CNA program
Development of the CNA's Integrated Information System	1. Establishment of technical requirements and development of the SACES-CNA module. High quality accreditation to facilitate the management of the accreditation processes, and interaction with other higher education information systems and higher education institutions. 2. Use of the SACES. High quality accreditation by the different internal and external agents of the accreditation process of programs and institutions. 3. Development of an awareness-raising and training strategy on the SACES. High quality accreditation to improve management and interaction with users of the CNA.	Development of the SACES-CNA module for accreditation processes of undergraduate programs. Constant use of the system's institutions to register the accreditation processes of undergraduate programs. Ongoing response to queries and support for the connection of information in the system via email and telephone. Improvement of connectivity.	**Development of the Postgraduate and Institutional SACES–CNA Modules** • Development of the module of postgraduate programs and for institutional accreditation processes. • Development of a system of indicators that supports the administrative work and mission of CNA. •

4. Strengthening of the technological infrastructure of the CNA, understood as improvement of hardware, connectivity, website, databases and IT support.		
5. Preparation and implementation of an internal and external communication plan that permits communication of the academic activities and results of the management by the CNA so that they are fully known and valued by stakeholders and society.		

The progress, achievements and activities carried out by the CNA to fulfill its mission and proposed objectives are shown throughout the document.

4.1.3   Resources

The CNA has adequate human and financial resources to effectively carry out internal activities and those that correspond to external assessment according to the established accreditation model and its mission.

4.1.3.1   The CNA has qualified, trained and capable staff for effective and efficient external assessment according to its mission and methodological approach.

The assessment by academic peers examines the way in which the programs meet the quality requirements established by the academic communities of the respective profession or discipline and their coherence with the nature and purposes of the institution, as well as the quality criteria defined in the CNA's model. The academic peers' work is based on identifying coherence between the information in the self-assessment report and the effective findings in the institution. The peers issue their opinions on quality based on the information obtained and even on aspects not considered in the self-assessment, but that are also relevant to assess the quality of the institutions and programs in a specific field. As a result of the external assessment, the peers submit a report to the CNA.

According to that indicated herein, the academic peers' work is crucial for the development of the accreditation process. Therefore, the way in which the CNA consolidates the bank of peers, appoints academic peers, and monitors and assesses their performance is described below.

4.1.3.1.1   Criteria and procedures for peer selection.

"Peer" means equal or similar. Regarding accreditation, "peer" refers to a member of the community that has the authority to judge the quality. In the accreditation process, the "peers" are responsible for issuing an opinion on quality, and they must be recognized by the community, which respects the peers as long as they are outstanding examples of the community and are professionally identified as having the authority to issue the opinion. Generally, the peers carry out research and teaching work and are recognized as professors, researchers or outstanding professionals.

The main requirements to be an academic peer include: (i) education in the area of knowledge of the program to assess, preferably at master's degree or doctorate level; (ii) teaching experience in national or international prestigious universities; and (iii) research experience, demonstrated by the status of COLCIENCIAS Researcher, or by renowned academic and scientific academic products (publications in magazines, books or chapters of books).

In addition to the above, academic peers must be aware of the principles, assumptions and implications of the work carried out in their area. This will allow them to comprehensively assess the corresponding education processes. The academic peers must be able to assess quality taking into account specific knowledge, such as the accreditation model established by the CNA.

Over its history, the CNA has gradually created a bank of peers with national and international academics.

Additionally, in 2016, the CNA's targets included forming banks of peers to support the assessment of programs of medical specialties and for the programs of this area of education.

For this purpose, the Guidelines for Medical Specialties are governed by the following rules:

- The formation of the bank of peers to assess the medical specialties programs shall be carried out with the participation and support of the HEIs that offer these programs, as well as the university hospitals, clinics and accredited hospitals that have connections with the programs of the HEIs that provide them. The list of (university or accredited) clinical institutions that meet these quality requirements will be prepared and constantly updated by mutual agreement with the Ministry of Health and Social Protection.
- According to the number of programs that form part of the cluster, the group of assessment peers is comprised of a number related to the amount of programs to be assessed, so that there is one peer for each program to assess.
- Without exception, the academic assessment peers must have accredited education in a basic specialty, and a second or third specialty, which in all cases shall be related to the programs that comprise the cluster to assess.
- The academic assessment peers must have a minimum teaching experience in medical specialties of five years and five years of experience as a specialist in a university or accredited hospital/clinic in one of the areas related to the programs to assess.
- The assessment of the medical specialty programs shall be carried out comprehensively, analyzing the factors, characteristics and indicators according to the characteristics of each program to assess.
- The external peers will individually issue the assessment report for each one of the evaluated programs. This report will be verified and signed by the group of peers who participated in the assessment.

4.1.3.1.2   Criteria and procedures for appointment of peers.

Once the self-assessment report submitted by the institution or academic program is received and reviewed, the Technical Secretariat shortlists the academic peers who will make the visit. The shortlisted teams of peers are submitted to the Council for its approval. Once they are approved, the external assessment visit is scheduled, and finally, the peers must submit a report as a result of the verification carried out in said visit.

The peers are selected according to a profile and some established criteria with the aim to ensure that they are recognized professionals in their academic community for their academic and scientific visibility, experience, and prestige[21].

According to the type of visit, the teams of peers are comprised as follows:

In visits for **undergraduate and postgraduate academic programs**, two (2) academic peers. For doctorate programs, an international peer will be added.

In **institutional visits**: five (5) academic peers, and at least one of them must be an international peer.

Once the council confirms the teams of peers in a plenary session, it notifies the peers and starts the process of agreeing the agendas with the institutions and the necessary administrative process to make the visits. Simultaneously, the appointed peers are informed of their responsibilities, as well as of the ethical framework that they must abide by during the external assessment:

1. Maintain strict confidentiality of information on the program or institution in the documents delivered by the CNA and of the opinions that the team of academic peers makes as part of its assessment work. Abstain from disclosing information about the assessment process by any means.
2. Assess the programs and institutions in accordance with the guidelines defined by the National Accreditation Council, and abstain from giving tips or guidance other than those provided by the council.
3. Inform the National Accreditation Council about connections that they have or have had with the institution or academic program that they are going to assess, or any other factor that may constitute ineligibility for the performance of their role as academic peers.
4. Act to prevent unfair advantages for the assessed higher education institution or program.
5. At the time of assessment, not have a marital relationship or relationship to the second degree of kinship with a director of the assessed higher education institution or academic unit.
6. Not receive special recognitions that compromise their roles as academic peers.

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[21] National Accreditation Council (2012): Academic Peer Training Handbook. Accessed at: http://www.cna.gov.co/1741/articles-186376_manual_pares.pdf

In accordance with the above, the peers must also receive information about ineligibilities, incompatibilities, obstacles, objections and conflicts of interest, and they must report whether they find themselves to be implicated in one of them or not before officially accepting their appointment[22].

It is relevant to mention the number of processes attended per year in order to establish the number of peers who intervene.

Table 24. Number of Peers who Have Made Visits

Term	Accreditation Process	Initial Accreditation	Renewal of Accreditation	Total
	Peer Visits Made by Type of Accreditation, 2014 - 2015 - 2016			
2014	Institutional	31	28	59
	Postgraduate	68	0	68
	Undergraduate	359	184	543
	2014 Subtotal	**458**	**212**	**670**
2015	Institutional	46	6	52
	Postgraduate	57	0	57
	Undergraduate	160	185	345
	2015 Subtotal	**263**	**191**	**454**
2016	Institutional	24	8	32
	Postgraduate	21	0	21
	Undergraduate	67	16	83
	2016 Subtotal	**112**	**24**	**136**
Overall Total		**833**	**427**	**1,260**

Source: CNA data.
Cut-off date for information: April 2016.

4.1.3.1.3   Follow-up and evaluation of peer performance.

Once the peers are appointed, the institutions may accept or reject them for reasons established in the Code of Ethics. Additionally, in the event that, in the opinion of the institution or program, the academic profile of the peer does not correspond with the nature, objectives or category to assess, the council will study the feasibility of changing the team of peers.

After making the visit, the assessed institution or program must complete a performance evaluation on each one of the peers. These evaluations are recorded in the application prior to the stage of the dean's comments.

4.1.3.1.4   Training and development of academic peers.

The induction and training of academic peers is carried out through regular events where the new peers meet, or directly in individual meetings with the CNA. Over the last five (5) years, several training processes have been carried out. The cities and number of attendees of the processes are listed in Section 4.2.1.2.

Likewise, the Academic Peer Training Handbook has been designed, which contains the main instructions about the CNA's assessment model, the peers' work, the assessment criteria, and the guidelines for carrying out the visit, as well as ethical aspects.

4.1.3.2   The CNA has the necessary physical and financial resources to meet its objectives and to carry out the activities that arise from its mission and objectives.

The CNA's resources for the development of its mission are described below.

4.1.3.2.1   Physical resources.

The National Accreditation Council is located at Calle 19 no. 6-68, floors 17 and 18, in an area of 1,115 square meters in Edificio Ángel, in the center of Bogotá.

The building is located in the Historical Center of Bogotá. There are important institutions of the education sector in the area, such as Universidad de los Andes, Universidad Jorge Tadeo Lozano, Instituto Colombo Americano, Alianza Colombo Francesa, Colombian Institute for the Promotion of Higher Education (ICFES, for the Spanish original) and the Luis Ángel Arango Library. The sector is an educational and cultural hub that hosts events, including cinema festivals and the International Theater Festival, attracting many foreigners; even more so with the high rate of migration over the last ten years.
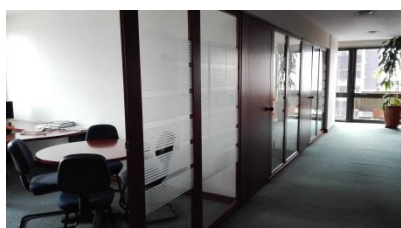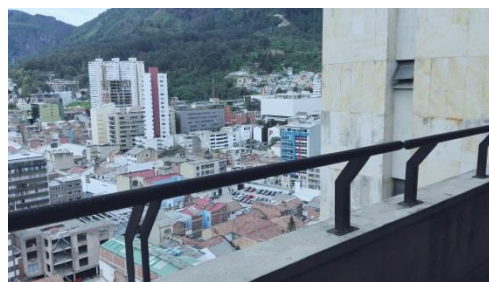
The area is in a privileged location for access to other government institutions, such as the ministries and Palacio de Nariño. The offices' construction has an architectural logic that is in harmony with the academic nature of the CNA. Therefore, it has seven executive offices for each one of the council members, allowing meetings to be held simultaneously.

The administrative areas are distributed over the two floors, which have the necessary areas for the development of administrative and academic activities for the Technical Secretariat's staff.

Additionally, it has a hall for holding the council meetings, an auditorium with a capacity of 100 people for academic activities and events, reception and administration areas, a filing and documentation center, and other common areas.

4.1.3.2.2   Financial resources.

The CNA is a public, government entity. Therefore, its only source of funds is the national budget. Consequently, the allocation, planning and execution of financial resources are subject to regulation and formalities that require strict compliance.

It is important to indicate that the CNA does not receive funds from other sources, because the system does not establish membership fees for institutions who join the National Accreditation System, nor does it charge fees for the assessment processes carried out for institutions or academic programs. This characteristic is part of the nature of the CNA, which was created to encourage and promote the quality of higher education.

The public budget is one of the essential tools for the execution of the state's economic policy. It is also the instrument through which it exercises its role as funder or direct supplier of goods and services. As part of the government planning management process, the different aims of the state and government are materialized in the budget, which will be executed through the entities responsible for its administration. The budget also responds to the operation of these entities and the financing acquired for the development of their activities.

Figure 8. General Aspects of the Colombian Budget Process
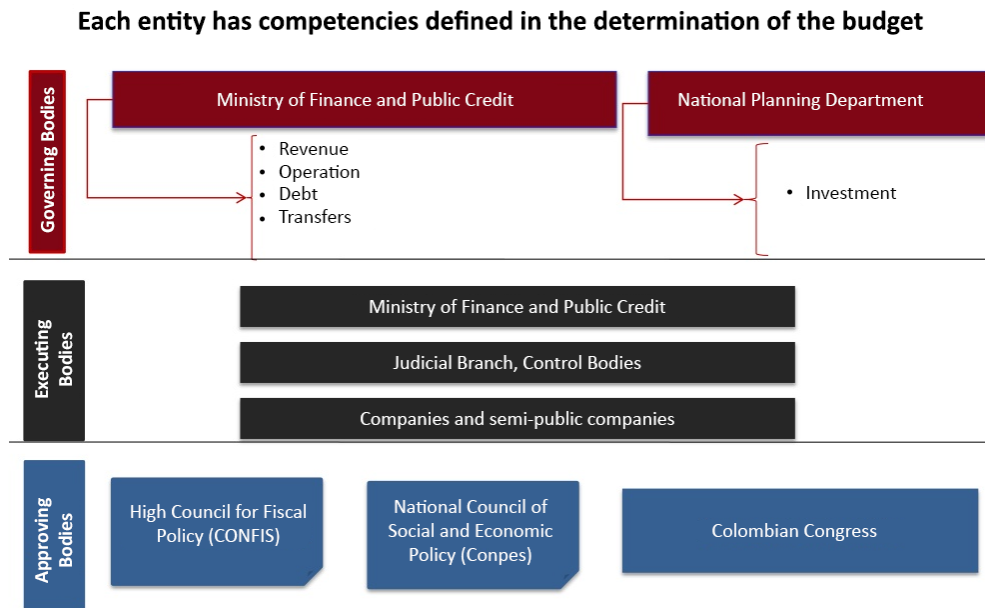
Each entity has competencies defined in the determination of the budget

The budget activity carried out by the state through the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit and the National Planning Department, which are the governing bodies on issues of the public budget in Colombia, establishes the general guidelines on appropriation and investment of state resources. The entities that execute the expenditure follow these guidelines in the process of preparing their operating budgets. The consolidation thereof forms the General Budget.

This budget is finally revised and approved by the bodies responsible for this. Therefore, the High Council for Fiscal Policy (CONFIS, for the Spanish original) is responsible for updating the tax targets and establishing the preliminary limits of sectoral expenditure. The National Council of Social and Economic Policy (CONPES, for the Spanish original) approves the medium-term tax framework, and prepares and approves the medium-term expenditure framework. Finally, Colombian Congress revises and approves the National General Budget, ensuring that it is in line with current legal guidelines and other regulations established for this activity.

Therefore, at its different levels, the state is responsible for applying the resources within a certain time to comply with the specific activities that respond to the country's needs.

The structure of the CNA's budget corresponds to the described logic and it is part of the budget of the Ministry of Education, organized into two types of resources: **operating resources and investment resources**.

The resources used to manage the CNA's budget needs come from items that are approved for the Colombian government by Colombian Congress in accordance with the Draft National General Budget submitted by the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit in the first ten days of each term, which contains the Draft Revenue, Expenditure and Tax Results. Once the budget is approved, the corresponding law is issued, which for the 2016 tax year is Law 1769/2015.

The **operating resources** respond to all the items that cover the CNA's operations, such as:

1. Professional fees and travel expenses of the council members
2. Maintenance of the CNA's facilities
3. Office supplies, cleaning, and cafeteria
4. National and international flight tickets for council members
5. Public utilities and administration of the CNA building
6. Logistical support for meetings and workshops
7. Professional fees of support staff

In this list, the *professional fees and travel expenses of the council members* line item corresponds to the costs of visits on initial conditions, which are directly carried out by the council members. Additionally, it includes the travel costs to attend to other activities, such as attendance at council meetings, CESU meetings, ICFES board meetings, and other meetings in representation of the National Accreditation Council.

Another important line item in this list is the professional fees of support staff, indicative of the strengthening of support staff of the CNA's different activities in recent years, allowing it to carry out its activities effectively.

The budgeted values for operating resources from 2012 to 2016 are shown below:

Table 25. List of Operating Resources

OPERATING RESOURCES		
Year	Approved - USD	Executed - USD
2012	343,613.06	331,932.71
2013	415,324.90	381,811.27
2014	449,820.34	443,765.85
2015	554,396.76	530,189.77
2016	822,712.96	596,404.86

Chart 24. Historical Behavior of Operating Resources
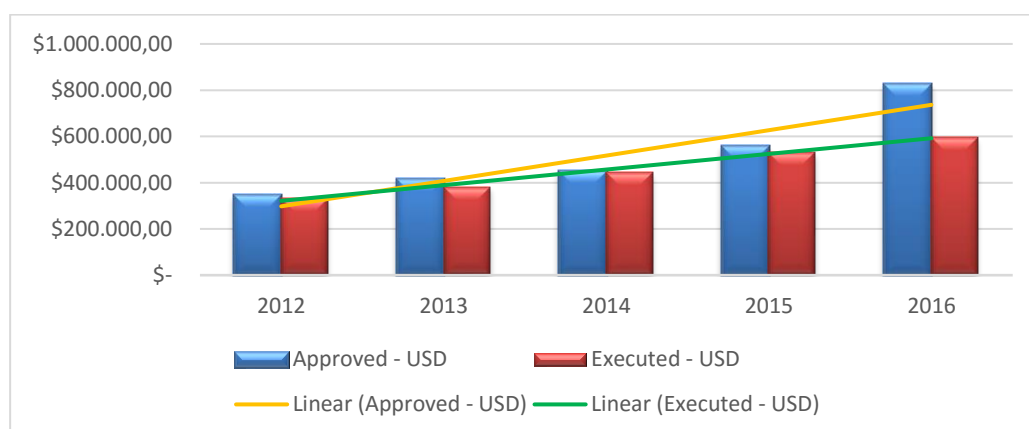
Notes:
1. The official exchange rate used for the conversion of Colombian pesos (COP) to U.S. dollars (USD) on Friday, August 19, 2016, was COP 2,884.02 per U.S. dollar.
2. Regarding the information recorded in 2016, the data correspond to the items executed in the first semester of the year.

As can be seen, the tendency of the resources budgeted and executed for the CNA's operation has gradually increased. This is reflected in the institution's commitment to improve its operating structure and, therefore, ensure the development of its mission and strategic activities.

In the last five years, the evolution of operating resources has shown a significant increase, especially between 2015 and 2016 (19%), which is primarily explained by the increase in the professional fees line item, because a group of supporting professionals was hired to strengthen the academic and planning technical group, in response to the recommendations of the Assessment Panel.

Regarding **investment resources**, it is important to note that the related line items are connected to the strategic project of the Ministry of National Education: Assessment, Certification and Accreditation of the Quality of Higher Education.

In turn, this project has the following related strategic activities: Assessment of Higher Education Institutions and Programs within the Quality Assurance System; Improvement of the Quality Assurance System; and Promotion of International Recognition and Positioning of the CNA. Therefore, the budget is allocated per activity.

The concepts covered by the investment line item mainly group together the costs related to the external assessment visits, as described below:

1. Resources allocated to the external assessment visits for undergraduate, postgraduate and institutional programs

2. International accreditation of programs (participation and cooperation with agencies of other countries): tickets, travel expenses and professional fees of the peers

3. Induction and training of peers

4. Continuous Improvement System

5. Accreditation culture: regional workshops

6. International external assessment of the National Accreditation Council

7. Technological improvement

8. Promotion of international recognition of the CNA

The costs of the external assessment visits carried out by the academic peers are recorded in the strategic activity to "Assess Higher Education Institutions and Programs within the Quality Assurance System".

The records of the regional meetings, developments and improvements of the SACES-CNA application, and other activities carried out in the development and improvement of the Accreditation System are found in the strategic activity "Improvement of the Quality Assurance System".

The budgeted values from 2012 to 2016 are shown below:

Table 26. List of Investment Resources

INVESTMENT RESOURCES		
Year	Budgeted- USD	Approved - USD
2012	1,596,209.46	1,554,600.87
2013	1,386,952.93	1,349,159.28
2014	1,229,874.37	1,229,874.37
2015	1,460,347.93	1,391,000.28
2016	1,677,485.91	1,677,485.91

Chart 25. Historical Behavior of the Investment Resources
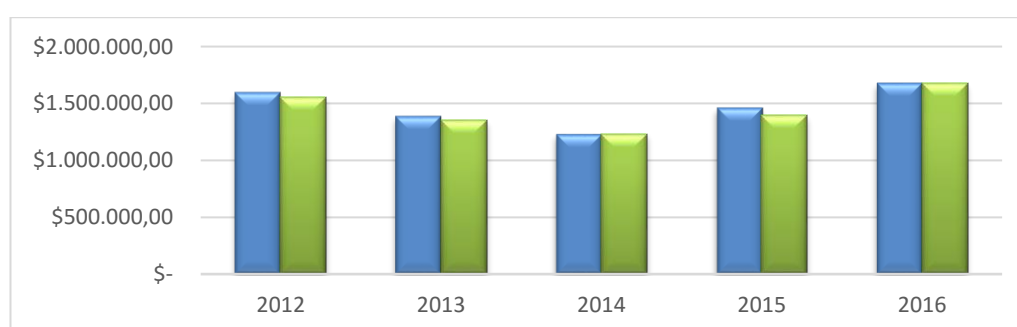
Notes:
1. The official exchange rate used for the conversion of Colombian pesos (COP) to U.S. dollars (USD) on Friday, August 19, 2016, was COP 2,884.02 per U.S. dollar.
2. Regarding the information recorded in 2016, the data correspond to the items executed in the first semester of the year.

The Investment Budget shows some year-on-year variations that mainly correspond to the number of visits made. These variations are explained by the cyclical behavior, especially in the accreditation renewal processes. These variations are also affected by the implementation of public policy that drives accreditation to a greater or lesser extent, as has occurred in the last two years.

Taking into account that the number of visits scheduled to respond to the processes underway has a direct effect on the Investment Budget, the planned number of visits for the 2016-2018 period is presented below:

Table 27. Planned Number of Annual Visits, 2016-2018

Concept	2016 TOTAL	2017 TOTAL	2018 TOTAL
Accreditation - Undergraduate	**325**	**353**	**398**
No. of national peers	650	706	
Accreditation - Postgraduate	**30**	**60**	**70**
No. of national peers	60	120	140
No. of international peers	30	60	70
Accreditation - HEI	**5**	**7**	**7**
No. of national peers	20	28	28
No. of international peers	5	7	7
TOTAL VISITS	**360**	**420**	**475**
Sum of national peers	**730**	**854**	**964**
Sum of international peers	**35**	**67**	**77**

Regarding the cost of visits, it is important to take the value of each visit made by the CNA as a reference according to the classification of the team of peers and the type of visit to make, as follows:

Table 28. Cost of Undergraduate Visits

COST OF ACCREDITATION VISIT FOR UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS (in Colombian pesos)			
LINE ITEM	UNIT COST	EQUIPMENT COST	TOTAL COST OF VISIT
TRAVEL EXPENSES OF NATIONAL PEERS	890,057	1,780,113	**9,095,745**
TICKETS FOR NATIONAL PEERS	900,000	1,800,000	
COORDINATOR PEER PROFESSIONAL FEES	3,102,543	3,102,543	
ACADEMIC PEER PROFESSIONAL FEES	2,413,089	2,413,089	

Descriptive Information	
No. of peers who make the visit	2
Average days of duration of the visit	2.5
Travel expenses per day	356,023
Academic peer professional fees	3.5 SMLMV
Coordinator peer professional fees	4.5 SMLMV
SMLMV: Current minimum monthly legal salary*	689,454

Source: CNA data. *Basis of calculation: 2016 minimum wage.

Table 29. Cost of Postgraduate Visits

COST OF ACCREDITATION VISIT FOR POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMS (in Colombian pesos)			
LINE ITEM	UNIT COST	EQUIPMENT COST	TOTAL COST OF VISIT
NATIONAL FARES	900,000	1,800,000	**19,465,141**
INTERNATIONAL FARES	3,000,000	3,000,000	
NATIONAL TRAVEL EXPENSES	824,754	1,649,509	
INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL EXPENSES	3,000,000	3,000,000	

COST OF ACCREDITATION VISIT FOR POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMS (in Colombian pesos)			
LINE ITEM	UNIT COST	EQUIPMENT COST	TOTAL COST OF VISIT
NATIONAL COORDINATOR PEER PROFESSIONAL FEES	3,102,543	3,102,543	
NATIONAL PEER PROFESSIONAL FEES	2,413,089	2,413,089	
INTERNATIONAL PEER PROFESSIONAL FEES	4,500,000	4,500,000	

Descriptive Information	
No. of peers who make the visit	3
Average days of duration of the visit	2.5
Average days of travel expenses for international peers	5
Value of travel expenses per day for national peers	329,902
Value of travel expenses per day for international peers (USD 200) (the value is given in COP)	600,000
Academic peer professional fees	3.5 SMLMV
Coordinator peer professional fees	4.5 SMLMV
International peer professional fees (USD 1,500)	4,500,000
SMLMV: Current minimum monthly legal salary*	689,454

Source: CNA data. *Basis of calculation: 2016 minimum wage.

Table 30. Cost of Institutional Visits

COST OF ACCREDITATION VISIT FOR INSTITUTIONAL PROGRAMS (in Colombian pesos)			
LINE ITEM	UNIT COST	EQUIPMENT COST	TOTAL COST OF VISIT
NATIONAL PEER TRAVEL EXPENSES	989,705	4,948,526	
INTERNATIONAL PEER TRAVEL EXPENSES	1,900,000	1,900,000	
TICKETS FOR NATIONAL PEERS	900,000	4,500,000	
TICKETS FOR INTERNATIONAL PEERS	3,000,000	3,000,000	
COORDINATOR PEER PROFESSIONAL FEES	3,102,543	3,102,543	32,292,879
REPORTER PEER PROFESSIONAL FEES	3,102,543	3,102,543	
NATIONAL PEER PROFESSIONAL FEES	2,413,089	4,826,178	
FINANCIAL PEER PROFESSIONAL FEES	2,413,089	2,413,089	
INTERNATIONAL PEER PROFESSIONAL FEES	4,500,000	4,500,000	

Descriptive Information	
No. of peers who make the visit	6
Average days of duration of the visit	3
Average days of travel expenses for international peers	5
Value of travel expenses per day for national peers	329,902
Value of travel expenses per day for international peers (USD 200) (the value is given in COP)	380,000
Academic peer professional fees	3.5 SMLMV
Financial peer professional fees	3.5 SMLMV
Coordinator peer professional fees	4.5 SMLMV
Reporter peer professional fees	4.5 SMLMV
International peer professional fees (USD 1,500)	4,500,000
2016 SMLMV: Current minimum monthly legal wage*	689,454

Source: CNA data. *Basis of calculation: 2016 minimum wage.

Forecast Cost of Visits

	Cost of Planned Visits		
	2016	**2017**	**2018**
Accreditation - Undergraduate	325	353	398
Accreditation - Postgraduate	30	60	70
Accreditation - HEI	5	7	7
Cost of professional fees for visits	COP 2,170,705,680.00	COP 2,789,508,607.20	COP 3,155,286,355.20
Cost of travel expenses for visits	COP 752,264,745.06	COP 1,003,054,739.54	COP 1,135,984,938.19
Ticket costs	COP 766,500,000.00	COP 1,024,695,000.00	COP 1,160,145,000.00
TOTAL	**COP 3,689,470,425.06**	**COP 4,817,258,346.74**	**COP 5,451,416,293.39**

4.1.3.2.3   Technological resources

In terms of the CNA's technological resources, there is notable progress in the improvement of hardware, software and connectivity, which supports the operation of the CNA and specifically, the Technical Secretariat. It has an inventory of office equipment, a database server, a domain server, one computer per user, and a communications room with a rack with the equipment, switches, firewall, international communication channel and the respective electricity backup systems, such as UPS, as well as other latest technology resources, and access to the education sector help desk.

The Ministry of National Education hires the 10 MB internet service for the CNA with an external internet and data center provider (which hosts the cna.gov.co domain, for the website, email and SACES–CNA system). This gives it the necessary computer security to keep the required communications active and available for the CNA's processes.

Currently, it has access to the intranet of the Ministry of National Education, which has important information systems for the CNA's work, such as: CORDIS (record and control of correspondence), STONE (Administrative and Financial System), the Commission System, and the Integrated Management System, and in general, information about the dynamics of the Ministry of National Education.

In turn, the CNA's website contains information that allows users to find out about the National Accreditation System and the National Accreditation Council, the strategic projects, guidelines, guides and indicators related to the accreditation processes, access to the SACES-CNA application and general information such as frequently asked questions, regulations and access to sites of interest. The website has two key components that facilitate access to information by higher education institutions: A search for institutions and programs with high quality accreditation, where users can enter key words that allow them to find information about currently accredited academic programs, as well as the list of accredited higher education institutions.

The procedure developed for the supply, maintenance, equipment and management of the material and financial resources is included in the Support Macro-Process that is part of the Quality Management System of the Ministry of National Education, and which includes processes such as Administrative and Financial Management. The CNA makes official requests to the Subdivision of Quality Assurance and has a professional responsible for the corresponding follow-up.

4.1.3.2.4   Document management

The CNA has a centralized management archive, which is fully documented, with a total of 7,802 records, an accumulated CNA fund of 764 records or historical archive, and 907 records of publications, especially books. The management archive meets the established technical rules for document management and is governed by the guidelines established by the National General Archive in Law 594/2000.

To maintain the physical documents, classified technical processes are carried out according to the Document Holding Tables established for the Subdivision of Quality Assurance of the Ministry of Education, to which the "Accreditations" document series belongs, and which integrates the CNA's processes.

The information related to the processes carried out with the institutions has an area organized into document units, which contain types of documents, such as: documents sent by the institution to start its accreditation process, communication between the institution and the CNA, communication with the assessment peers, reports, opinion issued by the CNA, and a copy of the accreditation decision issued by the Ministry of National Education. These documents are organized and are duly archived and stored. This documentation is stored for

one (1) year in the management archive of the CNA, and after this time, it is transferred to the Central Archive of the Ministry of National Education to be kept as a historical document.

Since the start-up of the SACES-CNA application, the supporting information for the accreditation process of undergraduate programs is recorded by the HEIs in this system. Therefore, they are no longer available on paper, but they are available as an electronic file.

4.1.3.2.5   Other resources: sector information systems

One of the greatest strengths of Colombian higher education is the follow-up and monitoring information systems that the Ministry of Education has been implementing in recent decades. It has consolidated a set of sources, processes, tools and users, which facilitate the compilation, disclosure and organization of information about higher education in order to carry out the planning, monitoring, assessment, advisory and audit processes, and oversight of the sector.

These systems comprise sources of relevant information for the analysis, verification and comparison of information provided by the HEIs, and which are important to carry out the different stages of the accreditation process.

Each one of the systems, its aims and features are presented below. The starting point will be the development of the SACES-CNA, because it is a development that has had great importance in the improvement of the processes, as well as in the reduction of response times and tracking of them. Then, the systems developed by the Ministry of Education are addressed, and finally, some additional sources of information are provided by entities involved in higher education.

HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM – SACES–CNA

SACES-CNA is an information system developed by the Ministry of National Education in order to document and facilitate the CNA's management of quality accreditation processes of institutions and programs. It aims to strengthen the transparency of the accreditation system; efficiently support the provision of the service; and to facilitate access and interaction between the different agents that are part of the National Accreditation System; as well as intervening in the assessment processes for the purposes of accreditation (HEIs, academic peers, council members and officers of the CNA, the Ministry of National Education and other users).

The system operates through a clear definition of the roles and functions of each one of the system's agents, who, as applicable, must enter, manage and/or approve information in the application. The HEIs as well as the academic peers have a user name and access password to establish the status of submitted or assigned procedures, and to access information in each stage of the process, indicating the new items and progress of the procedure. This tool permits the maintenance of a direct channel of communication between all users, who intervene in each stage of the accreditation process submitted to the CNA.

The system also provides the following advantages:

- Possibility of managing and registering online accreditation processes 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Normalized processes that minimize the use of physical documents and ensure maintenance and access to the supplied information.

- Ease and speed in the monitoring and management of the accreditation processes by the HEIs, academic peers and CNA.

- It not only facilitates the management of the processes, but also helps to improve the guarantee of confidentiality of information submitted by the HEI, as well as the filing and custody of it.

- Permits storage of the historical record of the managed programs.

- Consolidates all the necessary information for its interaction with other information systems, such as the SNIES and the SACES - RC.

- Additionally, this database is complemented with the information compiled by the other information systems of the Ministry of Education, thus forming the strategic sources of the sector.

It is important to indicate that the SACES-CNA started operations in January 2015, starting the module that permits the recording of information to request information on applications for the accreditation of undergraduate programs. Last year, the production and improvement stage ended, which permitted stabilization of the system, responding to the users' observations. At the same time, the CNA has provided ongoing online, telephone and in-person support to all the users. Visits have been made to several regions of the country in response to the applications made by the HEIs, showing greater understanding of the management of the system, its advantages and functionality by the agents (HEI staff, academic peers and council members). The tests are currently being carried out for the postgraduate program module.

The start-up of this system has involved a change of paradigm by the institutions, which in turn, has required an important process of raising awareness. However, it is undeniable that the SACES-CNA has significantly helped to speed up the processes that the HEIs must carry out in parallel with those that must be carried out inside the CNA.

CURRENT STATUS OF ACCREDITATION PROCESSES IMPLEMENTED THROUGH SACES-CNA

By May 2016, the HEIs had registered 817 applications for accreditation processes through the SACES-CNA platform. Out of which, 36% corresponds to accreditation renewal procedures and the remaining 64% to accreditation processes for the first time.

As part of these processes, 309 review procedures have been carried out on the completeness of initial conditions, and 189 on the completeness of self-assessment.

Table 31. Processes in the SACES-CNA by Stage and Type of Process

STAGE/TYPE OF PROCESS	FIRST TIME	RENEWAL	TOTAL
INITIAL CONDITIONS	238	0	238
SELF-ASSESSMENT	163	120	283
EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT	54	93	147
DEAN'S COMMENTS	52	58	110
WITH OPINION	13	26	39
TOTAL	520	297	
	64%	36%	100%

Source: SACES–CNA with the cut-off date of May 1, 2016.

Chart 26. Processes Recorded in the SACES-CNA by Type of Process
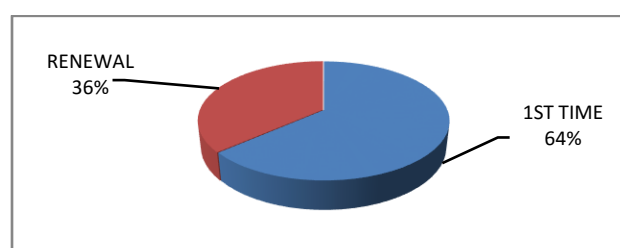
Figure 9. SACES-CNA Active Accreditation Processes
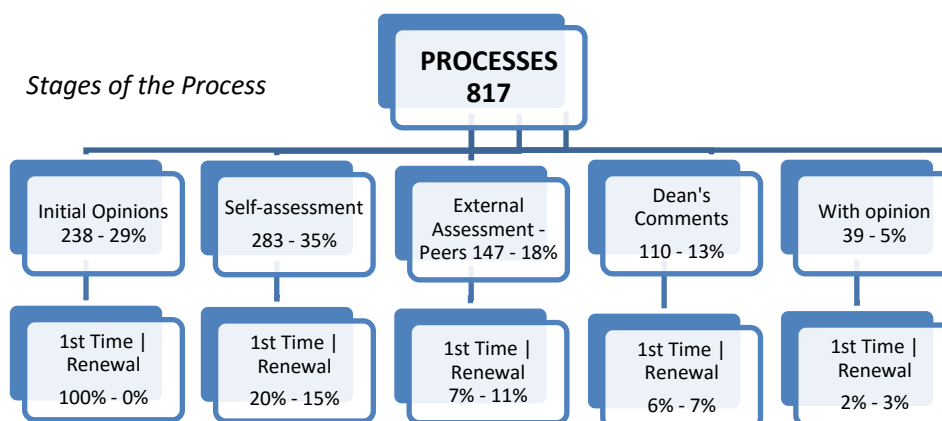
Source: SACES-CNA. Figures with the cut-off date of May 1, 2016.

Table 32. Classification of SACES-CNA Stages, Statuses, Agents and Activities

Stage	Status	Agent	Activity
Initial Conditions	Initial conditions	HEI	The HEI uploads information to the system on initial conditions (creation data, qualification certification and academic aspects).
	Completeness	Administrator CNA-Verifier	The verifying user (CNA) reviews the following aspects: official expression of intent signed by the registered agent of the institution; information about legal aspects of the institution; duly approved internal rules; information on academic aspects of the program; and information about institutional resources.
	Appointing council members (initial conditions)	Administrator CNA-SECRETARIAT	At the council meeting, the user with the "CNA-SECRETARIAT" profile appoints the council members who are going to make visits on initial conditions.
	Processing council member visit (initial conditions)	CNA council member	The appointed council member may access the information uploaded by the HEI to carry out this process.
	Awaiting report by council member (initial conditions)	CNA council member	When the visit is made, the system allows the council member to upload the report made on the visit to the system.
Self-Assessment	Approved to start self-assessment	HEI	The system requests the upload of the schedule of activities for the self-assessment process carried out by the HEI, where the scheduled date for registering the self-assessment information must be clear.
	In self-assessment	HEI	The HEI proceeds to upload the information for the self-assessment, methodology, evaluation of factors and characteristics, and the improvement plan, defining the self-assessment model developed by the institution for the applicable process.
	Completeness of self-assessment	Administrator CNA-Verifier	The verifying user (CNA) reviews the information registered by the HEI for the self-assessment process, which includes information on the registered agent, internal rules, legal information, and description of the self-assessment report.
External Assessment	Shortlisting peers (external assessment)	Administrator CNA-SECRETARIAT	The academic peers are appointed.
	Peers appointed	Peers, travel expenses and professional fees	Once the schedule is confirmed, the CNA carries out the administrative management necessary to make the visit as scheduled (travel expenses and professional fees).
	Awaiting report by peers	Peers	Once the visit is made, the academic peers may upload the "External Assessment Report" and the accreditation process continues.
	With peers' report	Administrator CNA-SECRETARIAT	When the academic peers register the External Assessment Report, the CNA sends it to one of the council members for review.
	Review of External Assessment Report	CNA council member	The council members may access the peers' report and review it according to the "External Assessment Guide".
	For comments by the dean	HEI	The CNA sends a copy of the peers' visit report to the dean to make the relevant comments and complement it with additional information when deemed necessary.

Final Assessment	For presentation by the council member	Administrator CNA-SECRETARIAT	Processes with this status are sent to the different council members in order to start the final stage of the self-assessment process.
	Presented by the council member	CNA council member	The council members prepare the corresponding presentation, which is analyzed at the council's plenary session, where a decision is made by consensus.
	With opinion	Administrator CNA-SECRETARIAT	The council issues an accreditation opinion, which is sent to the Ministry of Education, which prepares the corresponding administrative act (Resolution). At this point of the process, the HEI cannot see the opinion issued by the CNA in the system.
	With resolution	HEI	The main data of the accreditation resolution are recorded in the system.
	Recommended		Recommendations are issued during the council meeting, on which the HEI presents its improvement plan. Subsequently, the HEI may register a new self-assessment process.

Since the launch of the SACES-CNA, the times of the processes have been optimized compared to the processes that are still carried out traditionally. Additionally, the system permits tracking of the processes in real time, and significant paper saving.

Currently, the SACES-CNA information system only receives registration of the accreditation processes of undergraduate programs. It is planned to complete the functionality tests of the postgraduate programs module in 2016, and the institutional accreditation module in 2017.

With these planned developments, the aim is to make the SACES-CNA a comprehensive system for the accreditation processes implemented by the CNA.

HIGHER EDUCATION INFORMATION SYSTEMS

In 2002, the Ministry of National Education started the task of improving and strengthening the education sector's information systems at all levels in order to have clear, reliable and timely statistics that permit awareness of the quality of education and facilitate decision-making. Therefore, it has made information available to the government, organizations of the sector, institutions and users of higher education that can guide the planning, management, assessment, support and audit, and oversight of the sector's entities.

Currently, it works on strengthening flows of information (collecting and providing information on each process in real time) and on developing the culture of management and its analysis. To achieve this, it is necessary to keep all the entities interconnected, exchanging data and information on an ongoing basis and ensuring that each new item or relevant event is reported on time.

Having solid and reliable information systems contributes to the transformation and modernization of the sector, and it is a strategy within the Efficiency Policy outlined in current government's educational revolution. The main information systems implemented are SNIES, SPADIES and OLE, which will be discussed below.

Furthermore, the sector has other additional sources of information that make important contributions to the analysis of critical variables in education quality, and that may be consulted on the COLCIENCIAS, DANE, ICFES and ICETEX websites.

Another source of information of the Ministry of Education that is acquiring importance is that provided by the Subdivision of Audit and Oversight on the penal measures imposed on the HEIs, such as warnings, fines, suspension, and cancellation of programs and legal capacity.

For the accreditation processes of institutions and programs, each one of these systems provides valuable information for validation, referencing and verification of the information submitted by the institutions in their self-assessment documents.

The information structure of each one of these information systems is described below:

Figure 10. Higher Education Information Systems
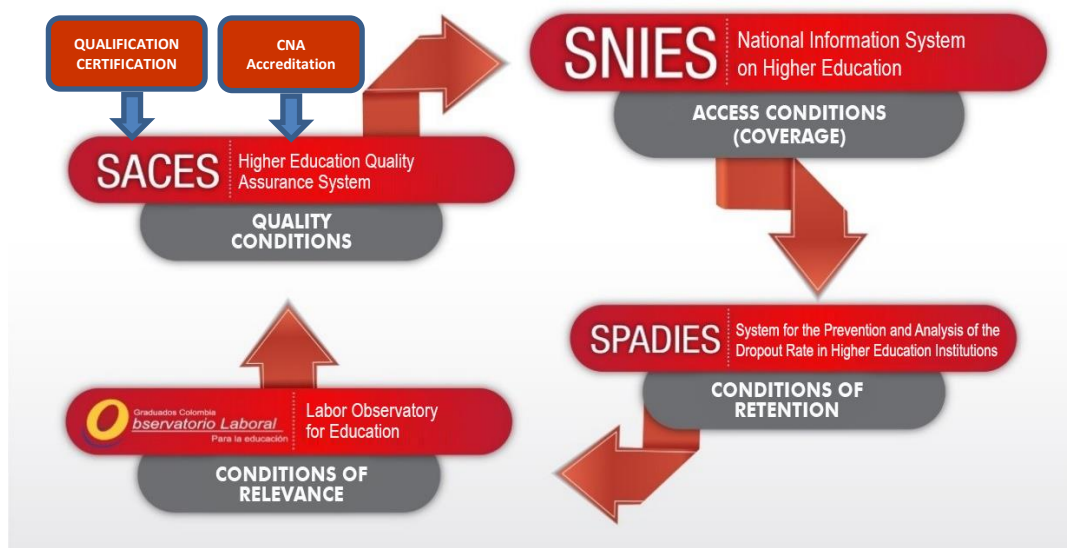
Source: Ministry of National Education.

SACES – QUALIFICATION CERTIFICATION: The Higher Education Quality Assurance System is the tool that the Ministry of National Education has established for higher education institutions (HEIs) to submit different applications to obtain the qualification certification, renewal, modification of programs or extensions of coverage, as well as applications for institutional procedures, such as recognition of legal capacity, economic feasibility study (public HEIs), change of nature, recognition as a university, and redefinition to provide programs in preparatory cycles.

The platform allows HEIs to submit the information required for each kind of application and attach the supporting documents for each procedure according to current regulation.

The SACES records the procedures carried out in each one of the processes until their completion with the issue of the corresponding administrative act that accepts or rejects the application submitted by the HEI, and permits the follow-up and generation of reports on the status of the processes.

The types of application that the agents can carry out are: 1) Status and evolution of processes related to institutional procedures, qualification certification, renewal, modification, extension of coverage and high quality accreditation. 2) Professional profiles of verifying peers. 3) Management indicators and statistics. 4) Partial and consolidated reports. 5) Warnings of expiries and new information.

SNIES: The National Information System on Higher Education (SNIES, for the Spanish original) is an information system created to respond to the information needs of higher education in Colombia.

This system compiles and organizes relevant information on higher education, which allows planning, monitoring, assessment, advice, audit and oversight of the sector. It is the official source of information on academic programs and institutions approved by the Ministry of National Education. It consolidates and supplies information, statistics and indicators about the characteristics and quality conditions of the programs and institutions.

The following reports are generated from the statistics at the end of each year: 1) Management Indicators of Public Universities. 2) Profile of Higher Education Institutions. 3) Rate of Progress of Higher Education. 4) Summary of Higher Education Indicators. 5) Departmental Higher Education Reports.

SPADIES: It is a tool for classification of the student population admitted to higher education institution for the first time. It permits monitoring of the dropout rates, as well as adoption of preventative measures so that students remain in the institutions and effectively graduate from them.

SPADIES consolidates information about the academic and socioeconomic conditions of higher education students, which can be used as a basis to establish the factors that lead to school dropout and to estimate the dropout risk of each student. This facilitates the design and improvement of supporting strategies for students, which encourage them to continue their studies and graduate. This system generates annual reports on the following indicators:

- Dropout rate by period: Proportion of students who, having enrolled two semesters ago, are classified as dropping out after one year.

- Dropout rate by cohort: Counts the accumulated cases of dropout in each semester for a group of students who started the first semester in the same academic period (cohort).

- Graduation rate by cohort: Identifies the number of students of the same academic period (cohort), who have passed the year in the HEI.

The main inquiries that can be made through SPADIES are: 1) Statistical monitoring of the dropout rates (by academic program, institution, sector, type of institution, region, areas of knowledge, and national aggregate). 2) Monitoring of the students' entry conditions (evolution of their classification). 3) Monitoring of the behavior of the phenomenon's determining factors. 4) Estimation of the risk of dropout for each student. 5) Facilitated selection and assessment of supporting institutional strategies for students. 6) Facilitated referencing. This can be carried out in relation to the national aggregate, to the groups of institutions (which can be by region, origin, level of training, and methodology), or to the groups of academic programs (e.g. nucleus and area of knowledge).

Labor Observatory for Education (OLE, for the Spanish original): This information system provides tools for analysis of the relevance of higher education according to the classification and follow-up of the country's graduates, and their rate of employment in the Colombian Labor Market. Therefore, it contributes to the improvement of the academic programs provided so that they effectively respond to the country's social and production needs in terms of relevance and quality. Consequently, the observatory supports the creation and transformation of the academic programs provided by the higher education institutions (HEIs), and it is a source of information to analyze the employment opportunities of the potential new programs or to improve existing ones.

The continuous monitoring of the graduates by this information system provides valuable tools to help improve the quality of the academic programs provided according to this analysis of relevance. Similarly, the observatory aims to guide expansion of the education system, coordinating the supply of graduates with the opportunities for development in each region and the country's productivity and competitiveness policy.

The Professional Education Information System (SIET, for the Spanish original) is the set of sources, processes, tools and users that, in coordination, enable and facilitate the compilation, disclosure and organization of information about this category of education. Its main objectives are to:

- Inform the community about education institutions and programs for work and human development and their respective quality certification.
- Serve as a tool to establish national and regional education policies; as well as for planning, monitoring, assessment, advice, audit and oversight.

The Ministry of National Education is responsible for the management of the SIET. In turn, it is the responsibility of each secretary of education of the certified territorial entities to include the data of the registered institutions and programs in the SIET and to keep the information complete, accurate and up-to-date. At any time, the Ministry of National Education can carry out processes to audit and verify the information consolidated in the system and provide technical support to the secretaries of education for the implementation of the system and update of its tools.

OTHER INFORMATION SYSTEMS OF REFERENCE

COLCIENCIAS: Administrative Department of Science, Technology and Innovation, which promotes public policy to encourage science, technology and innovation in Colombia. The activities for fulfillment of its mission involve the agreement of policies to encourage the production of knowledge, capacity-building for ST+I and promoting circulation and use of them for the comprehensive development of the country and wellbeing of Colombians. It coordinates the National Science, Technology and Innovation System (SNCTI, for the Spanish original), which has the mission to generate synergies and interaction so that Colombia achieves a scientific, technological and innovative culture; and so that its regions and population, productive sector, professionals and non-professionals, students, and basic, middle school, undergraduate and postgraduate teachers are included in the research and development strategies and agendas.

Furthermore, it defines strategic programs for the country's development, complementary efforts, use of international cooperation and visibility, and use and appropriation of the knowledge produced by our

communities of researchers and innovators; all based on promoting the research and innovation needed to create the country we dream of. [23]

COLCIENCIAS has the ScienTI Colombia platform, which has databases with information on researchers, research groups, research centers and institutions, and publications.

ICETEX is a state entity that promotes higher education by granting educational loans to students with limited economic possibilities and good academic performance; later collecting these loans with its own resources or those of third parties. It also facilitates access to educational opportunities provided by the international community in order to increase Colombians' quality of life and contribute to the country's social and economic development.

ICETEX has a comprehensive support model for students, which aims to provide opportunities for access to higher education for young people with low resources and/or conditions that restrict their access to higher education, increasing the possibilities of their continued study, graduation and subsequent incorporation into the labor market.

Since 2003, the institute has been strengthened with the active participation of higher education institutions as key partners to achieve its objectives.

Considering that there is direct interaction between the HEI and its students, which is the result of the normal development of their studies, the HEI is a facilitator for educational loan funding through the ICETEX portfolio.

Currently, loan management is carried out through a system in which the student makes the loan application to ICETEX on the internet, but the rest of the management (legalization of the loan and its renewal each semester) is carried out through the HEI[24].

ICFES: A national, decentralized entity with the aim to provide an assessment service of academic results at all levels and to conduct research on the factors that affect educational quality in order to provide information to improve the quality of education.

Similarly, the ICFES carries out other assessments commissioned by public or private entities, from which it receives revenue, pursuant to Law 635/2000.

To fulfill its objective, ICFES has roles including: develop theoretical foundations; design, prepare and apply assessment instruments for the quality of education, aimed at students of basic, secondary and higher education; design, implement, manage and keep the databases up-to-date with information on the results achieved in the exams and the related factors in accordance with internationally accepted practices; organize and manage the database of tests and questions according to level of education and program, which shall be confidential; drive and strengthen the culture of assessing the quality of education through the communication of results and analyses about the factors that affect them; independently manage the information from "state exams"; and report the results to those assessed, as well as to the Ministry of National Education, regional entities, educational institutions, and the general public.

SABER 11: The objectives of this exam are summarized as follows: a) select students for higher education; b) monitor the quality of education provided by upper secondary schools; and c) provide information to estimate the added value of higher education. This exam is for students who are completing eleventh grade, but it may also be sat by those who have already graduated from high school.

SABER 11 is based on the evaluation of competencies, which are understood as knowing how to do something in context; and involves mobilizing knowledge and skills in different assessment situations, which are defined in line with the Basic Skills Standards of the Ministry of National Education and the education requirements of higher education.

Currently, the SABER 11 State exam is comprised of five tests: Mathematics, Critical Reading, Social and Citizen Sciences, Natural Sciences and English. The results of these tests are also reported with the results of two subtests: Citizen Skills and Quantitative Reasoning.

SABER PRO: The State Higher Education Quality Exam is a standardized instrument for external assessment of higher education quality. Together with other processes and activities, it forms part of a set of instruments to assess the quality of the public education service and to exercise its audit and oversight.

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[23] Administrative Department of Science, Technology and Innovation – COLCIENCIAS. Accessed at: http://www.colciencias.gov.co/colciencias/sobre_colciencias/acerca
[24] Colombian Institute for Educational Credit and Technical Studies Abroad – (ICETEX, for the Spanish original). Accessed at: http://www.icetex.gov.co/

This exam started with the assessment of 22 higher education programs in 2003, reaching 55 programs in 2007. In this period, the exam was based on the assessment of specific skills by program. Between 2009 and 2010, the assessment of two tests used in all the training programs was included: reading comprehension and English language comprehension.

The design of the new exam, used since 2010, includes the assessment of generic skills, understood as those that all students must develop, regardless of their area of study, and the assessment of shared skills in groups of programs with similar education characteristics. Therefore, generic skills are assessed through five tests: critical reading, quantitative reasoning, written communication, English, and citizen skills. Around 42 tests have been created on specific, shared skills for different groups of reference.

The results obtained from this test provide individual information, from which reports of aggregate results are generated by program and by higher education institution, which may be analyzed taking into account the characteristics of the latter, such as nature, sector or accreditation. It is important to indicate that the comparison of the results of the two tests permits the identification of the higher education institution's relative contribution to the students from the time they are admitted, taking their performance in the basic entry exams (SABER 11) as a point of reference.

4.1.3.3   The CNA offers systematic opportunities for the professional development of its staff

Regarding knowledge management, the CNA carries out different processes with the aim to capitalize on the knowledge generated in the different areas where it has an impact on the consolidation of a quality culture and the different issues relevant to the work that the HEIs carry out on their path to excellence.

This is the case of the regional meetings, which have been consolidated as an area par excellence for the reflection, discussion and communication of topics regarding the quality accreditation and assurance processes of higher education. Several topics have been addressed at these meetings, including the communication and update of the new guidelines for accreditation, internationalization of higher education, governance, and internal systems of HEI quality assurance.

Therefore, training and refresher sessions are scheduled for the academic peers, which are carried out on an annual basis in different areas of the country in order to facilitate support of the different regions' academics. These activities aim to address aspects in the context of the National Accreditation System, general aspects of the guidelines, the stages to make the external assessment visits, and aspects related to the SACES-CNA. Section 4.2.1.2 provides details on these two activities.

It is important to note that the CNA's staff actively participates in each and every one of these activities. Additionally, the Ministry of National Education provides training with the participation of the CNA.

Other activities designed to capitalize on the knowledge produced regarding the quality of higher education include some documents that both the CNA and the MEN have published, and which are available to the academic community:

- Academic documents, which are available on the website: http://www.cna.gov.co/1741/article-186502.html
- Higher education publications available on the website of the Ministry of National Education: http://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1759/w3-propertyvalue-56752.html.

ANNEXES

Annex Reference	Document Title
A1	CNA Inventory of Rules
A5	State of the Art National Accreditation System and Identification of Roadmaps and Subjects for Research and Development to Improve Quality Conditions
A23	Technical Specifications - Assessment of Initial Conditions
A24	Technical Specifications – External Assessment Visit
A25	Technical Specifications – Issue and Reconsideration of Opinion
A26	Code of Ethics for Academic Peers Responsible for External Assessment for High Quality Accreditation
A27	Report – Actions for Support, Update, Training and Promotion of the Culture of Quality, 2015 – 2016
A28	Statistical Bulletin - National Accreditation Council, 2015.
A29	Report - Internal Structure of the CNA and Management Processes

The CNA's Framework for External Quality Assessment in Higher Education Institutions

The CNA's main concerns are the promotion of quality education and the good performance of students. By achieving them, it recognizes that quality is primarily the responsibility of the higher education institutions themselves, and this principle is based on its criteria and procedures, which promote internal quality assurance and provide the higher education institutions with clear guidance on the requirements for self-assessment and external assessment.

4.2 The CNA's framework for external quality assessment in higher education institutions

The quality policy establishes that "quality education is that which educates the best human beings, who are citizens with ethical values, who respect the public, exercise human rights, and live together in peace. It is education that generates legitimate opportunities for progress, and competitive education that helps to close gaps of inequality, based on the educational institution and with the participation of all of society".[25]

The concept of quality applied to higher education refers to the synthesis of characteristics that permit recognition of a specific kind of institution or academic program, and that allow an opinion to be formed about the relative difference between the way in which the institution or academic program provides said service and the optimum scenario that corresponds to its nature.

To move toward this optimum scenario, the National Accreditation Council has established a set of general characteristics, according to which opinions are issued about the quality of institutions and academic programs. However, the more specific establishment and relative weight of these characteristics will be largely dependent on the nature of the institution and the academic program in question.

In this context, an academic program is considered to be of high quality to the extent that it makes its educational project effective, and that it has proximity to its ideal, regarding its universal aspects as well as the kind of institution it belongs to, and the specific project it is a part of and which constitutes completion.

Thereby, quality involves the institutions' ongoing effort to responsibly meet the requirements of each of their roles, with different emphasis from one institution to another, leading to different kinds of institution. The comprehensive and continuous improvement processes involve the appropriation of a quality culture that assumes the continuous development of policies, actions, strategies and resources, which when incorporated into development plans, promote achievement of a mission and an ideal of excellence. Therefore, it is more important that there are mechanisms and a structure in place in each institution that constantly monitor the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of institutional work, as part of a process of self-regulation. This is made visible to society and the academic world through temporary accreditation and its continuous renewal[26].

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[25] 1 Ministry of National Education - Sectoral Plan 2010-2014. Accessed at: http://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1759/w3-article-293647.html

...ouncil (2012): Academic Peer Training Handbook. Accessed at: ...icles-186376_manual_pares.pdf

4.2.1 Relationship between the CNA and higher education institutions

To develop the conceptual and procedural aspects of the accreditation model of undergraduate and postgraduate programs, and of the institutional accreditation model, the council has prepared guides with practical guidance for the institutions on each one of the stages of the voluntary accreditation process. Additionally, it has prepared documents for reflection on different aspects of the process, and it has published other academic documents related to its areas of competency. This material, prepared by the CNA as preliminary versions, is subject to inquiry by the academic community until the definitive versions of the documents arrive, including the communities' feedback. The current documents of guidelines, procedures and guides that explain the approach and methodology used by the CNA in detail are regularly updated.

There are also multiple support and guidance mechanisms and areas that the CNA has provided to maintain a direct and effective relationship with the HEIs, which are discussed in greater detail in Section 4.2.1.2 of this guideline.

4.2.1.1 The CNA recognizes that institutional and program quality, as well as quality assurance, is an essential responsibility of the higher education institutions themselves, and it respects the academic autonomy, identity and integrity of the institutions and programs.

Accreditation in Colombia aims to improve the quality of higher education institutions and programs and foster their ongoing and interactive self-examination to empower their strengths and overcome their weaknesses, achieve their mission and institutional project, and accomplish their aims and objectives, as well as promoting the aptitude and strength of institutions incorporated into the process.

It also promotes the improvement of the education service provided by higher education institutions as a whole and facilitates accountability to society and the state. Accreditation lays the foundations for the legal certification that the state must provide of the high quality of accredited higher education institutions and programs. It is a strategy to promote and recognize quality and guide parents, students and other users of the service to choose from the different offers of higher education with greater awareness and criteria.

The conceptual and methodological framework of accreditation was defined by the National Accreditation Council according to the accreditation policies established by the CESU, with the intention for the quality assessment to comprehensively affect the different areas of institutional development and those of the academic program that is subject to assessment and accreditation. The accreditation policies defined by the CESU are aimed at strengthening the quality of higher education and organization of the National Accreditation System, which have been coherently incorporated into the CNA's model.

Figure 11. Sphere of University Autonomy
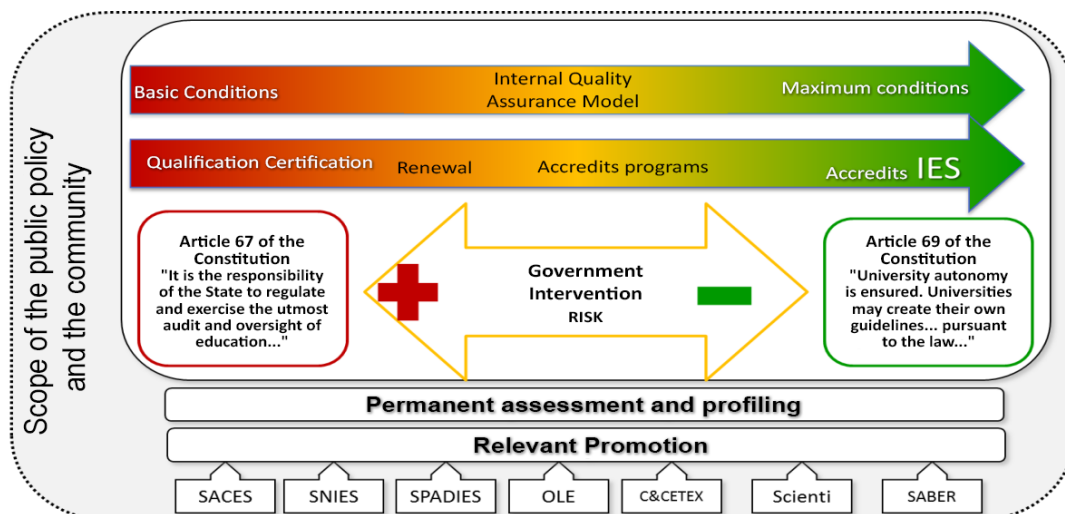
Source: CNA documents.

4.2.1.2 The CNA promotes the development and adequate application of internal quality assurance processes with the understanding that the main responsibility to ensure quality resides in the institutions and their programs.

The CNA has the essential role of ensuring that the higher education institutions (HEIs) meet high quality standards, as well as achieving their aims and objectives. This role is supported by Article 53 of Law 30/1992, which explicitly states the legal origin of the CNA.

Therefore, the National Accreditation Council has established and institutionalized different practices that aim to provide support to higher education institutions in the different stages of the accreditation process, especially during their self-assessment: quality criteria and technical indicators and instruments that are applied in external assessment, in the process of appointing peers for assessment, and in the final assessment directly carried out by the council.

The main supporting activities are as follows:
1. Visits to assess initial conditions of programs or institutions.
2. Support and technical assistance visits requested by the institutions.
3. Additional visits prior to the final assessment stage.
4. Academic talks and events.
5. Advisory workshops for use of the SACES-CNA application.

These supporting actions are carried out not only in response to the requests by the HEIs, but are also related to actions aimed at the consolidation of a culture of institutional and program quality.

VISITS TO ASSESS INITIAL CONDITIONS: Visits to assess initial conditions are carried out by a commission of the National Accreditation Council. In this visit, after the document requirements have been met, the council assesses whether or not the institution meets the conditions to successfully carry out accreditation processes of its academic programs pursuant to the guidelines established by the CNA.

The National Accreditation Council assesses said conditions in order to guide the institutions in their self-assessment processes. Therefore, it is not an exhaustive assessment of the institution and its programs. Its intention is to obtain a preliminary vision of the operation of the institution as a whole, for which it analyzes very diverse aspects, including compliance with current laws; academic and administrative organization; teachers; and physical and financial resources.

The process of assessing the initial conditions covers four stages, as follows: (i) application for the start of the process of assessing initial conditions by the registered agent of the institution; (ii) verification of fulfillment of requirements in the CNA; (iii) visit to assess the initial conditions; and (iv) communication by the CNA to the institution with the respective recommendations. If, as a result of the assessment of the initial conditions, the CNA considers that the institution has met said conditions, it shall inform the institution and agree the time in which the institution must complete the self-assessment process. If not —that is if the National Accreditation Council considers that it does not meet the conditions to successfully carry out the accreditation process—, it

shall make the relevant recommendations to the institution. When the institution has responded to the recommendations by the council, it may request a new process to assess the initial conditions after two years from the date on which said recommendations were made.

During the period from 2012 to June 2016, the CNA made the following visits requested by the programs and institutions to assess initial conditions:

Table 33. Visits on Initial Conditions

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Number of Visits to Assess Initial Conditions	12	25	25	27	7

Out of the total of 96 visits made in the last five years, 37 were to accredit institutions, and 59 to accredit programs.

In the following table, it can be observed that the highest number of visits was in Bogotá:

Table 34. Distribution of Visits on Initial Conditions by City

City	Number of Visits
Bogotá	20
Bucaramanga	6
Medellín	5
Cali	5
Barranquilla	5
Cartagena	5
Montería	5
Armenia	3
Popayán	3
Santa Marta	2
Other cities	33

SUPPORT VISITS OR MEETINGS: Support visits or meetings are activities designed to respond to questions and queries by the institutions, and in some cases, by the national and international academic communities. As part of a technical support and guidance service, the CNA shows, advises and guides them on all issues that are directly related to the factors, characteristics and aspects to assess in the accreditation processes, such as:
- Teaching and epistemological models

- Curricular models and study plans

- National and international trends in higher education

- National and international trends in education quality

- Conceptual, legal, methodological and procedural issues of the Colombian accreditation model.

These meetings are generally carried out with agents including deans, vice deans, rectors, program directors, students, teachers, directors of quality and/or accreditation offices, associations of schools, individuals, government entities, and international education entities.

Said support has been provided with visits to institutions in each of the country's regions where the applicant HEIs are located, as well as in the CNA's facilities, as follows:

Table 35. Support Visits or Meetings, 2012–2016

Year	2012		2013		2014		2015		2016	
Number of Support Visits	81		134		140		185		86	
Supported HEIs	Professional technical institutions	25	Professional technical institutions	8	Professional technical institutions	15	Professional technical institutions	21	Professional technical institutions	12
	Technology institutions	22	Technology institutions	10	Technology institutions	20	Technology institutions	26	Technology institutions	16
	Technology schools / university institutions	18	Technology schools / university institutions	36	Technology schools / university institutions	28	Technology schools / university institutions	32	Technology schools / university institutions	21
	Universities	1	Universities	47	Universities	36	Universities	66	Universities	26
	Associations of schools	26	Associations of schools	4	Associations of schools	15	Associations of schools	9	Associations of schools	2
	Individuals	6	Individuals	17	Individuals		Individuals	22	Individuals	4
	International education entities	2	International education entities	5	International education entities	17	International education entities	23	International education entities	2
	Institutions visited in the regions	5	Institutions visited in the regions	7	Institutions visited in the regions	36	Institutions visited in the regions	6	Institutions visited in the regions	3

ADDITIONAL VISITS: Additional visits are made on an exceptional basis in cases in which, in the final assessment stage, the council detects inconsistencies, queries or insufficiency in the information compiled during the accreditation processes. In this case, the council's plenary session can recommend that an additional visit be made to collect specific and reliable evidence on issues that require clarification.

Additional visits may also be made when an institution that has already received a visit to assess initial conditions expresses its interest in starting the accreditation process of a new program; and when in the opinion of the council, an additional or complementary visit may be made.

The following additional visits have been made in the period from 2012 to 2016:

Table 36. Additional Visits

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Number of Additional Visits	1	3	3	7	3

TALKS: Talks are carried out in CNA facilities with higher education institutions in order to address topics related to the accreditation processes, responding to the queries of the HEIs from a strategic perspective and the applicable regulatory framework in each case, advising and supporting them with the expertise of the CNA coordinator, the technical secretary or the academic coordinator.

These talks have been implemented since 2016 as part of the work and activities plan in order to encourage and promote the accreditation processes; as well as reviewing and clarifying legal, conceptual, methodological and procedural aspects of the accreditation, above all at a regional level. It is an activity that strengthens the CNA's relations with higher education institutions and it has been greatly received, which is reflected in the increase in applications received.

Therefore, it was necessary to make them more official, implementing acts from May 2016, which have become a tool to monitor the topics, objectives and commitments acquired in said meetings, generally attended by deans, vice deans, rectors, program directors, and directors of quality and/or accreditation offices.

A table is presented below that indicates the number of meetings held since they were formalized:

Table 37. Number of Talks Held in 2016

	February	March	April	May	June	July	Total
Number of talks attended by the CNA coordinator	13	8	9	11	5	3	**49**
Number of talks attended by the technical secretary	0	0	0	1	0	1	**2**
Number of talks attended by the academic coordinator	6	7	13	5	5	6	**42**

TRAINING ON THE SACES–CNA APPLICATION. The National Accreditation Council has proposed *implementing and developing the CNA's integrated information system* as one of its objectives, which has the main strategy of *using the SACES system,* in line with the strengthening of the accreditation culture.

As part of the development and implementation of the application, a training program on the SACES-CNA application was designed to provide support to all the users that interact in the accreditation process (whether in the registration and uploading of information, or in the monitoring, review or assessment of the accreditation processes), so that they can use the features of each stage in the process.

Training sessions for peers and users of the HEIs have been officially developed since 2015 as follows:

Table 38. Number of Training Sessions on the SACES-CNA Application

Year	2015	2016
Number of Training Sessions on the SACES-CNA Application	4 (Bucaramanga, Villavicencio and Bogotá -2-)	5 (Cali, Medellín, Barranquilla, Manizales and Santa Marta)

Additionally, the HEIs and academic peers are supported by telephone or by instructions sent to them by email. In-person support is also provided when the HEIs request it, which can take place in the CNA's offices or in the institutions.

In order to improve the general bank of peers, this year, a database of peers was made for the external assessment visits of bachelor's degree programs, for which a training process was scheduled, which includes the following topics:

1. General Aspects of the National Accreditation System
2. Academic Peers and Their Actions
3. Specific Aspects of the Assessment of Bachelor's Degree Programs
4. Use of the SACES Application for Assessment Processes

The following schedule will be implemented:

CITY	SUPPORTING COUNCIL MEMBER	DATE	PARTICIPANTS
CARTAGENA (Caribbean Coast) Place: Universidad Tecnológica de Bolívar	Dr. Cecilia Correa	Monday, August 22	26
MANIZALES (Coffee Belt)	Dr. Jhoniers Guerrero	Thursday, August 18	66
SOUTHWEST - CALI (Cali, Neiva and Pasto) Place: Universidad del Valle	Dr. Guillermo Murillo	Monday, August 22	52
MEDELLÍN Place: Institución Universitaria Pascual Bravo		Tuesday, August 30	60
BUCARAMANGA Place: UDES	Dr. Cecilia Correa	Wednesday, August 31	30
BOGOTÁ Place: Universidad Santo Tomás	Dr. Cecilia Correa	Tuesday, August 30	194

CNA Regional Meetings: The CNA's regional meetings are places for interaction between the council and the country's academic community to discuss and communicate topics regarding accreditation. They are held in different regions with the participation of all the higher education institutions. From 2012 to 2015, the issues addressed at these meetings have been:

- **2012** - Update of the guidelines for the accreditation of undergraduate programs and practical reflections on self-assessment and the External Assessment Report.

  The 2012 regional meetings were held as part of the process of updating the guidelines for the accreditation of undergraduate programs. Consequently, the council established an agenda with the central theme of communicating the main structural and methodological changes of these guidelines from the 2006 version.

  Additionally, the meetings were the perfect opportunity to bring the HEIs and academic peers up to date on self-assessment and preparation of the external assessment reports.

- **2013** - Importance of internationalization of HEIs as part of accreditation.

  The regional meetings in 2013 were the stage for the presentation of the good practices selected in the call for applications of "Internationalization Best Practices (IBPs) of Higher Education Institutions in the High Quality Accreditation Framework". The selection process was carried out in two stages. In the first instance, the Technical Secretariat shortlisted 25 IBPs, applying the criteria proposed in the call for application. Subsequently, the council members selected the best 15 proposals from these (due to the large amount of practices received and the quality of them, it was decided to increase the number of IBPs from 12 to 15).

  Additionally, recognized experts in the field of higher education quality internationalization were invited, who not only acted as speakers, but also actively participated in the discussions on the IBPs presented at each meeting.

- **2014** - Internal HEI quality assurance models and communication of the proposal to update guidelines for institutional accreditation.

  The 2014 CNA regional meetings aimed to discuss the relevance of the internal quality assurance systems of higher education institutions as part of the self-assessment processes, and to communicate the new proposal to update the guidelines for institutional accreditation.

  The agenda was comprised of the presentation of an Ibero-American study of quality assurance systems, the presentation of a study on the classification of said models in the country, the exhibition of some good practices selected through a public call for applications, and the official submission of the new version of the guidelines for institutional accreditation approved by the CESU in 2014.

- **2015** - University good governance and roundtables with the CNA's stakeholders.

  In 2015, the CNA proposed addressing the issue of good governance in higher education as one of the challenges faced by higher education institutions. National experts debated this issue at six academic sessions held in Cali, Bogotá, Bucaramanga, Manizales, Barranquilla and Medellín, taking into account relevant aspects including the relationship between good governance and quality of education, the implications of university autonomy, and the challenges posed by new information technology.

  Additionally, as part of the process of renewing the CNA's international certification of compliance with good quality assurance practices, roundtables were organized in the afternoon session with the CNA's stakeholders to complement the study of perception of the CNA's management with the identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the National Accreditation System.

  Therefore, deans, academic peers, teachers, students and accreditation coordinators of the country's higher education institutions participated in a critical reflection process, where they expressed their perspectives of the scopes and areas to improve in the assessment model and, generally, in the Colombia's National Accreditation System.

  The conclusions that arose from these roundtables have provided information to prepare the CNA's self-assessment report in order to renew the certification of compliance with good accreditation practices.

- **2016** - Accreditation of engineering programs - national and international context.

  Five regional accreditation roundtables have been created to revise the accreditation models for engineering programs in order to motivate these processes. In Colombia, only 23% of engineering programs provided has high quality accreditation, and these programs are concentrated in the country's main cities; in order of amount, Medellín, Bogotá and Cali.

These meetings are scheduled as follows:

Date	City
August 18, 2016	Bucaramanga
September 16, 2016	Pereira
September 23, 2016	Medellín
October 4, 2016	Cartagena
November 8, 2016	Cali

Therefore, it can be observed that the CNA has implemented strategies, which keep it in constant communication with the academic community in activities for respectful and constructive dialog. Not only do these activities provide the necessary support to carry out the accreditation processes or intentions of the HEIs, but they also provide feedback and construct a perception of the management carried out. This makes these activities significant and beneficial strategies for the institutions visited and supported as part of the self-assessment and improvement plan of the CNA.

A table that summarizes the support activities for the higher education institutions between 2012 and 2016 is provided below:

Table 39. Summary of Support Activities (2012-2016)

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Visits on initial conditions	13	25	25	27	7
Additional visits	1	3	3	7	3
Support visits or meetings	81	134	140	185	86
Talks (*)	0	0	0	0	93
SACES management training	0	0	0	4	5
Regional meetings	5	5	5	5	0

Note: *Cut-off date of information: July 31, 2016.

As well as the activities described in the previous sections, the CNA expects the CESU to approve the Accreditation Guidelines for Medical Specialties in August 2016. Meetings will be convened to launch the new guidelines in five cities of the country in October and November, which not only the HEIs will be invited to, but also the country's associations and networks of hospitals, which will be a new opportunity for the CNA to gain proximity to the academic communities.

4.2.1.3 The CNA takes into account the workload and the cost of its procedures for the institutions, and it strives to make the time and cost as efficient as possible.

Aware of the HEIs' investment in all kinds of resources to meet the conditions for accreditation, the CNA has implemented mechanisms that not only improve the time of the processes, but also their management.

Therefore, with the implementation of the SACES-CNA application, it has managed to reduce the time of the undergraduate program accreditation process to less days, from the time the procedures are registered by the HEIs, until the time the opinion is issued by the council. In terms of the accreditation processes of postgraduate and institutional programs, procedures have been implemented to speed up the appointment of peers, such as the agreement of agendas with the institutions, which has had a positive impact on processing times.

When comparing the processing times during the first four months of 2015 and 2016, is it observed that the processing times of undergraduate accreditation processes have improved. This permits the optimization of resources that the HEIs and the CNA invest in the implementation of the accreditation processes.

Table 40. Average Response Time to Processes

Term	January		February		March		April	
	Undergraduate	Postgraduate	Undergraduate	Postgraduate	Undergraduate	Postgraduate	Undergraduate	Postgraduate
2015	388	382	413	436	287	0	408	444
2016	259	234	283	0	283	298	303	374

(Assessment Days - First Four Months of 2015 and 2016)

Chart 27. Average Response Time to Processes
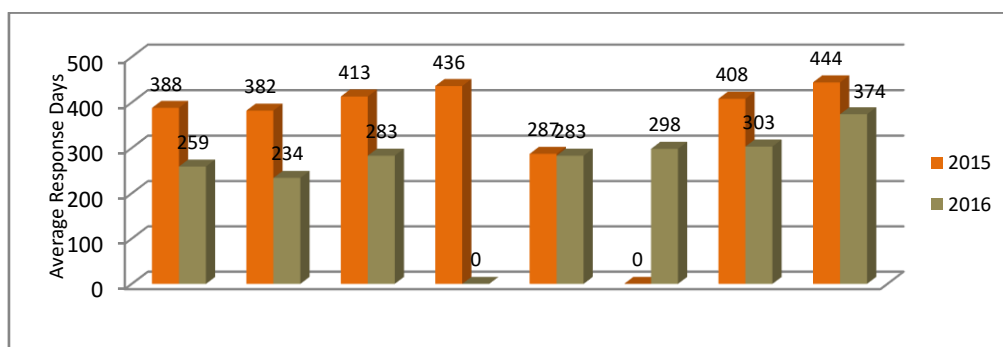
Additionally, the information regarding self-assessment must be kept up-to-date by the HEIs, and its verification may be required at any stage of the process. This helps the CNA's final decision to be based on reliable and up-to-date information about the quality conditions of the assessed program or institution.

4.2.2   Definition of external quality assessment criteria

When developing and applying its accreditation model, the CNA was inspired by the announcements of axiological cut-off contained in the Preamble and in Title 1 of the Colombian Political Constitution, and in Law 30/1992. Therefore, it commits to the mandates of the Constitution regarding the right to education and culture, and to the great objectives established for higher education.

The CNA has based the creation and consolidation of the accreditation model of higher education institutions and programs on the legal foundations of the National Accreditation Council[27]; on the policies established for that purpose by the CESU; on the observations and suggestions of the academic community; and on the studies, reflections, analyses and conclusions of the council about the nature of the accreditation; the concept of quality in higher education; the criteria that shall guide the process; and the factors around which the quality characteristics and indicators are grouped. It establishes the required instruments for both self-assessment and external assessment of the programs and institutions, which makes it possible to measure the level of quality achieved by a program or institution.

In accordance with the CNA's strategic objectives, the accreditation objectives are presented in the following table:

Table 41. Accreditation Objectives

Objective	Description
Inform	• Provide reliable information to the users of the higher education service and feed the information system created by law.
Reference	• Suggest a quality paradigm for Colombian higher education programs.
Regulate	• Be an accountability mechanism for society and the state about the education service provided by higher education institutions. • Be an instrument through which the state grants certification of the quality of higher education programs.
Mediate to	• Improve the quality of higher education. • Foster the aptitude and solidity of Colombian higher education programs.

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[27]The administrative acts that constitute the legal platform of the National Accreditation System are proposed by the CNA to the competent authorities (CESU, Ministry of National Education) after a process of agreement and analysis with the academic community. In no case are they established unilaterally by the Ministry of National Education.

Objective	Description
	• Foster ongoing self-assessment of academic programs and institutions as part of the culture of assessment. • Promote the role and importance of academics as they allow the direction and credibility of their work to be made objective, and encourage recognition of their achievements. • Promote verification of fulfillment of the mission, aims and objectives in institutions.
Strive for	• National and international mobility and recognition of students and teachers. • Recognition by international organizations, higher education institutions abroad, and external quality assurance systems. • Support in the creation and consolidation of scientific and academic communities. • Promotion of self-assessment and continuous improvement processes to achieve high levels of quality in higher education (CNA, 2012: 13).

Source: Official documents of the CNA – October 2012.

The CNA implements the following types of accreditation processes, and each one has its own guidelines:

- Accreditation of undergraduate programs across all levels of the education system (professional technical, technological, and professional) in both the in-person and distance-learning categories.

- Accreditation of postgraduate, master's degree and doctorate programs.

- Accreditation of higher education institutions.

- Renewal of the accreditation of higher education institutions and academic programs.

For each one of these kinds of assessment, the CNA's accreditation model organizes its assessment criteria into: (i) principles, (ii) factors, (iii) characteristics, and (iv) aspects to assess.

The basic principles on which the National Accreditation System operates are general ethical guidelines that serve as a framework for assessment, and that guide the action not only of the council, but also of the institution that voluntarily decides to subject itself to the accreditation, and of the academic peers who intervene in the external assessment. The factors group a set of resources, processes and results around which the quality of higher education is defined. They are of a universal nature. The characteristics are dimensions inside each factor that permit the measurement of the degree of achievement made in the quality of each one of the factors. The aspects to assess are the empirical, qualitative or quantitative references, which show the achievement made in each one of the characteristics and factors.

In general, from the accreditation perspective, high quality conditions are references that an academic program uses to guide its action and set very significant challenges. Currently, it is not possible for the CNA to consider the quality of higher education in isolation from the following aspects, which have been incorporated into all the assessment criteria and guidelines:

a) Incorporation of highly qualified teachers with appropriate categories of employment, who lead the academic processes.

b) Science, technology, humanities and art research in harmony with universal knowledge and high visibility.

c) People's all-round education to develop the capacity to address the challenges of endogenous development with ethical, social and environmental responsibility, and participate in the construction of a more inclusive society.

d) The social importance and relevance implied by more diverse and flexible educational environments to adequately respond to the nine education and research requirements of the respective environments.

e) Follow-up of graduates that permits validation of the education process and the program's adequate contribution to their professional experience.

f) Generation of transparent, effective and efficient management systems that ensure people's rights and duties.

g) Internationalization with all that it implies, including the mobility of students and teachers, transnational academic acknowledgments, networks, multinational partnerships, and joint publications.

h)   Flexible and interdisciplinary education processes based on work of academic credit and the development of competencies, especially attitudes, knowledge, capacity and skills.

i)   Sufficient and adequate physical and financial resources.

As set out by the CNA, accreditation is voluntary and temporary in order to assure society that the accredited higher education institutions and programs meet high levels of quality. Responding to the dynamics generated by the process, the decision was made to start with the accreditation of academic programs, seeking the replicative effect that this first assessment category could have on the quality of higher education.

To develop the conceptual and procedural aspects of the program and institutional accreditation models, the council has prepared guides with practical guidance for institutions on each stage of the accreditation process. Additionally, it has prepared documents for reflection on different aspects of the process, and it has published other academic documents related to their areas of competency, which are regularly updated.

4.2.2.1   The CNA recognizes and values institutional diversity, and translates this appreciation into criteria and procedures that take into account the identity and goals of the higher education institutions.

In Colombia, the wealth and diversity of the institutional profiles and their degree of consolidation and development means that diverse quality assessment strategies have to be taken into account for academic programs and institutions. Therefore, the proposed model emphasizes self-assessment, as each institution's commitment to quality derived from the autonomy granted to it by the Constitution and by law. In external assessment or assessment by peers, it emphasizes the role of the academic community as a recognized and legitimate reference to assess the quality of programs and institutions in a specific field. After the final assessment carried out by the CNA, it stresses the importance of the state's role to guarantee the authority vested in the institutions that provide the education service.

The quality criteria mentioned herein are references from which it is possible to address the quality assessment of an academic program or institution. However, in the CNA, they are not interpreted in an absolute or abstract way, but they are considered according to the institution's mission and the reality in which they intend to be assessed. Therefore, the opinion on quality issued by the academic peers not only refers to a universal dimension, but also to how these characteristics are made real in a specific context.

In this perspective, quality assessment in the accreditation framework in Colombia involves a complex exercise, which, despite being supported by some quantitative references, cannot deny its interpretative nature. The process followed by the CNA is hermeneutic in that it interprets the meaning that an event has in a specific social and institutional context.

Institutional accreditation permits the recognition and differentiation of the nature of the institutions as a whole, as well as assessing fulfillment of their missions and social impact. This accreditation complements program accreditation and assumes it as a prior requisite. Furthermore, institutional accreditation provides the possibility to assess the institutions' capacity to use physical and human resources to efficiently and responsibly achieve their social mission. It also permits the differentiated exercise of the State's role of audit and oversight of higher education, which is currently applied indiscriminately and with high bureaucratic costs across all institutions regardless of the recognition of their quality. Therefore, institutional accreditation makes it possible to distinguish different levels in the exercise of university autonomy.

Likewise, in institutional accreditation, quality is established by the achievement of the purposes and objectives of higher education; by the capacity of self-assessment and self-regulation; by the social relevance of the postulates of the mission and institutional projects; by the way in which the basic functions of teaching, research and social outreach are achieved; by the academic work's impact on society; and by the development of the administrative and management areas, wellbeing and physical and financial resources; also in relation to the quality ideals suggested in the model. Institutional accreditation essentially aims to assess the institutions' capacity to sustain their institutional and educational projects in the medium and long term, and their capacity to face and promptly respond to their rapidly changing environment.

It must be understood that institutions that enter the National Accreditation System are free to use their own instruments for collecting information, to define new features or aspects to assess, or to read them differently, in order to run their self-assessment processes more appropriately and to better reflect their specific nature or that of their programs. This is without detriment to the mandatory consideration of the quality characteristics and factors of the CNA's model for program accreditation, and response to the criteria that inspire the National Accreditation System.

Additionally, the guidelines express that "the factors selected in the CNA's accreditation model for assessment of the academic programs are evidence of the high quality, and can be grouped into four dynamics":

+ **Say what it does**: A high-quality undergraduate program must have clear foundations, coherent with its institutional education projects, vision and mission, and clearly expressed in its program education project. These elements must be clearly known and appropriated by the academic community. Additionally, they must provide true, ethical and verifiable information to the community, and demonstrate that it is done in this manner.

+ **Do what it says**: A high-quality undergraduate program must show great coherence between what it says it does and what it does to achieve it, which is reflected in its highly qualified teaching staff, quality of teaching, scientific research of excellence, recognized artistic creation, outstanding students, adequate sources of funding, and academic freedom.

+ **Test it**: A high-quality undergraduate program must demonstrate high quality in what it says and what it does through self-regulation, self-assessment and external assessment processes, supported in reliable and comprehensive information systems.

+ **Improve it:** A high-quality undergraduate program must demonstrate that it has a continuous improvement and innovation plan that responds to the needs shown by the self-assessment processes.

The high quality accreditation process assumes compliance with the prior or basic quality conditions to provide and develop a program. It essentially refers to how an institution and its programs direct their duty toward an ideal of excellence, and it can show high quality through specific results, consolidated tradition, impact and social recognition.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, diversity can be shown by type of institution (public or private), or by nature of the institution (university, university institution, technology institution, or special regime institution), as shown in the following graphs:

Chart 28. Institutions with Valid Accreditation by Origin of the Institution

ORIGIN OF THE HEI	NUMBER OF HEIs
PRIVATE	21
PUBLIC	17
Overall total	38
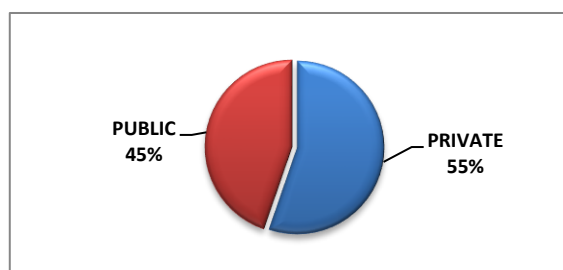
Source: CNA data.
Cut-off date of information: December 31, 2015.

Chart 29. Institutions with Valid Accreditation by Nature of the Institution

NATURE OF THE HEI	NUMBER OF HEIS
University	30
University institution	6
Technology institution	2
Special regime institution	1
Overall total	39
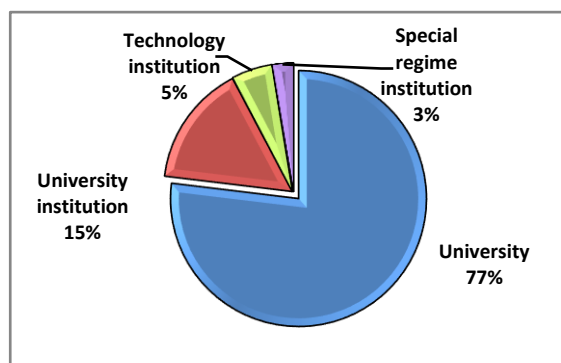
Source: CNA data.
Cut-off date of information: May 31, 2016.

Chart 30. Concentration of the Number of Programs by Nature of the HEI

NATURE OF THE HEI	NUMBER OF PROGRAMS
University	717
University institution	123
Technology institution	18
Technical institution	2
Overall total	860
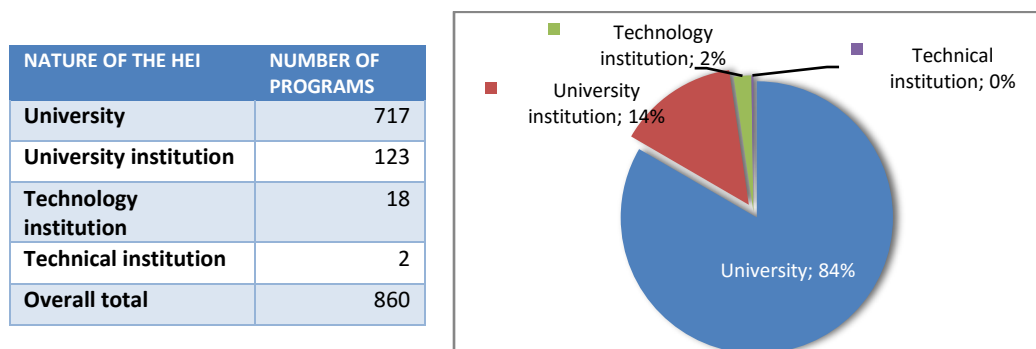
Source: CNA data.
Cut-off date of information: May 31, 2016.

4.2.2.2 The standards or criteria developed by the CNA have been subject to reasonable inquiries with the stakeholders and they are revised at regular intervals to ensure relevance with the system's needs.

The accreditation model in Colombia has generated social and academic authentication and confidence. This authentication is related to different factors:

- **Ample participation**: It is a model that responds to the needs and interests of a wide range of social agents. Out of which, it is important to highlight diverse academic establishments, representatives of public and private management of education, and disciplinary and professional associations, which include: Colombian Association of Schools of Engineering (ACOFI, for the Spanish original), Colombian Association of Schools of Medicine (ASCOFAME, for the Spanish original), Colombian Association of Schools of Education (ASCOFADE, for the Spanish original), Colombian Association of Business Schools (ASCOLFA, for the Spanish original), Colombian Association of Technical and/or Technology Education Institutions (ACIET, for the Spanish original), Association of Colombian Universities (ASCUN, for the Spanish original), deans of higher education institutions, coordinators of accreditation processes, and academic peers. The use of different mechanisms of participation and communication with the academic community and with the social agents who are stakeholders of the accreditation has been constant.

 - **Academic control:** The assessment reflects an academic perspective, which is expressed through the design of criteria or indicators to lead assessment processes. The academic and educational vision guides the assessment process alongside the possibility of participation of different sectors, for which it is recognized and accepted.

- **Independence:** The defined criteria are applied fully apart from external pressures or interests with respect to the government, higher education institutions (HEIs), and other agents. The independence of the CNA and its peers with respect to political, institutional or corporate pressures has been a central element of their credibility. Decision-making to recommend accreditation or not is officially carried out by the council in a plenary session, without the participation of other entities or agents, and only having information of the processes and the social and academic responsibility of the council as a reference.

- **Emphasis on the autonomy and responsibility of the HEIs:** The CNA's model bases responsibility of quality on the higher education institutions themselves, and promotes and supports the institutions' ongoing commitment to their continuous improvement. This is based on the voluntary nature of the accreditation process when the institution or program considers that it is ready for it, and on the internal self-assessment that each one carries out.

Table 42. Inquiry Processes Carried out

DOCUMENT	REASONS	AGENTS
"Guidelines for the Accreditation of Master's Degree and Doctorate Programs" (CNA, 2010) and the corresponding self-assessment guide	In 2010, in collaboration with the academic community, the CNA started the process of accrediting master's degree and doctorate programs in order to ensure that these programs are of high quality, as is currently done in all Ibero-American countries.	The CNA received and incorporated contributions from people, institutions and organizations interested in improving the quality of this level of education into the definitive version. Additionally, it generated an ample process for the exchange of

DOCUMENT	REASONS	AGENTS
		information on assessment methodologies and quality indicators with accreditation agencies of other countries, regarding the accreditation of this kind of program.
Guidelines for Accreditation of Undergraduate Programs in 2013	According to the new trends of higher education in the 21st century and the recommendations made by INQAAHE and RIACES during the 2012 accreditation visit, and in the framework of a weighted exercise, a new proposal of *Guidelines for the Accreditation of Undergraduate Programs* was developed.	The final document that now presents the guidelines for the accreditation of undergraduate programs is the result of a joint creation between the CNA, associations of higher education institutions and the academic community, associations of schools, and scientific and expert associations, based on the accumulated experience of the council as well as the participating institutions. This new proposal reflects the effort to improve the self-assessment processes and harmonize the criteria with the new challenges of higher education in the context of national and global dynamics.
Institutional Accreditation Guidelines - 2015	These guidelines direct the assessment of the higher education institutions established by law, regardless of their academic nature and the category under which they provide their programs. They take into account the synthesis of characteristics that allow the HEIs to be recognized through an opinion about the relative difference between the way in which the institution provides the public service of education and the optimum way according to its nature.	This is the result of a joint creation between the National Accreditation Council and the academic community, based on the accumulated experience of the council and the participating institutions. This new proposal reflects the effort to improve the self-assessment processes and harmonize the criteria with the new challenges of higher education in the context of national and global dynamics. This model has achieved sufficient authentication in the national academic community and acknowledgment in the international environment, with clear examples of improvement of the quality of higher education in the country, documented in different studies.
Guidelines for Medical Specialties - 2016	Incorporation of the arguments and foundations expressed by academia regarding some characteristics and indicators of medical specialties that differentiate them from the master's degree and doctorate programs in their work and development of academic activities. The CNA assessed the possibility of starting a process of dialog with the academic and scientific communities related to the area of health, and specifically to the medical area of this topic.	The agents in the process were as follows: • National Academy of Medicine • ASCUN • Institutions that provide programs on medical specialties • Colombian Association of Postgraduate Directors • ASCOFAME • Coordinators of medicine programs and programs of medical specialties • Network of University Hospitals • National Inter-sectoral Commission for Higher Education Quality Assurance (CONACES, for the Spanish original) • Quality Division for Higher Education of the Ministry of National Education • Division for the Development of Human Resources in Health of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection • Subdivision of Quality Assurance of the Ministry of National Education

DOCUMENT	REASONS	AGENTS
		• National and international academic peers and experts.

Parallel to this, the CNA has been approaching associations of technical and technology higher education institutions and associations of distance-learning and online higher education so that based on current public policy in the country, the relevance of designing specific guidelines for this kind of academic program and institution can be studied. Said task is carried out with the support of the ACIET and national experts in this kind of service.

In this respect, it is worth mentioning the international certification awarded to the CNA in 2012, by the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and the Ibero-American Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (RIACES, for the Spanish original), as well as the recognition in the same year by the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA), which led to the Multilateral Agreement on the Mutual Recognition of Accreditation Results regarding Joint Programmes (MULTRA), through a single procedure, generating trust among the accreditation organizations of the Colombian model.

4.2.2.3 The standards or criteria take into account the specific aspects related to the different categories of education, such as transnational education, distance-learning or online programs or other untraditional approaches in higher education relevant to the context in which they operate.

In recent decades, Colombian higher education institutions have had to make decisions regarding particularly complex and interdependent local, national and international contexts. There is awareness of the need to create conditions for the consolidation of a high-quality education system in response to the challenges resulting from modernization and globalization processes, and the intense and growing connection between knowledge and production of goods and services, in line with the proposals of the country's economic, cultural, social and environmental aims. To contribute to this, through their roles (education, research and social protection), higher education institutions assume the double challenge of being contemporary and of preparing people for national development in the context of the constitutional principles and of Colombia's geographical, social and cultural features.

Given the variety of specific projects within each kind of institution, and the importance of responding to the variety of needs and contexts, quality must be considered not only in its relationship with universal institutional models, but also with the particular needs expressed in the institutional projects and missions. Therefore, the CNA has consolidated the Assessment System (self-assessment, external assessment and final assessment) through the creation of guidelines based on general universal references, which consider the quality conditions of any program in any area of knowledge or category.

The accreditation model prepared by the CNA aims to coordinate these universal references of higher education with the specific references defined by the mission and the institutional project. The assessment processes that the accreditation is based on maintain their academic nature and are carried out in a framework of respect for institutional identities and vocation, aiming to reinforce the variety and diversity of the country's higher education system. These assessment processes are tools for the self-regulation and continuous improvement of programs and institutions, and constitute the starting point to reinforce university autonomy.

In said context, the assessment involved in the accreditation process makes the internal conditions of the institutions' operation explicit and shows their strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, there is a very strong starting point for internal institutional improvement processes, which becomes a clear reference for the potential users of higher education to be able to make an adequately informed decision.

Additionally, selection of the team of academic peers is the CNA's responsibility. To do this, it follows the criteria mentioned in the corresponding guide designed for that purpose, taking into account participation in the induction processes that the council regularly organizes, among other aspects. Once the academic peers are

appointed, the CNA promptly informs the institution of the members of the team of peers that will carry out the external assessment and the name of its coordinator.

External assessment, which is the responsibility of the academic peers, is carried out once self-assessment is completed. In this phase of the process, the peers work as a team to ensure rigorous examination of the different aspects of quality, and apply the criteria, instruments and procedures defined by the CNA in the External Assessment Guide for accreditation. Whereby the aim is to offer the peers the necessary information to understand the meaning, the stages and instruments of the officially established accreditation process in Colombia, and to indicate the behavior regulations, and the procedures that they must follow during the external assessment. Additionally, this guide aims to illustrate the procedures of this stage of the process to the HEIs.

Similarly, the rigorous guidelines designed for the undergraduate and postgraduate programs and institutions guide the academic peers so that they carry out *external assessment* across all levels and categories, including professional, professional technical and technological education programs (*including training in preparatory cycles*) in the in-person methodology, as well as online and distance learning. Although in all cases, the self-assessment of the programs must report on all the factors and characteristics established in the CNA's guidelines, the institution will determine the aspects to assess that are most relevant to it and may make the adjustments it deems appropriate. For example, if the program subject to assessment is for technical or technological education, the external assessment by the academic peer has to consider its specific nature and scopes in terms of applied research or technological development. Assessment of the specific features of the higher education system is based on the thorough education and selection of academics. The council establishes the members of the teams or commissions of peers in a plenary session by consensus. These appointments are recorded in the minutes of the respective session prepared by the technical secretary. A greater number of peers is selected in order to have second options, and peers are also appointed who will have the role of coordinator. In the case of institutional accreditation, the commissions of peers will include at least one international expert; and for the accreditation and reaccreditation of programs, it will be at the discretion of the council.

4.2.2.4 The regulations or criteria explicitly address the areas of institutional activity that are within the CNA's scope (for example, management and institutional governance, design and approval of the program, teaching and learning, admission of students, progress and certification, research, and participation of the community) and the availability of the necessary resources (for example, financial, human and learning resources).

The accreditation guidelines, which contain the factors, characteristics and indicators to be taken into account for the accreditation processes have been gradually and regularly issued as guiding documents for the assessment of academic quality and accreditation of institutions and programs for higher education institutions, academic assessment peers and the CNA itself.

The current guidelines in Colombia are the following:

+ Accreditation Guidelines of Master's Degree and Doctorate Programs issued in May 2010.

+ Accreditation Guidelines of Undergraduate Programs issued in January 2013.

+ Institutional Accreditation Guidelines issued through CESU Agreement/December 3, 2014.

4.2.2.4.1 Accreditation criteria of undergraduate programs.

The proposed structure for the accreditation of undergraduate programs is covered in the guide for external assessment to accredit undergraduate academic programs[28]. Compared to the 2006 version, the 2013 version incorporates two factors: no. 5, national and international visibility, and no. 6, research, and artistic and cultural creation. Therefore, the characteristics become factors that show the achievements made. Consequently, greater importance is given to national and international relations, and to the commitment to research, as shown in the following table:

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[28] National Accreditation Council (2012): Procedure Guide for External Assessment to Accredit Undergraduate Academic Programs.

Table 43. Evolution of the Structure of Guidelines for Undergraduate Programs

FACTORS OF 2006 GUIDELINES	FACTORS OF 2013 GUIDELINES
MISSION AND INSTITUTIONAL AND PROGRAM PROJECT	MISSION AND INSTITUTIONAL AND PROGRAM PROJECT
STUDENTS	STUDENTS
TEACHERS	TEACHERS
ACADEMIC PROCESSES	ACADEMIC PROCESSES
	NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL VISIBILITY
	RESEARCH AND CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC CREATION AND RESEARCH
INSTITUTIONAL WELLBEING	INSTITUTIONAL WELLBEING
ORGANIZATION, ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT	ORGANIZATION, ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT
GRADUATES AND COORDINATION IN THE ENVIRONMENT	IMPACT OF GRADUATES ON THE ENVIRONMENT
PHYSICAL AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES	PHYSICAL AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES
8 FACTORS **42 CHARACTERISTICS** **196 ASPECTS TO ASSESS** **181 INDICATORS**	**10 FACTORS** **40 CHARACTERISTICS** **243 ASPECTS TO ASSESS**

Source: National Accreditation Council.

The guidelines for high quality accreditation of the undergraduate programs were issued by the CNA in January 2013, with the approval of the National Council of Higher Education (CESU, for the Spanish original).

The adjustments to the guidelines arise from ongoing interaction with the institutions, and, in general, with the academic community. Although the factors and characteristics have been reorganized in order to show the actions that the HEIs carry out in the factors that have gained importance, such as national and international visibility, research, and artistic and cultural creation; the importance of three cross-cutting factors is maintained, which ensure the development of the HEIs' missions: the students, the teachers, and the academic processes.

The quality factors considered in the guidelines of the 2013 version for accreditation of undergraduate programs are as follows:

Table 44. Factors, Characteristics and Indicators Applicable to Undergraduate Programs

Source: National Accreditation Council, Guidelines for the Accreditation of Undergraduate Programs / 2013.

Accreditation of bachelor's degree programs: Law 1753/2015 (2014-2018 Development Plan) recognizes the importance of the provision and development of academic programs in Education Sciences, and it considers the need to create a policy to improve the country's education system. This process starts with improvement of the education conditions of those who professionally prepare themselves for teaching work, with the premise that excellence of the teaching staff is an essential factor to ensure the quality of education provided by educational institutions for children, young people and adults in different educational levels and cycles.

In accordance with the above, Decree 2450/2015 defines the quality conditions and criteria that must guide the processes of granting and renewing the qualification certification of bachelor's degree programs and those focused on education, and brings them to the level of the high quality accreditation criteria of undergraduate programs, defining the rules for procedure that the higher education institutions with bachelor's degree programs must adopt to obtain the accreditation in accordance with Sections 1 and 2 of Article 222 of Law 1753/2015.

In compliance with these regulations, bachelor's degree programs that have a minimum of four (4) cohorts of graduates (which do not have high quality accreditation) must start the accreditation process within a term of two years from when this law comes into effect. Bachelor's degree programs that do not have the required cohorts will have a term of two (2) years to start the high quality accreditation process after they meet the requirement, under penalty of losing the validity of the qualification certification granted for running the bachelor's degree program.

Taking into account that it is necessary to ensure university autonomy, which is essential for the higher education institutions to fully achieve their mission, the CNA has reiterated its support and assistance for the institutions to address the accreditation processes. To do this, in March, it identified the accreditable programs in Education Science that in December 2015 had the four cohorts of graduates and were not accredited. It is implementing a plan of activities for 2016 and 2017 to respond to this new demand for accreditation of programs.

4.2.2.4.2   Accreditation criteria of master's degree and doctorate programs.

CESU Agreement 01 / February 2010, whereby the National Accreditation Council is authorized to "design and enact the Guidelines for High Quality Accreditation of Master's Degree and Doctorate Programs, and unify the accreditation ranges for undergraduate, master's degree, doctorate and institutional programs".

The minimum quality conditions of the master's degree and doctorate programs help to strengthen the basis of national capacity for the generation, transfer, appropriation and application of knowledge, as well as strengthening and keeping the disciplinary and professional knowledge taught in undergraduate programs up-to-date. They must also constitute areas for methodological and scientific renewal and update, contributing to the consolidation of the scientific and academic communities in their respective fields.

The Guidelines for High Quality Accreditation of Master's Degree and Doctorate Programs issued in May 2010 are comprised of three quality assessment components: 10 factors, 29 characteristics and 95 indicators. The factors are as follows: Achievement of the program's objectives and coherence with the mission and vision of the university; students; teachers; academic processes and curricular guidelines; research, generation of knowledge and artistic production; coordination with the environment and capacity to generate innovative processes; internationalization, strategic partnerships and incorporation into global scientific networks; institutional environment and wellbeing; graduates and impact assessment of the program; and physical resources and administrative and financial management. Some of them have special importance in the process of accrediting master's degree and doctorate programs, which include: research, coordination with the environment and innovation and internationalization, and strategic partnerships and incorporation into scientific networks.

Essential characteristics of master's degree and doctorate programs: The minimum quality conditions of the master's degree and doctorate programs help to strengthen the basis of national capacity for the generation, transfer, appropriation and application of knowledge, as well as strengthening and keeping the disciplinary and professional knowledge taught in the undergraduate programs up-to-date. They must also constitute areas for methodological and scientific renewal and update, contributing to the consolidation of the scientific and academic communities in their respective fields.

Specialized master's degree programs aim to provide in-depth study of an area of knowledge and the development of competencies that permit the solution of problems or the analysis of particular situations of a disciplinary, interdisciplinary or professional nature through the assimilation or appropriation of knowledge, methodologies and scientific, technological or artistic development. The thesis of this kind of master's degree may be aimed at case studies, solution of a specific problem or the analysis of a particular situation.

Research master's degree programs aim to develop competencies that permit active participation in research processes that generate new knowledge or technological processes. The thesis of this kind of master's degree must reflect the acquisition of scientific skills of an academic researcher, which may be developed in more depth in a doctorate program.

A *doctorate* is a postgraduate academic program that grants the highest education qualification and accredits education and competency for the exercise of high quality research and academic work. Doctorate programs aim to train researchers with the capacity to independently carry out and guide academic and research processes in the specific area of a field of knowledge. The results of a doctoral dissertation must make an original and significant contribution to the progress of science, technology, humanities, arts or philosophy. These two

levels are differentiated by the requirements in terms of research skills and the research capacity developed in the students.

Table 45. Guidelines for Accreditation of Master's Degree and Doctorate Programs

FACTORS		
1. List of program objectives and coherence with the University mission and vision	Characteristics 1	1 Indicators
2. Students	Characteristics 2 to 4	10 Indicators
3. Professors - Researchers	Characteristics 5 to 8	14 Indicators
4. Academic processes and curricular guidelines	Characteristics 9 to 12	11 Indicators
5. Research, generation of knowledge and artistic production	Characteristics 13 to 15	12 Indicators
6. Coordination with the environment	Characteristics 16 to 18	8 Indicators
7. Internationalization, partnerships and inclusion in global scientific networks	Characteristics 19 to 21	16 Indicators
8. Institutional environment and wellbeing	Characteristics 22	4 Indicators
9. Graduates and impact analysis	Characteristics 23 to 24	5 Indicators
10. Physical resources, administration and financial management	Characteristics 25 to 29	14 Indicators

Source: Official CNA documents.

To ensure the high quality of master's degrees and doctorates, it is considered that these programs must have essential requirements and methodological considerations that guide the high quality accreditation of postgraduate programs.

To ensure high quality in master's degrees and doctorates, it is considered that these programs must have:
+ Full-time teachers with education to the same level as or higher than the level of the program provided.

+ Teachers organized in research groups or in similar structures, which give them the stability and continuity to work according to clearly defined lines of research that reflect the research nature of the program.

+ Hosting of and participation in seminars, workshops and other events that promote research and interaction between students and teachers.

+ Mechanisms that facilitate the international publication of research products.

+ Exchange agreements with prestigious national and international universities.

+ Competitive research infrastructure with international standards and adequate and necessary means so that students and teachers carry out their work. (including a library, access to databases, excellent connectivity, and technology in line with the nature of the program).

+ Institutional mechanisms and policies for the guidance and development of research.

In the case of assessment of doctorate programs for high quality accreditation, their impact must be measured. Therefore, only programs that have received qualification certification from the CONACES and that have at least nine graduates in the case of doctorates, or 20 graduates in the case of master's degrees are assessed[29].

4.2.2.4.3   Guidelines for medical specialties.

From a methodological and teaching perspective and of content, medical/surgical specialties can generally be divided into two large groups: programs with essentially clinical theory and practical content, and programs with essentially surgical theory and practical content. Additionally, there is a group of secondary specialties or "subspecialties" that bring together clinical and surgical theory and practice content, or programs that have the requirement of completion of a prior qualification in a surgical or clinical specialty. The previous characteristics

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[29] National Accreditation Council (2010): Guidelines for High Quality Accreditation of Postgraduate, Master's Degree and Doctorate Programs.

result in the development of wide groups of programs of specialties sharing technical and technological resources, practice facilities, university wellbeing programs and resources, and teaching staff resources, which makes it relevant to assess the possibility of carrying out assessment processes for accreditation not individually, but by groups of these more similar programs. Considering the above, the question arises of whether the accreditation processes of these programs must be continued in one of the following ways:

- Individually, according to their denomination, as has been done to date. This alternative would not permit the accreditation of a significant percentage of these programs in the medium term given the high number of denominations and the low number of them that are accredited at the moment. It presents some disadvantages, including the following: It puts the institutional accreditation of the HEIs that provide them at risk of not achieving the percentages of accredited programs in the required time; and it increases the institutional costs and costs of the system to develop individual accreditation processes.

- By cluster of programs, taking into account their clinical or surgical emphasis. This alternative allows collective accreditation processes to be carried out in groups of programs that largely share resources; sharing of teams of external assessment peers, and acceleration of the accreditation processes.

- It also poses the possibility of accrediting these programs according to two large groups: programs of basic specialties (internal medicine, pediatrics, gynecology and obstetrics, and surgery) and subspecialties or second specialty programs.

- Finally, the possibility of carrying out accreditation processes for programs grouped by departments or by schools (clinical departments, surgical departments) or by programs of specialties and related subspecialties (for example, orthopedic programs, knee orthopedics, neck surgery, foot surgery, etc.) has been proposed. These last three accreditation alternatives by groups of specialties are proposed as viable, taking into account that the medical/surgical specialty programs share a large part of human, technical, technological, physical, financial resources, etc., which reduces the times of accreditation processes, economizes institutional costs and costs of the system in the accreditation processes, and finally optimizes the use of academic peers and permits more comprehensive assessments[30].

Taking into account the large and growing number of denominations of medical/surgical specialties currently offered in the country, the inquiry made to the different agents of the process showed a majority consensus about the need to limit the number of denominations for medical/surgical specialties and subspecialties, aiming to internationally standardize the number and denomination of the programs, without ignoring the constitutional regulation of university autonomy.

The international standardization of the denomination of medical/surgical specialty programs not only facilitates the national accreditation processes of these programs, but is also a factor that will facilitate their internationalization and international accreditation processes. The process that leads to the limitation and standardization of the denominations of medical/surgical specialty programs is the responsibility of the Human Resources Division of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, the National Inter-sectoral Commission for Higher Education Quality Assurance (CONACES, for the Spanish original), and the higher education institutions that provide these programs.

As a result of the process of communicating the project and consultation of the different stakeholders carried out by the CNA between February 2015 and January 2016, the agreements are presented, which were achieved in the assessment methodology as well as in specific nuclear aspects that will be incorporated into the different factors, characteristics and indicators of the new accreditation guidelines for medical/surgical specialty programs in Colombia:

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[30] National Accreditation Council (2016): Guidelines for Accreditation of Medical/Surgical Specialties.

Table 46. Guidelines for Medical Specialties

Factor	Characteristics	Indicators
1. Definition, institutional vision, mission and their coherence with the program mission and objectives	Characteristics 3	3 Indicators
2. Students	Characteristics 4	12 Indicators
3. Professors	Characteristics 4	13 Indicators
4. Academic processes and curricular guidelines	Characteristics 4	6 Indicators
5. Research, technological development and innovation	Characteristics 3	4 indicators
6. Coordination with the environment and social outreach	Caractarísticas 3	6 Indicators
7. Internationalization, mobility and inclusion in scientific and academic associations and networks	Characteristics 3	5 Indicators
8. Institutional environment and wellbeing	Characteristics 2	4 Indicators
9. Graduates, dropout rate, retention and impact analysis	Characteristics 3	8 Indicators
10. Physical resources, administrative and financial management	Characteristics 3	5 Indicators

Fuente: Documentos oficiales del CNA.

The application of the accreditation guidelines for medical specialties plans a transition period for its application, which includes the following terms:

- The self-assessment processes of the programs started by the HEIs and the verification of initial conditions by the CNA will be carried out using these new guidelines for accreditation of medical specialties as a reference from November 1, 2016, once the training workshops have been held for the external assessment peers of these programs.

- The external assessment by academic peers and the final assessment issued by the CNA will be carried out, taking as a reference these new guidelines for accreditation of medical specialties, from March 1, 2017. During the previous period, the guidelines for accreditation of current master's degree and doctorate programs will be applied in the assessment of external peers and in the assessment of the CNA.

- Despite the previous transition period, in the accreditation application of several medical specialty programs, higher education institutions could opt to express their willingness for the current Guidelines for Accreditation of Master's Degree and Doctorate Programs or new Guidelines for Accreditation of Medical Specialties to be applied in the final assessment by the CNA. This period for the HEIs' voluntary selection of the guidelines to apply shall be extended for six (6) months from March 1, 2017, to August 31, 2017.

4.2.2.4.4 High quality accreditation of higher education institutions.

Accreditation of higher education institutions was started in June 2001. Institutional accreditation and the accreditation of academic programs are complementary. Their complementarity consists of institutional accreditation being aimed at the institution as a whole, while program accreditation considers the programs to be integral parts of the institutions. Therefore, the accreditation of programs strengthens institutional accreditation, and in turn, the latter must promote program accreditation.

Through Agreement 03/2014, the CESU issued the Guidelines for High Quality Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions. These guidelines are aimed at the assessment of higher education institutions established by law, regardless of their academic nature and the category under which they offer their programs, taking into account the synthesis of characteristics that allow them to be recognized through an opinion about the relative difference between the way in which the institution offers the public service of education and the optimum way according to its nature.

Quality assessment for institutional accreditation involves comprehensive assessment of the institution as a whole. The aspects that sustain the high quality of a higher education institution include the following:

- A strong culture of self-regulation and self-assessment aimed at continuous improvement; the reason for the voluntary nature of accreditation.

- Coherence between the declared aims and the action taken to achieve them.

- Highly qualified teaching staff, with appropriate types of contract, which permit the formation of consolidated academic communities.

- Science, technology, humanities and art research in harmony with universal knowledge and high visibility.

- All-round education of people to address the challenges of endogenous development with ethical, social and environmental responsibility, and to participate in the construction of a more inclusive society.

- The social importance and relevance supposed by more diverse and flexible educational environments.

- Graduate follow-up policies.

- Follow-up of graduates that permits validation of the education process and the institution's adequate contribution to their professional experiences.

- Development of good governance policies that ensure institutional stability and the generation of transparent, effective and efficient management systems that ensure fulfillment of the rights and duties of people and accountability before society.

- Internationalization, which involves the mobility of students and teachers, multinational partnerships and networks, and joint publications, among others.

- Flexible and interdisciplinary education processes for the development of the knowledge, capacity and skills required in current work and social dynamics.

- Sufficient physical and financial resources to adequately achieve the missions and carry out support actions.

- The capacity to have an impact on the productive and social sectors through planning and extension.

- Transparency in the promotion of the services that the institutions offer in development of their essential roles.

The institutional accreditation objectives reiterate the meaning of some of the objectives proposed for the accreditation of undergraduate programs. The guidelines show 12 objectives, out of which, five (5) may be considered as very different from the program accreditation objectives, while the other seven (7) have similarities with those of programs:

1. Indicate a quality paradigm for Colombian higher education institutions.
2. Make the institutions' competencies and characteristics visible in light of the needs and demands of the country's different social and economic sectors.
3. Propose a horizon for the responsible exercise of autonomy by the HEIs.
4. Promote mobility and academic cooperation between higher education institutions based on recognition of their quality.
5. Encourage the quality of education in Colombian higher education institutions.
6. Serve as instruments though which the state can publicly acknowledge that the accredited institutions have high levels of quality and achieve their aims and objectives.
7. Serve as a medium so that higher education institutions are accountable to society and the state about the service they provide.
8. Serve as a reliable source of information so that students and parents can make decisions based on quality criteria.
9. Promote the aptitude and strength of institutions that provide higher education.
10. Be an incentive for the academic directors by allowing them to disclose the direction and credibility of their work, and encourage recognition of their achievements.
11. Serve as a stimulus so that institutions constantly verify the achievement of their mission, aims and objectives in the framework of the Constitution and law, and according to their own bylaws.
12. Promote ongoing self-assessment of institutions as part of a culture of assessment.

Both the 2001 and 2006 versions of the institutional accreditation guidelines present the concept of quality according to the institutional context, the place of institutional accreditation, the legal framework, and the criteria for institutional accreditation to finally present the factors of institutional quality assessment with their related characteristics and the stages of institutional accreditation: internal self-assessment, external assessment, and the final phase.

They also propose relationships between accreditation of institutions and programs and the general procedure for institutional accreditation. Unlike any other processes, institutional accreditation is viewed as a whole, in that institutional assessment supposes a comprehensive review of all its aspects from the mission, institutional

project and academic community, academic processes, institutional wellbeing, social impact and relevance, self-assessment and self-regulation processes, organization, administration and management, facilities and the resources for academic support, to financial resources.

Quality assessment for the accreditation of a higher education institution includes the following stages:

- Self-assessment that is the responsibility of the institution.
- External assessment carried out by academic peers.
- Final assessment that is the responsibility of the CNA
- Public acknowledgment of quality by the Ministry of National Education.

Table 47. Guidelines for Institutional Accreditation

FACTORES			
1. Institutional project and mission	Characteristics 1 to 3	16 Indicators
2. Students	Characteristics 4 to 6	34 Indicators
3. Professors	Characteristics 7 to 11	57 Indicators
4. Academic Processes	Characteristics 12 to 13	33 Indicators
5. Research	Characteristics 14 to 15	48 indicators
6. Social impact and relevance	Caractarísticas 16 to 18	85 Indicators
7. Self-assessment and self-regulation	Characteristics 19 to 20	20 Indicators
8. Institutional Wellbeing	Characteristics 21 to 22	20 Indicators
9. Organization, management and administration	Characteristics 23 to 24	30 Indicators
10. Resources for academic support and facilities	Characteristics 25 to 34	91 Indicators

Source: Official CNA documents.

Under the 2006 guidelines, in order to be accredited, higher education institutions (HEIs) had to have at least one accredited program or master's degree or doctorate program with current qualification certification in each of the five groups of areas of knowledge defined by the CNA. With the 2015 guidelines, said condition has been eliminated, and now, the HEIs must have at least 25% of all their accreditable programs accredited. This percentage will increase to 40% in 2019.

Similarly, under the new guidelines, the assessment of all the campuses and branches of the HEIs must be subject to assessment to carry out **multicampus accreditation,** which will involve having accredited programs in at least 75% of their campuses or branches. This service must be of at least 10% of their academic provision. From 2019, the established 75% will increase to 100% as a requirement for accreditation.

4.2.2.5 The criteria, regulations and procedures take into account the mechanisms for internal follow-up and provide effective monitoring of the results of external assessment.

The agents of the accreditation process are: the institutions, academic peers and CNA for high quality assessment; and the Ministry of National Education for public acknowledgment. These agents also have a clearly defined role in each one of the phases for the accreditation process in order to facilitate the follow-up of the information and results of them.

The main elements of follow-up covered by the CNA's accreditation model are as follows:

- Based on the aim to promote quality and continuous improvement, one of the components required in all the accreditation processes is the **improvement plan**, which is one of the most specific expressions of a program or institution's commitment to quality. These improvement plans are part of the self-assessment report as established in the procedure guides, and they are verified by the peers for external assessment and by the council to make the final decision. Additionally, they are the main tool for the development of strategies and actions in each program or institution.

Given the temporary nature of the accreditation, the accredited programs and HEIs must apply for renewal of the accreditation every time the granted term expires. Therefore, in the **accreditation renewal** processes, the institutions must demonstrate that they have made progress from the status of the quality conditions of the previous accreditation and from the recommendations made by the council. This is one of the assessment criteria that are suggested to the assessment peers in the external assessment stage, and it is also taken into account by the council when it studies and issues an opinion on the accreditation renewal processes.

4.2.2.6 The CNA's procedures specify the way in which the criteria will be applied and the necessary evidence to demonstrate that they are met.

The assessment criteria are specified and materialized in the Guidelines for the Accreditation of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Programs and Institutions, which not only consider the conceptual elements, but also the factors, characteristics, aspects to assess and (suggested) indicators that the higher education institutions can take into account to address the accreditation process. Furthermore, to support the institutions in the procedural aspects of the program and institutional accreditation models, the council has prepared guides with practical guidance on each one of the stages of the voluntary accreditation process.

The assessment methodology is formed of a set of factors, characteristics and indicators that serve as an analytical instrument in the assessment of the different elements involved in the comprehensive assessment of the quality of an institution or its program. Said assessment takes the following elements into account:

a) **Factors:** These are large areas of institutional development that express the elements that the institution and its programs have for all the academic work. They are structural components that have an impact on quality. They coordinate the mission, aims, goals and objectives of an institution with the essential roles of research, teaching and social outreach. See Chart 7, which presents the high quality factors for undergraduate and postgraduate programs and higher education institutions.

b) **Characteristics:** These "constitute dimensions of the quality of a program or institution. They refer to the factors, and they will be taken as aspects that in light of which, the specific situation in the different components and stages of the accreditation process will be observed and judged" (CNA, 1996). The degree to which an institution or program achieves the quality of its performance can be perceived through them. These characteristics cannot be read abstractly. They must be read according to the missions and the contextual reality in which they are intended to be assessed. Therefore, the opinion on quality issued by the peers not only refers to a universal dimension, but also to how these characteristics are made real in a specific context.

c) **Aspects to assess:** These are attributes or descriptors of the characteristics that are used to explain them. They are not a different level of analysis between the characteristics and the indicators. They only serve to explain the characteristics, and, therefore, they form part of them.

d) **Indicators:** These are empirical references of the characteristics and they make it possible to observe or assess their performance in a given situation. The indicators express attributes susceptible to receiving a numerical value or a qualitative assessment. Therefore, they are quantitative and qualitative. The quality characteristics are made clear and can be assessed through them.

In general, the indicators that allow the level of achievement of different quality characteristics and factors to be shown are autonomously adopted by the institutions and programs. However, there are some nationally standardized indicators that are known by all the institutions and programs, which are used by the council to assess some quality criteria. The main ones are: the research factor, the number of research groups and their classification in COLCIENCIAS; the number of researchers and their classification; and the number of publications and their impact factor. In the student factor, the academic performance results in the national standardized exams (SABER PRO) and the dropout/retention indicators of students according to the SPADIES.

The analysis of the specific features of each discipline in the case of program assessment especially falls on academic peers, and on the council members from each discipline who represent said academic community, and who are generally part of the respective academic groups.

4.2.2.6.1   Mechanisms and procedures for accreditation processes.

The CNA maintains a permanent call for applications to carry out the accreditation processes of undergraduate programs in all areas of knowledge and levels of education, as well as for the accreditation of institutions. The accreditation processes of undergraduate programs started in 1998 and of institutions in 2001. The accreditation of postgraduate programs started in August 2010. All the documents, guides and procedures are published on the website: http://www.cna.gov.co/1741/channel.html

The accreditation process is developed in five phases:

1.   Assessment of Initial Conditions

Programs that voluntarily subject themselves to the process for the first time in order to enter the National Accreditation System must send the documentation established in CNA Procedure Guide 01 - "Assessment of Initial Conditions" (2006 Second Edition) to the CNA for its revision. That is, a letter of expression of interest signed by the dean or registered agent of the institution and the documentation that proves fulfillment of the requirements. Subsequently, a visit is scheduled as part of the CNA's role to guide the institutions in their self-assessment processes. In turn, the visit aims to make the institution aware of whether or not it meets the conditions to successfully carry out the accreditation process. The visits are carried out by a commission of the CNA selected for this purpose with prior assessment of the documents sent by the institution.

It is important to note that there is now the SACES-CNA application, which allows information to be uploaded about the accreditation process of undergraduate programs.

Higher education institutions that wish to subject themselves to the institutional accreditation process must have at least five (5) continuous years of legal operation in the institutional nature (technical institution, technology institution, university institution or university) in which they submit their application for institutional accreditation, and meet the requirements and conditions expressed in Article 10 of the Guidelines for Institutional Accreditation.

2.   Self-Assessment and Self-Assessment Report of the Program or Higher Education Institution

Self-assessment for accreditation is the process that an institution internally carries out based on the guidelines established for that purpose by the CNA. It is expected that said process will serve not only for the accreditation of institutions or programs, but also essentially in the creation and development of actions to improve quality, so that the report produced on it is the result of responsible and critical work by the respective academic community.

The assessment methodology of the CNA's accreditation model is formed of a set of factors, characteristics and indicators that serve as an analytical tool in the assessment of the different elements involved in the comprehensive assessment of the quality of an institution or program.

Each institution designs its own self-assessment model and organizes it in the most appropriate way in the institutional sphere as well as in each program submitted for accreditation. Generally, as a starting point for self-assessment, there are quality and self-assessment policies defined by the governing or management boards of the higher education institutions, and policies on the formation of groups of the academic community and areas of the mission that are responsible for leading the process in the organization's different programs and units.

The experience in the processes shows the leadership that the directors of the institutions have assumed from the time that they voluntarily decide to apply for the accreditation of their programs or of the institution itself. To do this, they must achieve sufficient levels of agreement and participation of the university community and commit the financial resources required for self-assessment and the proposals for changes that they decide to undertake with priority in order to successfully carry out the complicated task of ensuring quality.

3.   External Assessment

It is carried out by academic peers with a renowned record in the field of the educational program, which are appointed by the CNA. Their work consists of identifying coherence between the information in the self-assessment report and the effective findings in the institution. The peers issue their opinions on quality based on the information obtained and even on aspects not considered in the self-assessment, but that are also relevant to assess the quality of the institutions and programs in a specific field. As a result of the external assessment, the peers submit a report to the CNA.

4.   **Dean's Comments on the Peers' Report**

Once the internal consistency of the External Assessment Report is revised by a member of the CNA, the report is sent to the institution that requested the accreditation so that the dean can read it and express agreement or disagreement with it.

5.   **Final Assessment or Opinion of the CNA**

It consists of the technical and academic opinion issued by the CNA based on the self-assessment of the program in the report submitted by the team of peers and on the comments by the institution's dean on said report. When applicable, this technical opinion includes a recommendation about the term of accreditation (no less than four years and no more than ten years), and it is sent to the Ministry of National Education to issue the act of accreditation. If the opinion is not positive, the CNA proceeds to confidentially inform the institutions of the relevant recommendations in order to submit the program again after at least two years.

When the opinion does not recommend accreditation, the institution may submit a request for reconsideration. In this case, the CNA will review the arguments and issue its final opinion. Based on the definitive opinion, if they deem it appropriate, the institutions may develop strategies to start a new accreditation process in the term proposed to strengthen the identified weaknesses that led to failure of the accreditation.

Finally, based on the final opinion of the CNA, the Ministry of National Education issues the respective administrative act (resolution) in which it grants high quality accreditation. In the event that the registered agent of the institution or its proxy disagree with said resolution, they have a term of ten (10) days from the notification to file an appeal for reversal with the Ministry of National Education.

6.   **Resolution for Accreditation of the Program or Institution**

It is the administrative act issued by the Ministry of National Education whereby the accreditation is officially recognized.

7.   **Continuous Improvement Process**

As a result of the self-assessment process, the institution establishes an improvement plan, which is given feedback with the recommendation or suggestions made by the CNA in the issued opinion.

Figure 12. Stages of the Accreditation Process
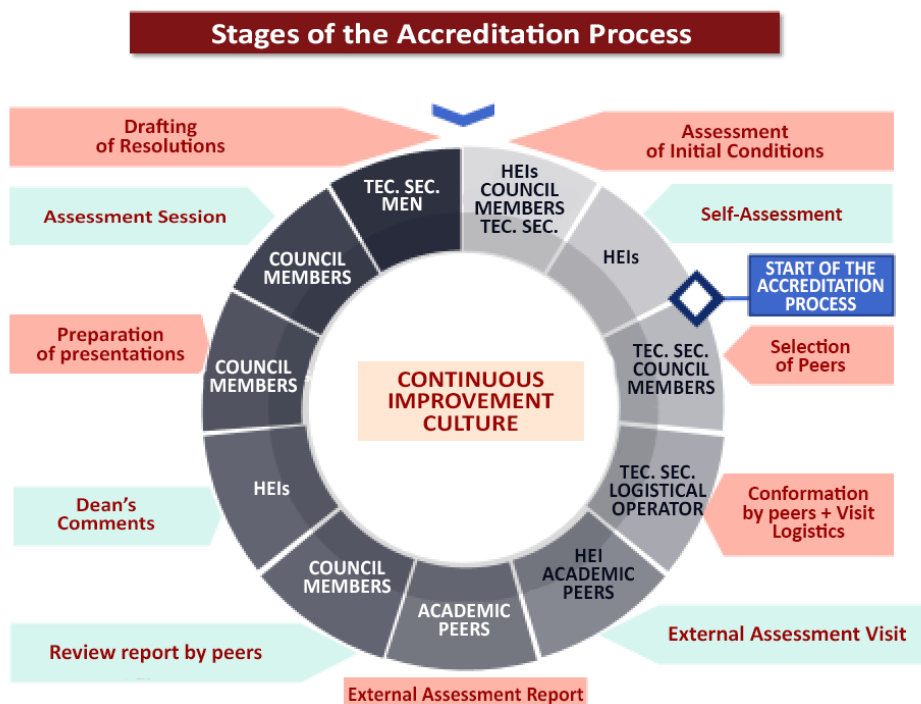
4.2.2.6.2   Requirements to join the National Accreditation System.

Accreditation in Colombia is voluntary. Therefore, a higher education institution must officially express its interest to the CNA to join the National Accreditation System (SNA, for the Spanish original) by means of a letter signed by its Registered Agent, and express with how many and which programs it is going to start the self-assessment process. As previously stated, incorporation into the SNA starts through the accreditation processes of academic programs, which can subsequently be continued with institutional accreditation.

Requirements to start accreditation processes of undergraduate programs:

The National Council of Higher Education (CESU, for the Spanish original) established the following official requirements for higher education institutions that wish to join the National Accreditation System:

- Be duly authorized to operate as a higher education institution and to grant qualifications in the program for accreditation.
- Comply with the legal regulations established for higher education, particularly those which correspond to its kind of institution.
- Not have been disciplined in the last three years due to a breach of the legal provisions that govern higher education, other than a private warning; nor be under investigation at the time of the application.
- Have a history in the program it hopes to accredit reflected in its effective impact on the environment and in the existence of at least four graduations of students, whose professional performance it is possible to determine.

Additionally, when defining the instruments for accreditation, the CNA deems it relevant that before starting the accreditation process of undergraduate programs and after the official requirements have been met, the institution examines whether it has the basic operating conditions that allow it to assess its orientation, history, stability, and degree of academic and administrative development. Said requirements have been called initial conditions, and they are published in the document: Assessment of Initial Conditions, Procedure Guide-CNA 01-Third Edition, November 2006, which are as follows:

- Have a clearly formulated mission that is coherent with its institutional definition and nature, and that is of public knowledge. As the mission must be reflected in the institution's academic activities, its achievements must be assessed.
- Have an institutional project prepared that serves as an essential reference in the decision-making processes.
- Have a nucleus of teachers of an appropriate size, quality and type of work for the nature of the institution and program that it hopes to accredit.
- Have bylaws and rules for teachers and students that include clear policies for the selection and employment of teachers and for the admission of students. These regulations must define the rights and duties of each other, and the system of their participation in the institution's management bodies.
- Have an organizational structure with administration and management systems that correspond to the nature, size and complexity of the institution and the program.
- Have the physical and logistical infrastructure that satisfies the needs of the institution and the program.
- Maintain proven financial stability and adequately use the resources available, in accordance with its nature, mission and objectives.
- Have an appropriate institutional environment with policies and facilities designed to maintain the wellbeing of all its members.

The council members examine the documents submitted by the institution and visit it for assessment.

With the visit to assess the initial conditions, the council proposes obtaining a preliminary vision of the institution as a whole; establishing its main strengths and weaknesses; and based on them, forming an opinion as to whether the institution's current state is favorable for carrying out accreditation processes of academic programs.

Requirements to start accreditation processes of postgraduate programs:

a. Higher education institutions that wish to subject themselves to the institutional accreditation process must have at least five (5) continuous years of legal operation in the institutional nature (technical

institution, technology institution, university institution or university) in which they submit the application for institutional accreditation.

b. The institution must be up-to-date with the information requirements for the National Information System on Higher Education (SNIES, for the Spanish original) pursuant to current regulations.

c. Not have been disciplined in the last five years due to breach of higher education standards.

d. Clearly report the academic service provided regarding the type, category and methodology of programs and the place it is provided.

e. From January 1, 2015, the institution that starts the accreditation process must have at least 25% of all the accreditable undergraduate and postgraduate programs of the HEI accredited, regardless of whether its methodology is in-person or distance learning (traditional or online), or if it is an extension. Said percentage will be 40% from the first of January 2019.

f. Additionally, if it is a multicampus institution, it must have accredited programs in at least 75% of its campuses or branches; at least 10% of the accreditable programs accredited from January 1, 2015, and at least 25% from January 1, 2019. In campuses or branches with less than ten programs, at least one must be accredited from 2015. The aforementioned percentages shall apply to all the branches and campuses from January 1, 2019.

g. Higher education institutions that have different branches or campuses must request a multicampus institutional accreditation.

h. All of the branches, campuses, Regional Centers of Higher Education (CERES, for the Spanish original) operated by the institution, centers for tutorial services, distance-learning centers, or similar, with both the in-person and distance-learning methodologies (traditional and virtual), must be included in the self-assessment and in the institutional improvement plan. The CNA will define the extension and scope of the peer's visit in terms of campuses, branches, CERES, centers for tutorial services or distance-learning centers. The assessment will be carried out, taking into account the nature of the institution and the social, economic, environmental and cultural context of the regions where the institution carries out is activities.

i. In the multicampus institutions, the assessment processes will include how the institution operates as an integrated academic system and the systemic interaction that permits a holistic and global vision of the HEIs. Accreditation will be granted for a term that applies to the whole institution. The CNA's opinion shall apply to all activities supported with the name of the institution.

j. Institutional accreditation is temporary. The terms that may be granted for institutional accreditation are four, six, eight or ten years.

k. During said term, the accredited institution must maintain the essential conditions and all of the components through which the quality assessment was implemented. If there are radical changes in the institutions, which may be legal, academic, financial or administrative, the dean or registered agent must opportunely inform the CNA about said changes and assemble the respective documents so that the institution can be assessed again if necessary.

l. Institutional accreditation will only be granted according to the nature of the institution at the time of assessment (university, university institution, technology institution or professional technical institution). This means that in the case of transformation of the institution, a new institutional accreditation is required, and therefore, the current accreditation will be automatically lost.

m. The new conditions established in this document will apply to the HEIs that start the process from January 1, 2015.

n. In accordance with current legislation, the institution must maintain its nature as a legal entity for public use, and as a non-profit organization. The surpluses generated during operation must be fully invested in strengthening the essential roles, if not, the accreditation will be lost and it shall not be possible to access it.

4.2.3 External assessment process

The external assessment stage is carried out by external assessment peers selected by the CNA, as reported in Section 4.2.2.6.1, and basically consists of a visit to the program and institution to verify the objectivity and truth of the content in the self-assessment report. Additionally, in the visit, the peers must complement their vision of the program or HEI, taking into account aspects that have not been considered in the self-assessment, and that are essential in the quality assessment, and examine critical aspects detected in the prior examination of the documents. As a result of this visit, the peers must prepare and submit the External Assessment Report to the CNA. This report contains the critical analysis of the self-assessment, the assessment of the quality characteristics and of the factors defined by the model, the strengths and weaknesses, and the explicit opinion on the quality of the program or HEI, as well as the recommendations deemed relevant for its improvement (see Annex xx. External Assessment Report Model).

The external assessment responds not only to the achievements made, but also to the effectively implemented quality improvement mechanisms. Therefore, as well as the aspects where it can be ensured that high quality

conditions are met, it is possible to indicate other aspects where it can be expected that these levels will be achieved in the immediate future.

The mechanism used to monitor the recommendations made by the council to the accredited programs is specified once the accreditation cycle is completed. That is, when the institution requests renewal of the accreditation. The aim of this monitoring is to confirm and document the improvement of the program or institution, analyzing the impact of accreditation, and verifying whether the improvement programs and the goals proposed in the recommendations of the previous accreditation were achieved. This impact is verified by showing specific improvement in the main factors that are analyzed (for example, level of training of the teaching staff, dropout rates, research capacity, scientific publications, and internationalization).

4.2.3.1   The CNA carries out a reliable external review process that is based on published procedures and criteria. This is followed by an equivalent self-assessment that includes external assessment (normally including on-site visits) and ongoing follow-up of the recommendations resulting from said review.

The external assessment visit is one of the most important moments of the whole accreditation process. During the visit, the institution and program use all the resources and evidence required to demonstrate the veracity of the quality conditions of the program or institution in accordance with the accreditation guidelines in each case.

Based on the information received, the peers make a visit for two and a half days, during which they must verify, validate and collect all the evidence about the conditions of the program or HEI that is subject to assessment. For this purpose, the CNA provides a model agenda that the peers must implement during the visit.

The visit agenda is flexible and may be agreed between the team of peers and the institution. However, in all cases, it is essential that all the visits include meetings with the academic establishments: directors, teachers, students, graduates and employers of the graduates. Therefore, part of the exercise of verification and collection of evidence is carried out according to conversations with each stakeholder in each process (see Annex xxx. Model Visit Agenda).

Another element that contributes to the reliability of external assessment is the peers' report. It is a joint report and its content is comprised of the following aspects described in the External Assessment Guides:

a) General considerations about the assessed institution or program;

b) Critical analysis of the self-assessment carried out by the institution;

c) Analysis and issue of opinions about the quality of the main analyzed characteristics and about the quality of each factor;

d) Strengths and weaknesses of the institution;

e) Explicit opinion on the global quality of the institution;

f) Recommendations to improve the quality of the institution or program, as applicable.

Said report must be submitted to the CNA within a maximum term of 30 calendar days according to the format established for the External Assessment Report.

4.2.3.2   The CNA has published documents that clearly establish what is expected of higher education institutions in the form of quality criteria or standards and procedures for self-assessment and external assessment.

The CNA's assessment criteria, as well as its guides and procedures, are published on the CNA's website and can be freely accessed by anyone interested.

Guidelines: **http://www.cna.gov.co/1741/article-186359.html**

Procedure guides: **http://www.cna.gov.co/1741/article-186376.html**

4.2.3.3 The external assessment process is carried out by teams of experts in accordance with the characteristics of the institution or program that is being assessed. The experts may provide information from several perspectives, including those of the institutions, academics, students or practicing professionals.

The CNA appoints academic peers based on the previously defined criteria in the Accreditation Guidelines.

The appointed team of peers for the program accreditation visits (undergraduate and postgraduate) is comprised of two (2) or three (3) academics who are registered in the bank of peers in the areas of knowledge of the program to be assessed. Within the team of peers, it is defined who will have the role of coordinator, taking into consideration experience as an academic peer. In the case of the renewal processes, it is important for the person who occupies this role to have participated in the previous accreditation process. The conditions to select the team of peers firstly take into account that the education and academic experience profile of the assessors corresponds to that of the program or institution to visit.

For institutional accreditation, the commission of peers is comprised of at least five (5) academic peers, which includes the participation of a former council member, and one of them is appointed as the coordinator. On some occasions, when the complexity of the assessment requires it, the team is reinforced with the appointment of another peer, who acts as the team's reporter. The peer commissions include international experts, especially in institutional accreditation, and in accreditation processes of doctorates.

The shortlisting of teams of peers is the responsibility of the Technical Secretariat, which presents the teams for the consideration of the CNA. The CNA studies the proposal and establishes the members of the teams or commissions of peers, and may make adjustments and suggestions about other candidates. Generally, a greater number of peers is selected in order to have second options, and the peers who will have the role of coordinator are officially appointed. It is also taken into account that the appointed academic peers do not have nor have had any kind of employment with the institution that they are going to visit in accordance with the criteria established in the Code of Ethics.

The official invitation to the appointed peers is sent by the Technical Secretariat by email and is accompanied by the Code of Ethics defined by the CNA. The peers have ten calendar days to officially express their acceptance of the role. Once accepted, they are officially informed of the team members and the name of the coordinator, and they are included in the SACES application, so that they can access the information and documents of the program or institution to assess.

Parallel to this, the dean of the higher education institution is also informed of the members of the team or committee of peers that will make the external assessment visit. The coordinator peer agrees the date and agenda of the visit with the institution, which are previously discussed with the team or committee. Said date must be established within fifteen (15) calendar days from notification of the appointment of peers by the CNA, and it must be made within two (2) months from the notification. The external assessment visit lasts 2.5 business days for academic programs, and 3 days for institutional accreditation. Eventually, the council authorizes visits for one or more additional days depending on the complexity of the visit. In general, the team of peers for institutional accreditation has a coordinator and reporter of the External Assessment Report, who are both appointed by the CNA.

As stated above, the visit agenda is flexible and may be agreed between the team of peers and the institution. However, in any case, it is essential that all the visits include meetings with the academic establishments: directors, teachers, students, graduates and employers of the graduates. Therefore, part of the exercise of verification and collection of evidence is carried out according to conversations with each stakeholder in each process (see Annex xxx. Model Visit Agenda).

4.2.3.4 The CNA has clear specifications about the characteristics and selection of external workers, who must be supported with adequate training and good supporting material, such as guides or manuals.

The academic peers who participate in the external assessment guarantee the legitimacy of the assessment process. The careful selection of teams of peers by the CNA, added to the conceptual and methodological reinforcements delivered in the induction and training activities, allows the hetero-evaluation to be developed in the best way in the essence of the paradigm of disciplines and professions. The members of the national and

international academic communities are those who have the authority to judge an academic program or higher education institution, as they have the knowledge and are experts in each subject.

The academic peers are responsible for on-site verification of the self-assessment report, assessment of the internal operating conditions, and for issuing an opinion on the quality of the institution or academic program, and their forecasts through a written report submitted to the CNA.

The accreditation process has the participation of teams of academic peers who are part of the bank of peers, which receives nominations from the same academic communities and from the directors of the higher education institutions.

The requirements to join the bank of peers primarily consider the level of education and academic experience. The peers will preferably have a master's degree or doctorate, and demonstrate teaching, research and administrative experience in higher education, as well as being part of some academic community, and not have been disciplined in the exercise of their profession. The résumés are analyzed by the Technical Secretariat, and then they are officially entered into the bank of peers if they meet this profile. Recently, the bank of peers has also been enriched with the registration of international peers. Some of them have joined through calls for applications, such as those of ARCU-SUR.

At least once a year, through a national call for applications, the CNA carries out induction, re-induction and training processes for academic peers. These processes are concentrated in the following cities: Cali, Barranquilla, Bucaramanga, Medellín and Bogotá, where one-day sessions are scheduled for the development of the following topics:

- National Accreditation System - General Aspects
- National Accreditation Council
    o Formation
    o Processes
    o Role of Academic Peers
    o General Guidance for External Assessment
    o Code of Ethics
- SACES-CNA System
    o Acceptance of Appointment
    o Update of Profile and its Interrelation with the CvLAc
    o How to Upload the Agenda Agreed with the Institution
    o How to Access the Self-Assessment Information
    o Guidelines to Upload the Report to the System

An attendance register is kept for these training sessions, which account for the ongoing communication of changes in the processes, serve as support for peers, and resolve inquiries about the relations with the institutions, the external assessment processes and the support system.

Additionally, the CNA has designed a Peer Training Handbook, which is sent to the peers when they are appointed, especially when it is the first time that they are going to carry out this work (this handbook can be consulted at: http://www.cna.gov.co/1741/articles-186376_manual_pares.pdf)

4.2.3.5   The external review procedures include effective and comprehensive mechanisms to prevent conflicts of interest and ensure that any opinion resulting from the external assessments is based on clear, published criteria.

To ensure the effectiveness and transparency of the external assessment stage, the CNA's accreditation process has the following mechanisms:

- The established regulations on ineligibilities, incompatibilities and conflicts of interest of academic peers are applied during the appointment of peers.

- Once the team of peers is notified, the institutions have the power to disqualify the peers (each one or all the team) for the aforementioned reasons, referring to the Code of Ethics, or when in their duly argued opinion, the peers' profiles do not correspond with the nature or specific characteristics of the program to assess.

- The External Assessment Report is revised by the council, so that if the report is incomplete or deficient, the team of peers is returned for it to be completed or improved.

- If the report is approved, it is sent to the visited institution or program, so that before the final assessment, the institution has the opportunity to read it and respond (complement, clarify, or add information) to the perception and records of the external assessment peers.

- When the final assessment is produced by the CNA, in the event that the result is negative and it is considered that the HEI or institution does not meet the conditions to achieve the accreditation, the council sends an opinion to the institution with recommendations for improvement. There is the possibility of a request for review, which consists of a new option that the HEI or program has to dispute the council's decision, providing new arguments and evidence about the quality of the assessed process. In this case, the council assesses the whole process again, including new arguments and evidence submitted. As a result of this new assessment, the council may confirm its original opinion or change its decision, accrediting the program or HEI.

It is also important to mention that the Peer Handbook contains the framework for action of the peers and the foundations of external assessment in which aspects are mentioned, such as: characteristics of the academic peer; criteria for the action of academic peers; ineligibilities, incompatibilities and obstacles; objections and conflicts of interest; and roles of the person who coordinates the team of academic peers (Article 4 – Peer Handbook: http://www.cna.gov.co/1741/articles-186376_manual_pares.pdf and the Code of Ethics at: http://www.cna.gov.co/1741/articles-186793_Codigo_Etica_Pares.pdf)

4.2.3.6 The CNA's system ensures that every institution or program will be coherently assessed, even if the external panels, teams or committees are different.

The CNA makes the document: "Guidance for External Assessment for Institutional Accreditation" available to the academic peers in order to provide the necessary information to understand the direction, methodology, instruments and general guidance of the institutional accreditation process, as well as indicating the procedures that must be followed in the development of external assessment. Similarly, it aims to illustrate the procedures of the external assessment stage to the higher education institutions that subject themselves to this process[31].

Taking into account that as external assessors, the academic peers are in charge of and responsible for assessment for high-quality accreditation, they must be exemplary members of the academic and scientific community. Firstly, they must be recognized for the way in which they carry out the work of their field and of their assessment work.

Therefore, the CNA, and society in general expect that in compliance with the responsibility appointed to them by the state, as well as strictly observing general regulations regarding public ethics, the academic peers put into practice the criteria of the accreditation model and promote respect for the values and universal examples that comprise the academic ethos. Considering the responsibilities and the social effects of the peers' work, it is necessary to reiterate and detail the ethical guidance that must guide their behavior in their relations with the institutions and programs as part of the assessment process in which they are the main agent. These aspects have been developed in the Code of Ethics.[32]

Although knowledge is the essential quality of the peers, some definitive personality traits are also taken into account in the development of their work: The academic peers must be sensitive to differences between the projects they assess and their own project; and they must have the capacity to understand and assess education in the context of an institutional project that they understand and respect without disregarding the legal high quality requirements for accreditation. As well as the program's own universal dimensions, this involves taking into account the academic tradition it is a part of and the institutional tradition in which the education is provided. In this context:

- The peers do not examine an academic program without a context. They must understand the social role that this program has and responsibly assess it. This requires examination of the way in which the program responds to the community's needs.

- In external assessment, the peers recognize the opportunity to demonstrate the strengths and weaknesses of an academic program to effectively help improve its quality. This leads them to provide criticism in the most academic sense of the term, meaning the capacity to highlight items that warrant examination, and not the unilateral exploration of what needs to be rejected.

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[31] National Accreditation Council (2006): Guidance for External Assessment for Institutional Accreditation. Accessed at: http://www.cna.gov.co/1741/articles-186376_guia_6.pdf

[32] National Accreditation Council (2010): Code of Ethics for Academic Peers Responsible for External Assessment for High Quality Accreditation. Accessed at: http://www.cna.gov.co/1741/articles-186793_Codigo_Etica_Pares.pdf

- The peers must comply with the assumptions of true communication. They must be correct, sincere and respectful, and manage comprehensible language.
- The peers must be fair. This means that they must recognize the rules of the work they carry out and work with good judgment, honesty and responsibility.
- Peers are members of the academic community and do not represent any institution. They make their assessment not by comparison with the institution where they work or have been educated, but in response to academic criteria.
- The peers know the paradigm that they examine and they are not the defender of this paradigm or another one. In the case of paradigms in conflict, when the peers do not share the examined approach, they must have the capacity to recognize the internal conditions of the paradigm that they judge, regardless of the critical opinion they have toward it. In all cases, the fact that the peers form a team must ensure balance and objectivity in judgment.

There is an established code of ethics to guide the academic peers' work. Academic peers may be disqualified by the council when there is evidence that they have not fully met the responsibilities of their position or that there has been a breach of the Code of Ethics (which can be consulted in the "Code of Ethics" at: http://www.cna.gov.co/1741/articles-186793_Codigo_Etica_Pares.pdf).

The practice gained in external assessment makes it possible for the work of the academic peers to be increasingly more qualified, and for them to learn from each other in the external assessment teams, thus creating a certain experience, even if they do not intend to work with assessment professionals. Additionally, although the external assessments, and particularly the visits to institutions, are activities for academic exchange between peers, the meetings and seminars where the experienced peers can contribute their knowledge to potential peers have been useful.

The teams of peers must act with full independence of criteria to form their conclusions and make the necessary recommendations to the program or institution. In said report, the team of peers does not conclude nor suggest whether to grant the accreditation or not. This is a decision that corresponds to the council in a plenary session.

The professionals of the Technical Secretariat do not participate in the assessments, nor do they participate in the assessments or attend the visits to the academic programs or institutions. Their work is based on facilitating and providing support throughout the assessment process to the council members, as well as to the peers, institutions and academic programs. In the context of these roles, the Technical Secretariat appoints a council member to revise the External Assessment Report; request the corresponding adjustments or additions, if necessary; and prepare the corresponding presentation so that the council can analyze the External Assessment Report in a plenary session. If necessary, it can discuss the report with the peers involved in the process or request the clarifications that it deems appropriate.

As mentioned, after it is made known to the council, the External Assessment Report is sent to the institution for its analysis and comments. Only after receiving the institution's announcement does the council start the final assessment phase of the program's quality according to the results of the self-assessment, external assessment and the institution's assessment of the peers' report.

In response to the peers' assessment, the institution extends the elements of the council's opinion in the final assessment, which critically responds to the external assessment. The HEIs send their comments on the External Assessment Report to the CNA. The institutions have no more than 15 business days to do this. Therefore, the council's assessment operates as a meta-assessment, which includes the institution's opinion. All of the decisions made by the council are made by consensus and are included and supported in the minutes of each session.

4.2.3.7 The CNA carries out the external assessment within a reasonable time after the completion of a self-assessment report to ensure that the information is up-to-date.

The scheduling of the external assessment visits depends on several factors: availability of the academic peers; agreement of the date and agenda with the institution or program to assess, which at the same time, depends on the academic calendar; and the logistical operations required to carry out the visit.

In recent years, in the framework of these variables, the CNA has made great efforts to optimize the times of the assessment process and especially of the visits, as stated in Section 4.2.1.3 of this document. The following mechanisms have been considered for this purpose:

- In 2015, the process was scheduled by dividing the year into four periods: two for registering applications, and two for scheduling visits. These periods are generally adjusted to the institutions' academic periods.

- The critical stages of the program are being monitored more strictly, which are: submission of the peers' reports, which must be within 15 days from the end of the visit; and submission of the institution's comments about the peers' report, which must also be within 15 days from receipt of the report.

- The implementation of the SACES application since 2015 has also helped to improve communication times with the institutions, because now the procedures are carried out online, which has substantially reduced communications by paper mail or email.

- Regarding the visit logistics, since 2012, the Ministry of Education has supported the organization of this process by outsourcing to external operators: a trust company that manages funds for the payment of the travel expenses and professional fees of the assessment peers; and a logistics operator which is responsible for scheduling the visits, agreeing itineraries and issuing tickets for the academic peers, after monitoring the submission of the reports.

The information systems that have been updated by the HEIs are consulted at the time of assessment.

4.2.3.8 The CNA provides higher education institutions with the opportunity to correct the mistakes that may appear in the External Assessment Report.

One of the stages of the accreditation process is called the "Dean's Comments". This stage consists of the opportunity for the institution or program that is being assessed to read the report and respond to it; that is to complement, clarify, or add information about the items perceived and recorded by the external assessment peers before the final assessment is made by the council.

Additionally, in this stage, the institution makes an announcement on the performance of the assessment peers (before reading the report), and together with the comments about the External Assessment Report, sends the *master tables,* which are standardized forms that contain updated and consolidated information about some of the critical characteristics for quality assessment.

4.2.4 Requirements for self-assessment

The CNA has published specific guides to guide the HEIs in their self-assessment processes:

- Self-Assessment Guide for Accreditation of Undergraduate Programs: **http://www.cna.gov.co/1741/articles-186376_guia_autoev_2013.pdf**

- Self-Assessment Guide for Accreditation of Master's Degree and Doctorate Programs: **http://www.cna.gov.co/1741/articles-186376_Guia_mae_doc_2010.pdf**

4.2.4.1 The CNA provides clear guidance to institutions or programs on the application of the procedures for self-assessment, the application for assessment/feedback from the public, students and other constituents, or the preparation of external assessment when necessary and appropriate.

As analyzed in Section 4.2.1.2, the CNA carries out different support activities, which aim to provide clear and accurate answers to the questions that all the stakeholders ask about the model, stages of the accreditation process, etc.

ANNEXES

Annex Reference	Document Title
A1	CNA Inventory of Rules
A8	Guidelines for Institutional Accreditation
A9	Guidelines for Accreditation of Undergraduate Programs
A10	Guidelines for Accreditation of Programs of Accredited HEIs

A11	Guidelines for Institutional Accreditation
A12	Guidelines for High Quality Accreditation of Master's Degree and Doctorate Programs
A13	Procedure Guide for Self-Assessment for Accreditation of Undergraduate Programs
A14	Guide – Assessment of Initial Conditions for Accreditation of Programs
A15	Guide – Assessment of Initial Conditions for Institutional Accreditation (2015)
A16	Guide for External Assessment for Accreditation: Undergraduate, Master's Degree and Doctorate Programs and Institutions (2015)
A17	Guide for Reports by External Peers of Postgraduate Programs
A18	Procedure guide for External Assessment for Accreditation of Undergraduate Academic Programs
A19	Procedure Guide for the Renewal of Accreditation of Undergraduate Academic Programs
A20	Procedure Guide for Self-Assessment for High Quality Accreditation of Master's Degree and Doctorate Programs
A21	Guide for Reports by External Peers of Postgraduate Programs
A22	Academic Peer Training Handbook
A23	Technical Specifications - Assessment of Initial Conditions
A24	Technical Specifications – External Assessment Visit
A25	Technical Specifications – Issue and Reconsideration of Opinion
A26	Code of Ethics for Academic Peers Responsible for External Assessment for High Quality Accreditation
A27	Report – Actions for Support, Update, Training and Promotion of the Culture of Quality, 2015 – 2016

4.3   Decision-making

4.3.1   The decision-making process

Among the roles of the National Accreditation Council, the most important task is to carry out the final quality assessment of programs and institutions based on self-assessment and peer assessment.

The decision on the accreditation process is made in this final assessment stage, based on an analysis of the information obtained in the different stages of accreditation, such as: assessment of initial conditions, self-assessment, external assessment, and reviews of the improvement plan and progress. In this stage, the information provided by external assessment peers is studied, along with the history of the processes undertaken by the institutions and programs and the data collected in the master tables, which contain the indicators of the program or institution under study.

By consensus between the council members in a plenary session, council decides independently and without the influence of third parties to recommend that the Ministry of National Education accredits a program or institution or not. These decisions have always been clear, impartial and consistent, based on the evidence and results of each process, in accordance with the report provided by the team of peers, and on the verification and comparison of other sources of information of the sector as mentioned earlier.

The CNA's final decision regarding the result of an accreditation process is made in the form of an opinion prepared by the council, which can have two options:

When the result of the assessment is positive, the opinion highlights the strengths that give rise to the accreditation; it points out the opportunities for improvement, and advises the Ministry of National Education to grant accreditation for any of the terms provided by the regulations on accreditation (the possible terms are currently 4, 6, 8 or 10 years).

In the case of a negative result; that is when, after carrying out the assessment process, the academic programs or institutions do not meet the conditions to be recognized as high quality, the council's opinion is sent to the institution or program, indicating the

DECISION-MAKING

The CNA has policies and procedures to ensure a fair and independent decision-making process in the final review of the institution or program. It provides effective procedures to deal with claims and complaints.

recommendations and opportunities for improvement. This is carried out confidentially, inviting the institution to move forward with its plans and to apply again for a second process. All the CNA's decisions regarding the assessment results of the processes are recorded in minutes of the council meetings, which can be consulted at any time.

The existence of different periods of time (accreditation terms) reflect the temporary nature of accreditation and allow the council to distinguish between the different levels of achievement attained, as a result of the diversity and complexity of the characteristics and degrees of maturity of the institutions and programs. To this effect the council has always promoted the fair treatment of institutions and programs, as it is important to remember that the opinion regarding accreditation is the result of a synthesis in which the different aspects are related to each other in a given context, and are not a sum of the achievements attained.

In this regard, it is important to mention the provisions set forth in Article 8 of CESU Agreement 02 / 2005. "It is the responsibility of the National Accreditation Council to promote and execute the accreditation policy adopted by the National Council of Higher Education and to coordinate the respective processes. Therefore, it will guide the institutions so that they carry out their self-assessment; it will adopt the quality criteria, tools and technical indicators that must be applied in the external assessment; it will appoint the academic peers that must practice it; it will respond to their inquiries; it will listen to the Institution; and it will carry out the final assessment, which it shall send to the Ministry of National Education or, if applicable, to the respective educational institution with the relevant recommendations," which sets out the field of action and the CNA's decision.

The results of the assessment carried out by the National Accreditation Council serve as feedback for the Higher Education Quality Assurance System and become points of reference for the Ministry of National Education, CONACES and the higher education institutions. In addition, the CNA's approaches are assessed and taken into account for addressing the policy on higher education given the CNA's role as an advisory body of the Ministry of National Education and the national social recognition that it has always enjoyed.

4.3.1.1 The CNA's decisions take into consideration the results of the institution's self-assessment process, as well as those of the external assessment. They can also consider any other relevant information provided that the higher education institutions have been informed thereof.

In all the accreditation processes, the decisions made by the CNA are clearly based on three elements: (i) the self-assessment report submitted by the institution or the program, (ii) the peer report resulting from the external assessment visit, and (iii) the dean's comments regarding the peer report, along with the information from the master tables.

Additionally, as mentioned earlier, as a mechanism of verification and comparison, the council refers to other sources of information from the sector, which are public, recognized and validated by all higher education institutions. These include: the science and technology information systems that record and categorize research groups, researchers and publications (COLCIENCIAS-Scenti); the information on results of students' standardized academic performance tests (ICFES

– SABER PRO), and information about dropout rates.

In this regard, it is important to point out some of the characteristics of the CNA's assessment model that permeates the decisions regarding process assessments:

Firstly, the accreditation process is a part of and is linked to Colombia's Quality Assurance System, so one of the requirements to apply for assessment for accreditation is to have a valid qualification certification and not to have been recently disciplined. In other words, the institution and the program must be preceded by a commitment to quality. Accreditation is not only a goal, but one of several means that help to improve quality. It is intended to continuously improve quality and involves a support process.

Accreditation is not intended to rank programs or institutions. It is not a "ranking" activity. It is not intended to standardize institutions or programs since it recognizes the specific characteristics of their nature and the context.

4.3.1.2 The CNA's decisions are impartial, strict and consistent, even when they are based on the reports of other quality control bodies.

The National Accreditation Council (CNA, for the Spanish original) is an autonomous decision-making body that represents the country's academic and scientific community, and it is responsible for promoting and executing the accreditation policy adopted by the National Council of Higher Education (CESU, for the Spanish original). It is comprised of seven (7) members appointed by the CESU for a period of five (5) years, and who cannot be reelected. The council began operating in July 1995 and to date, it has continued safeguarding the impartiality, strictness and consistency of its official decisions.

4.3.1.3 The CNA's decisions are based on published procedures and criteria, and can only be justified according to said procedures and criteria.

From the beginning, the CNA has been characterized by its emphasis and interest in the participation of and interaction with the academic community. Therefore, it makes its documents, policies, procedures and criteria clear and available to the public. It discloses the accreditation decisions and the results of the assessment on its own operation. The CNA has extensive background material that is highly valued by stakeholders both nationally and internationally. It has published several versions of its guidelines, guides, indicators and academic documentation related to the accreditation process. It maintains information on the CNA website that allows users to learn more about the National Accreditation System and the National Accreditation Council, strategic projects, guidelines, guides and indicators, news, frequently asked questions and accreditation processes, regulations and sites of interest.

Additionally, the information generated in the accreditation process is available to the public at the following link: www.cna.gov.co. This website provides information about accredited institutions as well as programs and includes data on the resolutions that validate this condition, the term thereof, and the strengths identified in the assessment process.

The information is also disseminated internationally through the CNA's participation in two major international websites: the UNESCO-RIACES-CNA website and the QAHEC Quality Assurance in Higher Education Clearinghouse website of the INQAAHE, thus following one of the higher education institutions' suggestions, which proposes greater dissemination of accredited programs and institutions as an incentive.

As part of the participation strategy maintained by the CNA during its operation, since 2009, it has met on an annual basis in order to disseminate information regarding the SNA and to examine in detail a topic related to the *regional meetings on accreditation*, which have the participation of representatives of the country's higher education institutions, and where deans, directors, accreditation coordinators and academic peers are consulted.

4.3.1.4 The consistency in decision-making includes the consistency and transparency of the processes and actions to enforce the recommendations for follow-up activities.

Consistent and transparent decision-making is a challenge for both the CNA and the SNA. Therefore, **external assessment** is used as a starting point for the evaluation of the self-assessment carried out by the higher education institutions and academic programs. As mentioned earlier, this is done by academic peers with a renowned record in the field of the educational program, who are appointed

by the CNA. Their task is focused on establishing coherence between the information in the self-assessment report and the actual findings in the institution.

The National Accreditation Council appoints academic peers based on the criteria previously defined in the Accreditation Guidelines. Initially, a list is proposed of shortlisted peers from the bank of academic peers created by the CNA with candidates suggested by the academic community in the country and abroad, and by the council members themselves, in order for the council to define the final members of the team or committee of peers. The peers will preferably have a master's degree or a doctorate, and demonstrate teaching, research and administrative experience in higher education. They must also be part of an academic community, and not have been disciplined in the exercise of their profession.

As mentioned earlier and as a way to safeguard the transparency and consistency of its decisions, the CNA provides peers with the necessary induction and training and gives them all the documents, guidance and assistance required. It has been a tradition of the CNA to maintain ongoing communication with the academic peers, and, therefore, a record has been made of talks among peers and induction sessions in different cities of the country. Expert peers are also consulted. These actions provide important feedback regarding the accreditation process and the work carried out by peers. There is an updated code of ethics that has been disseminated and accepted by the academic community, which defines aspects including conflicts of interest. The teams of peers have the autonomy and independence that comes with their responsibility to propose conclusions and recommendations that support the councils decision-making process.

In order to ensure greater transparency in the external assessment process, the dean of the higher education institution is informed of the members of the team or committee of peers that will carry out the external assessment visit. Once a CNA council member has read and analyzed the External Assessment Report, it is sent to the institution for **analysis and comments**. After learning of the peer assessment, the institution can expand on the information it deems relevant, which will serve as grounds for the council to make decisions.

In the framework of the **final assessment**, the opinion issued by the CNA is published. This process implicitly involves decision-making on the accreditation process based on the analysis of the information obtained in the different stages of accreditation, such as: assessment of initial conditions, self-assessment, external assessment, and reviews of the improvement plan and progress. This also allows the confirmation of the information provided by external assessment peers, along with the history of the processes undertaken by the institutions and programs and the data collected, which contain the indicators of the program or institution under study.

When applicable, this technical opinion includes a recommendation about the term of accreditation, which is sent to the Ministry of National Education to issue the corresponding resolution of accreditation. If the opinion is not positive, the CNA proceeds to confidentially inform the institutions of the relevant recommendations, so the program or institution can apply again.

By consensus in a plenary session, the council decides independently and without the influence of third parties to recommend that the Ministry of National Education accredits a program or institution or not. These decisions are always clear, impartial and consistent, given that they are based on the weighting and grading of the factors of the accreditation model carried out by the team of peers and the explicit opinion regarding the overall quality of the institution or program.

However, in the interest of the transparency of the process, the CNA has addressed the requests for reconsideration submitted by higher education institutions. These are usually submitted when a positive opinion is not issued regarding the accreditation of a higher education institution or program. In order to resolve the requests for reconsideration or appeals for reversal, there is a

formally established process known as "Issue and Reconsideration of Opinion", which is part of the Integrated Management System.

4.3.1.5 Decisions reported by the CNA are clear and accurate.

This aspect corresponds to the area of strengths of the National Accreditation System and the CNA, which have been identified by agents of the accreditation process, expressed as such, observing agreement on the following:

a) **Process credibility** - by means of the National Accreditation Council, the SNA has managed to position itself in the education system, in the academic community and in Colombian society, as a guarantor of the quality of higher education institutions and programs. It has been expressed that there is confidence in the actions and decisions of the CNA, because it is a prestigious, high-level entity with highly recognized management and duly structured and well-grounded processes. In turn, it is recognized that the CNA respects university autonomy, values the nature and identity declared by the institution and bases its decisions on the voluntary nature of accreditation. In addition, the transparency of the processes is pointed out as a strength that conveys security and is a true academic point of reference in the education system.

b) **Responsibility and rigor** - The rigor of the accreditation system and its recognition gives rise to an institutional commitment that involves the establishment of short and medium-term goals that translate into specific results at all levels of higher education institutions and programs. One of the strengths that is reiterated is the clear contribution of the Accreditation System to the strengthening and acceptance of the culture of quality, which ensures a real contribution to the quality of education, an aspect that is inherent to social responsibility and the rigor and independence that guide the actions of the CNA. The fact that the CNA promotes the involvement of the academic community in building the model is also highlighted, and in turn, this leverages the participation and commitment of the entire university community in the institutions.

c) **Qualification and quality of the CNA team** - Among the strengths mentioned, it is important to highlight the professional and human qualities of the officials and council members as "qualified, committed academics". "Independence, kindness and service" are also emphasized, along with the guidance and support provided to the institutions through the CNA to start and carry out their processes; as well as the academic feedback generated between the institutions and academic peers in the external assessment that enriches the construction of knowledge and strengthens academic communities.

4.3.2 The CNA's process for appeals and complaints

The CNA has clear processes and procedures to carry out its duties. It also has forms that are defined and coded in the Integrated Management System of the Ministry of National Education, which facilitate the internal and external accreditation procedures. These processes and procedures include the established and approved process of "Issue and Reconsideration of Opinion", which allows HEIs to ask the council to review the decision to not grant accreditation for a program or institution or to file an appeal for reversal against the resolution issued by the Ministry of Education based on the CNA's technical opinion.

Two situations are considered in order to deal with the cases to reconsider decisions:

a) When the program or institution requests reconsideration of the decision to not grant accreditation; that is when the result of the process is negative and the council only provides confidential recommendations.

b) When the institution files an appeal for reversal regarding the resolution issued by the Ministry of National Education granting the accreditation, because it disagrees with the content of the opinion or (more often) the term for which accreditation is granted.

In the first case, the request must be submitted to the coordinator of the CNA by means of a duly filed official communication indicating the grounds for the request. The HEIs must attach supporting documents, evidence or additional documents if necessary.

In the second case, it must be filed with Ministry of National Education, complying with the procedure in the terms legally provided in the regulations. This request is forwarded by the Ministry of National Education to the CNA, which is responsible for studying the process once again in the

light of the arguments provided, and for making the decision, which has two options: confirmation of the initial decision, or if the new arguments and evidence is accepted, a change in the decision for a longer term. In either of these cases, before making a decision, the council is likely to consider the need to request more information, to make an additional visit or to hold a hearing with the team of peers that made the visit. This is done in order to have all the information to make the right decision.

All the cases for reconsideration are included by the CNA's Technical Secretariat in the agenda for analysis in a plenary session of the CNA, prior to assigning the case to a council member other than the one who gave the initial presentation. A record is made of the decisions regarding the result of the analysis, along with the support thereof in the minutes of each session.

In order to prevent conflicts of interest, the CNA has updated the Code of Ethics for council members and staff of the Technical Secretariat of the National Accreditation Council. Chapter 5 establishes the ineligibilities, incompatibilities, obstacles, objections and other conflicts of interest. To summarize, in addition to the provisions set forth on the matter in the Political Constitution, the Civil Procedure Code and the regulations issued by the CESU in Agreement No. 02 / June 23, 2005, the council members and members of the Technical Secretariat must:

a)   Perform their roles based on the recognition of and respect for university autonomy and promotion thereof.

b)   Maintain strict confidentiality of the actions or decisions of the National Accreditation Council regarding the accreditation of higher education institutions and programs.

c)   Not participate in deliberations and decisions on accreditation regarding the institutions with which the council members has or has had a stable working relationship or employment in the last year.

d)   Not lead accreditation and self-assessment processes in the institution they work for.

e)   Abstain from giving tips or guidance other than that which the National Accreditation Council has agreed or made public.

f)   Not receive professional fees for their participation in national events on self-assessment and accreditation of institutions and programs.

g)   Abstain from simultaneously having the role of council member and the role of dean or registered agent of a higher education institution.

h)   Generally, the council members commit to not carry out actions that may give an advantage to the higher education institution in its accreditation process.

i)   The members of the National Accreditation Council and the staff of its Technical Secretariat must maintain confidentiality of information on the assessment and accreditation processes of programs and institutions until they are completed.

4.3.2.1   The CNA has established procedures to consistently deal with complaints regarding its procedures or operation.

The CNA uses the mechanisms and procedures established by the Ministry of National Education to respond to complaints and claims. Among them, the Virtual Citizen Service Window is an information system that allows all the agents of the process, including educational institutions, all their levels (students, teachers, directors), and also the general public, to file complaints, claims or inquiries online regarding the accreditation processes. In addition, another part of these requests arrives directly by mail to the CNA's offices.

At each monthly session, the Technical Secretariat makes a record in the agenda of the requests to be studied by the CNA, and to answer them as deemed appropriate by the council members.

4.3.2.2 The CNA has clear, published procedures for handling appeals related to its external assessment and decision-making processes.

As mentioned earlier, among the processes carried out by the CNA for the accreditation of institutional and academic programs, its negative opinions can be the subject of a **request** on behalf of the higher education institutions. In this case it is not an appeal, but referred to as a request to RECONSIDER the opinion. This request is analyzed by the members of the session, who will make a decision, either to reconsider the resolution of the CNA or confirm it in accordance with the evidence provided in said request, which must focus on what was said in the opinion and contributed in the opinion of the academic parties. This decision is made by said council in a plenary session.

If the opinions are not the subject of reconsideration, they are recorded in an administrative act referred to as a resolution, which is signed by the minister. Once the registered agent of the institution or the proxy thereof, or the person authorized thereby is notified, he/she has ten (10) days following the notification to file an appeal for reversal against the decision in the administrative act if the HEI disagrees with the decision of the Ministry of National Education (Article 76 of the Code of Administrative Procedure and Administrative Legal Action), and it will be resolved by said office.

It is important to mention that the CNA has technical specifications for these cases, which can be consulted at: http://www.cna.gov.co/1741/articles-187888_recurso_3.pdf

4.3.2.3 The appeals are carried out by a panel that was not responsible for the original decision and that has no conflict of interest. Appeals do not necessarily have to be carried out outside the CNA.

As regards the processes of appeal, a presenter other than the one who initially carried out the process is assigned, in order to ensure the impartiality, independence and objectivity thereof.

ANNEXES

Annex Reference	Document Title
A11	Guidelines for Institutional Accreditation
A12	Guidelines for Accreditation of Undergraduate Programs
A13	Guidelines for Accreditation of Programs of Accredited HEIs
A 14	Guide for Reports by External Peers of Postgraduate Programs
A15	Guidelines for Institutional Accreditation
A16	Guidelines for High Quality Accreditation of Master's Degree and Doctorate Programs
A17	Procedure Guide for Self-Assessment for Accreditation of Undergraduate Programs
A18	Procedure Guide for External Assessment for Accreditation of Undergraduate Academic Programs
A19	Procedure Guide for the Renewal of Accreditation of Undergraduate Academic Programs
A20	Procedure Guide - Guidance for External Assessment for Institutional Accreditation
A21	Procedure Guide - Guidance for the Submission of the Self-Assessment Report for Accreditation
A22	Procedure Guide for Self-Assessment for High Quality Accreditation of Master's Degree and Doctorate Programs
A 23	Guide for Reports by External Peers of Postgraduate Programs
A28	Technical Specifications - Assessment of Initial Conditions
A29	Technical Specifications – External Assessment Visit
A30	Technical Specifications – Issue and Reconsideration of Opinion
A31	Perception Study Report and Inquiries

The Agency and its Relationship with the Public

Since the beginning, the CNA has disseminated the accreditation model through various media, and has extensive background material that is highly valued by national and international stakeholders.

4.4 The agency and its relationship with the public

Since the beginning, the CNA has disseminated the accreditation model through various media, and has extensive background material that is highly valued by national and international stakeholders.

4.4.1 Public reports on the CNA's policies and decisions

It is important to the CNA to be in line with the evolution of knowledge and the national and international trends of education and assessment models, in order for its model to be in tune with these changes.

Considering the development of education in Colombia, the technological advances, and changes in the international context, among other variables, the CNA has updated the guidelines, guides and indicators, which have been made available to the academic community.

These documents provide institutions, programs, academic peers and the general community with guidance to carry out the accreditation process.

4.4.1.1 The CNA provides complete and clear information regarding the relevant documents, such as the policies, procedures and criteria.

The guidelines, guides and indicators are the documents that have been created for the Colombian accreditation model to be fully documented and for its structure to be widely known, thus facilitating its adoption and development by the HEIs.

The guidelines describe the structure of the CNA's accreditation model and contain the following information: legal framework, conceptual framework, objectives, quality criteria, factors of analysis, quality characteristics and aspects to be considered in each of the characteristics, based on which several indicators are suggested. The structure thereof was examined in detail in Section 4.2.2.4 of this report.

The procedure guides are complementary documents of the guidelines for accreditation designed by the CNA to guide the operational development of the accreditation process.

Table 48. Additional Documents Published

DOCUMENT TITLE	LATEST VERSION
Self-Assessment for Accreditation of Undergraduate Programs	CNA Procedure Guide no. 03. January 2013
External Assessment for Accreditation of Undergraduate Academic Programs	CNA Procedure Guide no. 03. Third Edition, November 2006.
Renewal of Accreditation of Undergraduate Academic Programs	CNA Procedure Guide no. 04. ISSN: 0122-9060. November 2006.
Guidance for External Assessment for Institutional Accreditation	CNA Procedure Guide no. 05. ISSN: 0122-9060. November 2006. Second Edition.
Guidance for the Submission of the Self-Assessment Report for Institutional Accreditation	CNA Procedure Guide.
Self-Assessment for High Quality Accreditation of Master's Degree and Doctorate Programs	CNA Procedure Guide. May 2010.
Academic Peer Training Handbook	2012
Self-Assessment for High Quality Accreditation of Master's Degree and Doctorate Programs	August 2012.

In addition, various technical documents have been made to provide suggestions about indicators that can be used, expanded or added to by the institutions. The indicators provide empirical, verifiable references on quality. Therefore, the CNA's methodology is not limited to the weighting and grading of every characteristic, although it includes them. This requires the use of indicators (qualitative and quantitative) provided by said empirical references for observing and assessing the performance of a program in a given situation.

The quality characteristics are made clear and can be assessed through them:

1. Indicators for Self-Assessment for Accreditation of Undergraduate Programs. CNA-ASCOFADE. First Edition, November 2006.

2. Indicators for Self-Assessment for Accreditation of Undergraduate Programs in the Online and Distance-Learning Categories. First Edition, November 2006.

3. Indicators for Self-Assessment for Accreditation of Technical and Technological Programs. Preliminary Version of the Document, 2006 (Unpublished).

4. Indicators for Self-Assessment for Accreditation of Medicine Programs. Preliminary Version of the Document, 2005 (Unpublished).

5. Indicators for Self-Assessment for Institutional Accreditation, CNA-ASCUN. Second Edition, November 2006.

6. Virtual Environments in Higher Education. First Edition, November 2000.

There is also a repository, where political, academic or technical documents can be consulted by the academic community for guidance on trends in topics related to quality and accreditation. These documents are available to users on the website http://www.cna.gov.co/1741/article-186502.html.

The CNA website also provides information that allows users to learn more about the National Accreditation System and the National Accreditation Council, strategic projects, guidelines, guides and indicators, information related to frequently asked questions and accreditation processes, regulations and sites of interest. This medium also provides accurate, updated and user-friendly information.

4.4.1.2 The CNA reports its decisions regarding higher education institutions and programs. The content and scope of the information may vary depending on the cultural context, legal requirements and other applicable factors.

The CNA's main tools for reporting its decisions are as follows:

The CNA website contains a search engine of programs and institutions that are currently accredited, which is updated on a permanent basis. This search engine provides the main data of the accredited institutions and programs and includes information on the strengths that gave rise to the accreditation in each case. This tool achieves one of the most important principles of accreditation, which is transparency; so the council's decisions regarding the quality of the institutions and programs are subject to public scrutiny. It also ensures the role of serving as a benchmark for decision-making by stakeholders. Students and parents can learn about the characteristics and profile of each institution or program; and the institutions have a reference or model regarding the actual conditions considered by the CNA to recognize the accreditation.

In addition, the CNA reports the results of its processes to society in other ways: through meetings with higher education institutions; in activities organized by the Ministry of National Education; and in workshops and events on quality assessment and assurance, where it presents comprehensive reports describing and analyzing the overall results, as well as results by region or group of institutions. It also takes part in the audits conducted in the context of the Integrated Management System of the Ministry of Education.

The information on activities is internationally communicated through the CNA's participation in two major international information systems on accredited academic programs and institutions. The UNESCO-RIACES-CNA website and the QAHEC Quality Assurance in Higher Education Clearinghouse website of the INQAAHE, thus following one of the higher education institutions' suggestions, which proposes greater dissemination of accredited programs and institutions as an incentive. This is carried out regularly on a semi-annual basis.

Since the scope of the CNA's actions ends when the council issues the final assessment opinion, when the opinions are positive, the CNA's decisions regarding accreditation are not published immediately, but sent to the Ministry of National Education in order for said body to issue the official resolution recognizing the accreditation, as provided by law. Once said administrative act (resolution) is issued, it can be accessed by the public.

In turn, when the academic programs or institutions do not obtain accreditation following the assessment process, they are confidentially informed of the result of the process and of the recommendations for improvement in which the CNA suggests applying for another process. It is important to point out that all the CNA's decisions are recorded in the minutes of the council meetings, which can accessed by the public.

4.4.1.3 The CNA has mechanisms to facilitate the public's understanding of the reasons on which its decisions are based.

As explained earlier, the publication of the strengths of accredited programs and HEIs in the ebsite's search engine is a mechanism of transparency. This is how the council defends its decisions regarding the characteristics and conditions of quality identified in the assessment process.

When a process (program or institution) does not achieve accreditation, the recommendations are not made public, but are kept confidential and directly sent to the institution. The reason for this practice is that the council has always carried out its management in the framework of promoting a culture of quality. In the case of a negative result, it aims to avoid shaming or discouraging the programs or institutions that voluntarily undergo the accreditation process.

4.4.2   Other public reports

The CNA provides regular reports on the status of the accreditation processes to entities such as: Ministry of National Education, in order to be included in its reports; the Colombian Presidency, as it is connected to the ongoing monitoring of the goals established by the Development Plan and the sector's public policy; ICETEX, as members of the Board of Directors, and the information regarding accredited institutions is taken into account for granting educational loans; and the media, regarding the evolution and development of the National Accreditation System.

Over the last three years, the council has set out to report on its management by publishing semi-annual statistical bulletins in which it provides up-to-date information on the processes carried out by the council. These bulletins are published on the website and are also available as a tool for the management of the Ministry of Education.

As regards the regional meetings, the CNA publishes the assessment and the information of interest to the academic community regarding the topics discussed.

4.4.2.1   The CNA informs the public of any decisions made as a result of any external assessment of its own performance.

Both the self-assessment report, and the process carried out for the preparation and execution of the external assessment are published on the CNA's website.

4.4.2.2   The CNA regularly prepares and disseminates integrated reports on the results of the quality control processes and any other relevant activity.

The CNA coordinates its quality management with the Quality Management System of the Ministry of National Education. Therefore, the monthly reports on its management are incorporated in the sectoral management indicators and reports. Based on these reports, the Ministry of National Education monitors the quality coverage indicator, among others, which refers to the percentage of students enrolled in accredited institutions or programs.

Additionally, monthly reports are submitted on the HEIs and programs that are currently accredited and the status of the processes underway.

ANNEXES

4.5 Agency accountability

4.5.1 CNA quality assurance

In order to ensure effectiveness, efficiency and transparency in the achievement of institutional objectives and social aims, the Ministry of Education has established the Integrated Management System, which has the following objectives:

1. Increase the level of customer satisfaction.
2. Strengthen the provision of services aimed at improving the coverage, quality, efficiency and relevance of education.
3. Strengthen the performance of the macro-processes established in the Ministry of National Education (MEN, for the Spanish original).
4. Ensure the availability and efficient use of financial resources and the availability and skills of human resources.
5. Strengthen the application of self-control and assessment mechanisms to ensure continuous improvement.
6. Ensure mechanisms of citizen participation and social control over the MEN's management.
7. Improve the MEN's environmental performance and prevent pollution.

The "monitoring and assurance" macro-process is part of the system, and it aims to "verify that the provision of education meets the constitutional, legal and regulatory quality conditions through the review of education proposals to facilitate provision of the service by the agents, **high quality accreditation**, issue of certifications, validation of qualifications, monitoring of the sector, and due response to queries and claims, exercising audit and oversight of the agents of the education system".

In this framework, the CNA has defined its map of processes, which identifies strategic processes as well as support processes and those related to its mission. The corresponding technical specifications have also been published:

- Assessment of Initial Conditions
- External Assessment Visit
- Issue and Reconsideration of Opinion

Agency Accountability

The CNA has policies and mechanisms for its internal quality control that demonstrate its continuous effort to improve the quality and integrity of its activities, its response to changes in its environment and its connection to the international community of quality control.

Figure 13. Map of CNA Processes
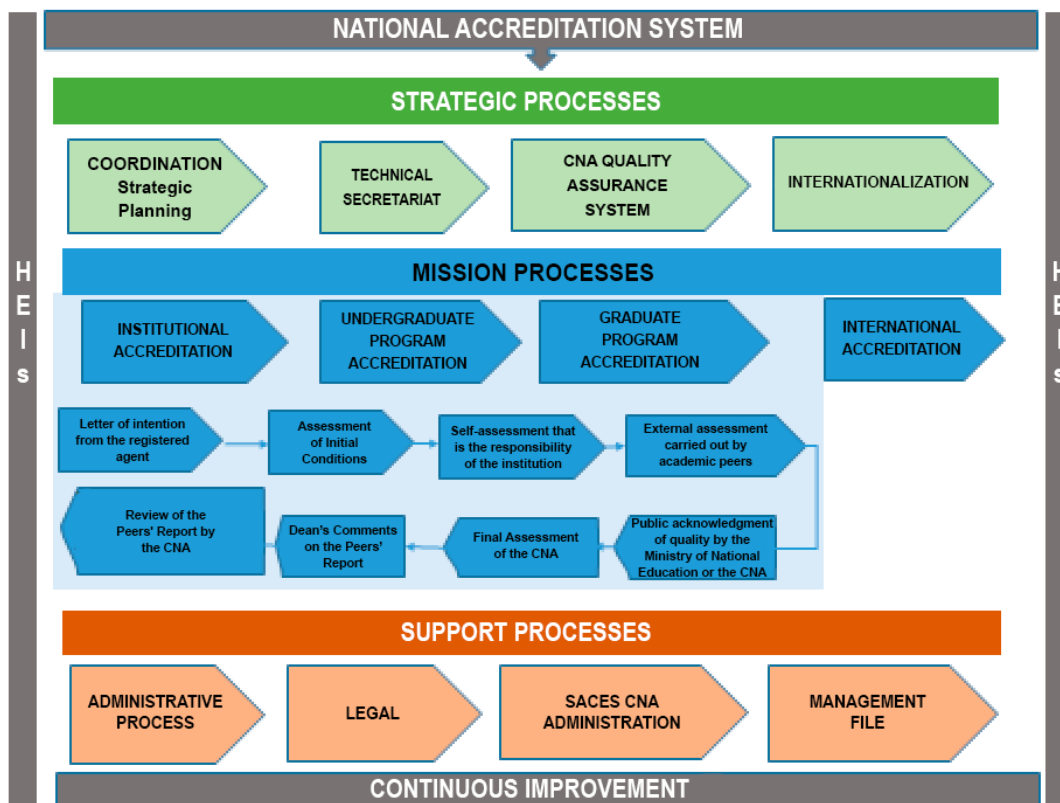
The overall objective of the **Continuous Improvement System** is to ensure that the Accreditation System is world-class. This is imperative in the globalized world of the 21st century. The accreditation agencies have established regional networks, which share assessment experiences and methodologies. These networks have played an important role in establishing shared standards and guides on the required characteristics of national higher education assessment and accreditation systems.

These standards have been complemented with the practice of "international external assessment of the agencies and national accreditation systems" in order to effectively confirm that these quality criteria are met. Therefore, there is a system to recognize said global quality in national accreditation systems.

To achieve this objective, the following specific objectives have been established for the Continuous Improvement System:

- Improve interaction between the CNA, higher education institutions and stakeholders that participate in the accreditation system.
- Develop learning processes to refine the assessment methodology. This refers to strengthening the criteria and indicators that are used in said process.
- Improve management of the assessment process, aiming to increase its efficiency.
- Strengthen the assessment process by peers, improving the quality and training of peers.
- Strengthen the capacity for follow-up of accreditations in order to increase their impact.
- Improve the transparency and verifiability of the Accreditation System, ensuring an adequate level of information for the users of said system.
- Facilitate mutual recognition between the accreditation agencies as a first step in the validation of qualifications through program accreditation, which facilitates the mobility of students, teachers and researchers. The latter forms part of the internationalization of the national accreditation systems.

Taking into account the main components that affect quality assurance, the Continuous Improvement System is coordinated around four dimensions:

- Creation and strengthening of the Internal Quality Assurance Systems in Colombian higher education institutions.
- Design and consolidation of the CNA's Continuous Improvement System.
- Interaction between the National Accreditation Council and other agents of the Higher Education Quality Assurance System.

✛ Internationalization of the National Accreditation System, and therefore, of the National Accreditation Council.

4.5.1.1 The CNA operates with transparency, integrity and professionalism and adheres to ethical and professional standards.

As described in Section 4.1.1.1 of this document, the CNA has a legal framework that defines its strategic aspects and mission, and a regulatory framework that clearly marks out the assessment model, its processes, the scope of its activities and the roles that it must carry out within the National Accreditation System.

Additionally, the guides and guidelines, as well as the academic documents that have been consolidating the capital of knowledge around the culture of quality, give the system's agents elements that ensure the transparency, integrity and professionalism required to carry out the accreditation processes.

4.5.1.2 The CNA has mechanisms that allow it to revise its own activities in order to respond to the changing nature of higher education, the effectiveness of its operation, and achievement of its objectives.

In development of the roles established through CESU Agreement 02/2006, and in order to promote and execute the Accreditation Policy, the National Accreditation Council carries out constant self-assessment of its actions, procedures and guidelines with the aim to contribute to the ongoing improvement of the Quality Assurance System.

The National Development Plan (2014-2018) establishes strategies to encourage the quality assurance processes, as well as raising awareness and applying guidelines for the assessment of higher education institutions and programs. Every year, the strategies driven by the National Accreditation Council are revised, assessed and documented, and their results are analyzed in the decision-making process to establish their implementation each year. As a result of the previous process, the following documents have been produced for the analysis of the Quality Assurance System:

- "State of the Art National Accreditation System and Identification of Roadmaps and Subjects for Research and Development to Improve Quality Conditions", published in 2013 by the Ministry of Education in cooperation with the Andrés Bello Agreement.

- "2013 Regional Meetings: Importance and Quality of the HEIs' Internationalization Processes as Part of Accreditation", National Accreditation Council, Ministry of National Education and Andrés Bello Agreement. ISBN 978-958-691-596-0. Bogotá, Colombia, January 2014.

- "Records of the 'Assessment of the Artistic and Cultural Creation Processes as Part of Program Accreditation', Bogotá, June 26 and 27, 2013". National Accreditation Council, Ministry of National Education and Andrés Bello Agreement. ISBN 978-958-691-568-7. Bogotá, Colombia, December 2013.

- "Guidelines for the Assessment of Initial conditions for Accreditation of Academic Programs", which establish the general procedure to start the self-assessment process for accreditation of academic programs. Approved by Agreement 02/2012, as a result of the proposal by the National Council of Higher Education (CESU, for the Spanish original).

- Guidelines for Accreditation of Undergraduate Programs. National Accreditation Council. Bogotá D.C., Colombia, January 2013.

- Guidelines for Institutional Accreditation under Agreement 03/2014, as a result of the proposal by the National Council of Higher Education (CESU, for the Spanish original).

The main objective of an accreditation system is to ensure world-class quality in the higher education systems of each country, and to be able to achieve this objective, the accreditation system must be world-class.

In response to this challenge, the CNA has developed a quality assurance system based on the following aspects:

✛ The *exchange of "good practices"* related to the assessment process of academic programs in order to learn from each other's experiences.

- The adoption of the *Continuous Improvement System* to develop learning processes that allow the agency to continuously improve its methodologies, and assessment and accreditation procedures.
- Quality assurance of the accreditation body through *international external assessment.* International external assessment of accreditation agencies is becoming one of the main mechanisms for the development of this reciprocal trust, and therefore, it provides an important basis to facilitate mutual recognition of the accreditation results.

4.5.1.3 The CNA regularly carries out self-assessment of its own activities, including consideration of its own effects and value. The assessment includes compilation and analysis of data for decision-making reports and actions for improvement.

As part of the self-assessment process, and with the aim to assess the perception of the CNA's operation and the impact of accreditation on higher education institutions, a perception study was carried out in 2015, which was developed in two stages:

An initial stage, which consisted of the application of perception surveys for agents of the 120 HEIs that are part of the National Accreditation System. The surveys were implemented and applied through an online tool for deans, accreditation coordinators, academic peers and teachers in order to assess these stakeholders' perception of the CNA's operation and the impact of the accreditation processes. This stage was carried out from August to September 2015.

The second stage was developed as part of the regional meetings carried out during October and November of the same year. Roundtables were carried out during this stage under the methodology known as World Café, which allowed the CNA's stakeholders —deans, teachers, coordinators, students and academic peers— to express and discuss their queries. Each one of the roundtables had one of the following topics as a central theme: (i) Academic Peers, (ii) Management and Administration of the Accreditation Process, (iii) Guidelines, and (iv) Accreditation Model.

These meetings were held in the cities of Cali, Bogotá, Bucaramanga, Manizales, Barranquilla and Medellín, and they were ideal places for the agents to freely and spontaneously share their perception about the proposed topics and to make important contributions from their roles and experiences, and from the specific characteristics of each institution that they represented.

Therefore, each roundtable had around 40 people from different institutional establishments of different regions. The roundtables were set up, trying to have at least one dean, one accreditation coordinator, one teacher, one student, and one academic peer at each one. Although this was not possible at all the tables, the participation of the accreditation coordinators and academic peers was notable.

A moderator was appointed at each table, who acted as the host of the table and proposed the leading questions on each assigned topic. A reporter was also appointed, responsible for writing the records and displaying the results of the roundtable at a plenary session. The participants of each table discussed each one of the proposed topics for 20 minutes. At the end of this time, the participants rotated to another table until completing the four tables of topics, except the hosts and moderators, who had to stay at their tables.

The main objective of this stage was to complement the results obtained in the surveys with the wider opinions of the participants to enrich the perception study regarding the CNA's management, and to observe the CNA's contribution to the construction and consolidation of quality education.

Table 49. Technical Specifications and Methodological Aspects of the Study

Objective	**Assess the perception of the CNA's operation and the impact of the accreditation processes among the stakeholders.**
Target Population	The surveys were carried out with deans, accreditation coordinators, academic peers, students and teachers through an online application. Each institution surveyed two teachers, two students, one accreditation coordinator and one dean, while in the case of national academic peers, the target was to survey 430 academics, with a total sample size of 1,150 individuals.
Sample	Agents of 120 HEIs that are part of the National Accreditation System (SNA, for the Spanish original), distributed as follows:

Agent	Sample Population	Number of Effective Surveys for Analysis	Effective Percentage of Participation
Deans	120	87	72.50%
Accreditation coordinators	120	120	100.00%
Students and teachers	480	480	100%
Academic peers	430	378	87.91%
Total	1,150	1065	92.61%

Methodology	**Stage 1**: Conducting the perception survey. The instrument was structured in four blocks of questions: Blocks 1 to 3 comprised of multiple choice questions; and Block 4 comprised of open questions. A specific survey was applied for each group, aimed at the type of role of each group in the process. The following scale was used:

Score	Degree of Agreement
5	Strongly agree
4	Agree
3	Neither agree nor disagree
2	Disagree
1	Strongly disagree

	The invitation to participate in the survey was made by email, which explained the aim of the survey to the participants and sent them a link with the username and corresponding password to complete the survey. **Stage 2**: Workshops using the collaborative dialog method carried out in the framework of the 2015 regional meetings.
Sample Environment	Cali, Bogotá, Bucaramanga, Manizales, Barranquilla and Medellín.
Date	October–November 2015

Source: Perception Study Report – Algoap S.A.S. – December 2015.

The perception study carried out in 2015 generated highly relevant information for the self-assessment process carried out by the council, mainly because it achieved active participation in the surveys as well as the roundtables.

As shown in the data recorded in the table above, the number of participants out of the number of stakeholders invited was highly representative. Therefore, the study as a whole accounts for the general opinion.

Aspects that received greater acceptance were included in the report as main strengths, and those that received less acceptance were included as comments or recommendations. Taking into account each one of the central topics and leading questions of the discussions in the roundtables, the general conclusions of the study can be seen in greater detail in the Perception Study Report, which is attached to this document. The most relevant aspects expressed by each one of the agents are presented below:

Regarding the **accreditation model,** the best assessed aspects by each one of the agents were: **Deans** - The aspect that received a higher rating was "the manuals, guides, materials and documents provided by the CNA provide efficient support for the development of the accreditation process by an academic program or institution" with an average of 4.25. The model permits reflection on the social responsibility of the knowledge. **Students and teachers** – The aspect that received the highest average rating, 4.64, was "the accreditation process helps to improve the quality of higher education". Some 98.4% of those surveyed in this group considered that the institutions promote the effective participation of teachers and students in the self-assessment processes. **Academic peers** - The aspect that received the best score was "the institution promotes

the effective participation of teachers and students in self-assessment for the purposes of accreditation" with an average of 4.62.

Regarding the **guidelines**, the findings were as follows: **Deans** - It is observed that "the factors and characteristics contained in the accreditation guidelines permit awareness of the quality of a higher education institution or program" with an average acceptance of 4.28. **Students and teachers** - The most outstanding aspect is "with the accreditation process, the institution or program improves awareness of its strengths and weaknesses" with an average rating of 4.56. **Academic peers** - The most outstanding aspect is "with the accreditation process, the institution or program improves awareness of its strengths and weaknesses", which obtained an average rating of 4.56.

Regarding the role carried out by the **academic peers**, the best assessed aspects are: **Deans** - "The peers' report constitutes a contribution to the improvement of the institution or program" with an average of 4.35. In terms of objective and adequate comments in the Assessment Report, 85.6% of the surveyed deans considered that the academic peers objectively carry out the assessment. However, several participants expressed that in some cases, the academic peers showed bias when carrying out the assessments and that they made comparisons with their institution of origin.

Management and administration of the accreditation process: The following was observed in the best assessed aspects: **Deans** - The aspect that "the technical support provided by the CNA's Technical Secretariat to the accreditation processes is adequate" stood out with an average of 4.33. Regarding the general assessment, the one which had greatest acceptance is "the accreditation processes fostered the development of a culture of assessment and continuous improvement in the institution", which presents an average of 4.70 (98.7%). **Students and teachers** - As a main aspect to improve, this group indicated the need for greater dissemination in society of the process developed by the CNA and information about the accredited programs and institutions. **Accreditation coordinators** – Although the statement with the lowest rating for this group of agents corresponds to the item that aims to establish whether the SACES-CNA information and online management system is efficient in terms of facilitating the management of the accreditation processes, 49.2% has a positive opinion regarding the application. Another evaluated aspect is whether "the CNA has the technical and organizational capacity to promptly respond to the requirements of the accreditation processes". In this response, 66.7% considered that the CNA has this capacity.

As can be seen, the average results of each one of the evaluated factors were very positive, which shows the strength of the accreditation model and of the actions carried out by the CNA to strengthen the culture of quality.

Similarly, it is important to highlight the importance and recognition that the consulted agents give to the communication and interaction mechanisms that the CNA has with the different HEIs, who recognize the importance of the support actions of the self-assessment process for accreditation.

Generally, in all the groups, it is notable that with the accreditation process, they have been able to identify strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and/or threats, which has led to the continuous improvement of higher education institutions. The social impact of accreditation on the institutions and the importance of carrying out a good process have also been mentioned.

4.5.1.4 The CNA is subject to external reviews at regular intervals, ideally not exceeding five years. There is evidence that any required action is applied and disclosed.

Law 30/1992, as well as the agreements issued by the National Council of Higher Education (CESU), assign the CNA —as a member entity of the National Accreditation System— with the responsibility of leading the development and conceptual enrichment of the National Accreditation System, and assuring society that the higher education institutions that are part of the System meet the highest quality requirements, and achieve their aims and objectives.

In fulfillment of this responsibility, in 2012, Colombia's National Accreditation Council (CNA) asked to be simultaneously assessed by the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and the Ibero-American Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (RIACES, for the Spanish original). The assessment was carried out by an international panel of four highly qualified experts —two of them selected by the INQAAHE and two by the RIACES (two Latin Americans and two Europeans)—, who based

their assessment on the "Guidelines of Good Practices in Quality Assurance" adopted by the INQAAHE and also accepted by the RIACES to assess the CNA's status, strategies and actions.

From January 30 to February 2, 2012, the panel of experts visited the offices of the agency in Bogotá. After revising the self-assessment report prepared by the CNA, a series of interviews were conducted with people from the main groups involved in its work: the Council Members of the CNA; the staff of the Academic and Technical Secretariats; representatives of the Colombian Ministry of National Education (with the personal participation of the Minister of Education and the Vice-Minister of Higher Education); a group of assessors (academic peers); representatives of national professional associations (which in reality were also all university students of the corresponding disciplines); as well as the delegations of the deans, people responsible for the Internal Quality Assurance Systems, the academic vice-deans, and students of universities and some other public and private HEIs that are part of the SNA.

In the final report of the previous assessment, the panel concluded that the CNA met all the guidelines that served as a reference for this joint review by the INQAAHE and RIACES. Out of the twelve guidelines, nine were fully or largely observed and the others were substantially observed.

Based on this report by the Panel of Assessors, the INQAAHE and RIACES issued the corresponding certification of the CNA as Colombia's national accreditation agency for a period of five years, which included the assessment report with the recommendations aimed at maintaining a culture of quality and a continuous improvement plan.

The assessment of the CNA by the INQAAHE and RIACES, and the visit by the panel, coincided with a very important point in the development of the agency and of the SNA. After a stage in which the targets to expand coverage predominated, in recent years, the attention of public policy has moved toward quality, where the CNA has played a decisive role. Therefore, it now seeks validation through international recognition of the value of Colombian accreditation.

After a first phase of accreditation based on all the undergraduate programs, it is entering a new stage focused on the assessment and accreditation of postgraduate programs and institutions, which undoubtedly requires additional resources and some adjustments. Finally, after accrediting the vast majority of accreditable universities and programs according to current high quality criteria and establishing their credibility in it, the CNA considers the feasibility of extending the system by means of more accessible accreditation for non-university higher education institutions.

In accordance with the previous conditions, and taking into account that the certification granted in 2012 has a term of five years, the renewal of the CNA's certification is a strategic project for the Ministry of National Education and the CESU. Therefore, said certification translates into a greater level of credibility, authority and trust that the CNA enjoys, at the same time as validating the impact that it has had on the development of the National Accreditation System (SNA); aspects that must be maintained for the benefit of the higher education system and the country.

Another assessment exercise of the CNA's management led to the signing of the Multilateral Agreement on the Mutual Recognition of Accreditation Results regarding Joint Programmes, after external review by the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA), where the processes implemented by the CNA were validated according to the European Standards of Accreditation.

4.5.2 Connection to the quality assurance community

As part of the process of proximity to the quality assurance community, the CNA has been gradually implementing strategies through internationalization, defined with the objective to "strengthen the CNA's internationalization to promote national and international recognition of the accredited academic programs and institutions, and help to consolidate the internationalization of the country's higher education". This improves relations between the academic community, society, and Colombia's Higher Education Quality Assurance System, permitting the development of public policy in higher education, and maintaining communication and feedback with the international community and global trends in quality assurance.

As part of the creation of the National Accreditation System through Law 30/1992, the National Accreditation Council has been gradually strengthening collective work with the entities that participate in quality assurance

processes both nationally and internationally. This has permitted progress in the review of its guidelines, models and procedures, as well as the learning and continuous improvement of them based on external experiences in the area. Participation in events related to quality assurance has allowed the council, among others, to be a co-founder of RIACES and join its Board of Directors, leading and executing the CINTAS project for support in the development of the internal quality assurance of the assurance agencies. Similarly, cooperation agreements have been signed with the National Accreditation System of Higher Education of Costa Rica (SINAES, for the Spanish original), the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation of Spain (ANECA, for the Spanish original), the Council of Evaluation, Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Ecuador (CEAACES, for the Spanish original) and the Dominican Association for Self-Evaluation and Accreditation (ADAAC, for the Spanish original) of the Dominican Republic. Furthermore, the CNA participates in the Network of National Accreditation Agencies (RANA, for the Spanish original) of MERCOSUR countries and it is a member of the **International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education** (INQAAHE), which brings together the world's main accreditation agencies. The CNA also participates in accreditation and peer training experiences with ARCU-SUR-MERCOSUR, RIACES and CONSUAN, as well as in the coordination of quality criteria and the development of quality assessment indicators and instruments with other countries. It contributes to the development of regional areas for knowledge in collaboration with the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI, for the Spanish original), the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB, for the Spanish original) and the Ibero-American University Council (CUIB, for the Spanish original) and the LACUE space (Latin America and the Caribbean – European Union) in cooperation with the members of this initiative.

As a central agent of the National Accreditation System, it has consolidated participation in international networks as one of its lines of action in internationalization, as well as the promotion of joint actions with agencies, public entities, ministries of education, and accreditation agencies, among others, to strengthen mutual work, understanding of the quality assurance systems, and the improvement of the guidelines, procedures and tools of the SNA. To achieve this, the council has joined initiatives implemented by the Colombian Network for the Internationalization of Higher Education (RCI, for the Spanish original), the Colombia Challenge Your Knowledge (CCYK) network of accredited universities, the Association of Colombian Universities (ASCUN, for the Spanish original), and strategic actions by the Ministry of National Education, among others.

It is important to highlight that, as shown in the council's organizational structure, it has an internationalization group, which allows it to be in constant contact with the quality assurance community and other relevant agents in public policy on education and the higher education sector.

4.5.2.1   The CNA is open to international advances in quality assurance and it has mechanisms that allow it to discover and analyze the main trends in the field.

As mentioned in the previous section (4.5.2), the internationalization activities include promotion of cooperation and integration with national accreditation agencies and other agents of the education systems of countries of the Latin America and Caribbean region, as well as of other regions such as Europe and North America. Through this initiative, the council puts its experience and aptitude in program and institutional accreditation processes at the service of quality of higher education to improve the processes, knowledge, proximity and learning from international experiences, as well as regular updates on progress.

The activities implemented by the internationalization group are aimed at the strategic objective established by the CNA to "*strengthen the CNA's internationalization to promote national and international recognition of the accredited academic programs and institutions, and help to consolidate the internationalization of the country's higher education*". Therefore, the CNA's participation in regional and global networks has enabled programs of specific areas of knowledge to participate in regional accreditation events, such as the process with ARCU-SUR. It has also permitted an increase in the number of external assessment peers trained under the national model and international criteria, facilitating the council's expansion of the range of possibilities to carry out national and international accreditation processes.

As part of the above, the CNA is open to new trends and international development related to quality assurance, accreditation, and internationalization (cross-border education), and defines an internationalization strategy that covers the following lines:

🔸   Participation in networks and regional events

🔸   International and regional accreditation

🔸   Internationalization of the National Accreditation System

The strategy to participate in networks and integration events with other accreditation systems is shown in the joint work with the following organizations.

INQAAHE
As part of the CNA's participation in this network, and especially as a result of the external assessment process that led to the council's international certification, the recommendations made by the panel of experts have been implemented, especially in the area of international relations through the internationalization actions. Out of which, it is worth mentioning the actions that are highlighted below, and that are presented in detail in the annexes of this report. The recommendations have allowed the CNA to guide actions to strengthen joint strategies with networks and associations of Latin America and the Caribbean, and to promote the discussion and communication of good practices in quality assurance. To do this, it has carried out joint processes, out of which conferences and workshops in Latin America and the Caribbean; the exchange of experiences, good practices and staff; and the training of peers, directors and technicians stand out, among other joint programs.

RIACES
 As part of the mutual interest of Spain and the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean that participate in the network, and with the aim to strengthen the mutual knowledge of the university systems, facilitate the identification of common and unique problems regarding the assessment and accreditation systems, increase assessment and accreditation capacity in the region, promote cooperation projects to speed up the transfer activities between the countries, and to facilitate the coordinated development of the assessment and accreditation processes in the region, the following actions have been implemented:

1) Pilot Project for Regional Accreditation of Undergraduate Programs in Medicine and Agronomy.
2) Regional Experimental Accreditation Project of Doctorates in Basic Sciences and Biotechnology.

With the CNA's support as a participant in the management and definition of the action plans of RIACES, actions have been carried out to assess the structuring process, roles and activities, in order not to repeat the efforts of the ARCU-SUR System, and to promote cooperation and the exchange of information on experiences between Ibero-American organizations, which aim to assess, assure and accredit the quality of higher education.

Central American Accreditation Council (**CONSUAN**, for the Spanish original): Pilot Project for Joint Accreditation of Undergraduate Programs in the Andean Region. The central objective of the project, which has been carried out since 2012, is to bring together and exchange experiences to define regional quality guidelines through an area for discussion, analysis of relevance, and political, institutional and technical viability, along with the development of regional workshops and meetings, which involve the active participation of Central American accreditation agencies, sector representatives, and guest international specialists. The specific objectives established are: 1) Identify the perception of relevance and viability of the Central American accreditation agencies with respect to the coordination of regional quality systems. 2) Outline a preliminary proposal to guide the processes for the coordination of regional quality standards. 3) Form an *ad hoc* commission to follow up actions designed to form a proposal of regional quality standards.

As part of the diversity of the education systems of countries that are part of this experience, in terms of academic quality and quality assurance systems, the assessment and accreditation guidelines have been discussed and accreditation processes have been implemented through the national agencies. Through these national experiences, the establishment of a system that promotes and strengthens the quality of higher education in the Andean Region has been proposed, considering the possibilities of coordination between the national systems and establishment of common criteria for the recognition of higher education academic programs that are provided in these countries, in order to facilitate the mobility of human resources and contribute to the construction of a common regional area for higher education.

The RANA, which is participated in by Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Bolivia, Chile, Venezuela and Colombia, has permitted the development of a platform for mutual recognition of the accreditation systems through the creation of ARCU-SUR. Since 2012, through the incorporation of Colombia, it has facilitated the development of joint projects, such as regional accreditation, and the promotion and construction of the regional program for the mobility of degree programs accredited by the same system, which is called MARCA.

The ARCU-SUR System, which Colombia participates in through the National Accreditation Council, together with the national accreditation agencies of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Bolivia, Venezuela and Chile, respects the internal legislation of each country and the autonomy of the university institutions, and it considers degree programs that have official recognition in their country, are accredited by each national agency, and have consolidated administrative and academic processes and graduates in their processes. The ARCU-SUR System offers public assurance among the region's countries of the academic and scientific level of the regionally accredited degrees. For the regional accreditation process, through the participation of their national accreditation agencies, the member countries have established advisory commissions by area of knowledge. Through these commissions and with the contribution of each country's experiences, regional guidelines for

accreditation, specifications of the process, and handbooks and guidelines on the process for peers and institutions have been created. These guidelines have been validated and approved by all the member countries as recognition of the education and quality assurance systems.

The work with the Advisory Commission for Engineering started in 2013. After an external assessment process implemented by the ARCU-SUR System in 2013, at the meeting of the RANA, it was decided to progress to update the regional quality criteria of the different competencies covered in the engineering area of knowledge in ARCU-SUR. These advisory commissions have permitted the joint construction of guidelines in the areas of agronomy, engineering, medicine, architecture, nursing, veterinary sciences and dentistry. The RANA works in the advisory commissions of the areas of pharmacology, geology and economics. The consolidation of these guidelines has allowed regional accreditation processes to be carried out. As part of which, the CNA has made three calls for applications to jointly accredit programs with the ARCU-SUR System in parallel with the internal process in the CNA. The two first calls for applications were made in 2011 and 2014, resulting in eleven accredited programs. The last call for applications was made in April 2016.

In 2014, three academic programs —two in medicine and one in agronomy— achieved national accreditation by the CNA and regional accreditation by ARCU-SUR, all within the framework of understanding and the agreements made by the regional accreditation system. In 2016, the CNA opened the new call for applications for the parallel accreditation of programs in the CNA and in ARCU-SUR – MERCOSUR. This call for applications is for architecture, agronomy, veterinary science and nursing. Twelve national higher education academic programs have been incorporated, which were shortlisted according to the date of expiry of their national accreditation and the branch of knowledge of this new call for applications, following the guidelines of ARCU-SUR - MERCOSUR.

As part of the CNA's management with the ARCU-SUR System in 2015, the following strategies can be established:
- Support in the management of the advisory commissions for the review of assessment criteria, according to area of knowledge. The work carried out in the areas of engineering, nursing and economy stand out.
- Constant communication for the organization of the in-person meetings of the RANA.
- Planning of the ARCU-SUR public call for accreditation applications for architecture, agronomy, nursing and veterinary science programs.
- Planning and organization of regional training sessions for assessment peers of the ARCU-SUR System; two of which were held in Bogotá.

European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA): The CNA developed the Certificate for Quality in Internationalisation (CeQuInt) through the council's incorporation as part of the network, and in the framework of the agreement signed for the development of joint projects (MULTRA). This initiative constitutes the pilot project in Latin America and in Colombia for assessment of the quality of internationalization. This project aims to develop a framework for action (i.e., a methodology) that can be used to assess the internationalization of a program or institution, and that if it is successfully completed, leads to a certificate of internationalization. The certificate aims to show that a program or institution has successfully incorporated an international and intercultural dimension into the purpose, role and service of its education. The project is based on the common framework agreed by the ECA for internationalization, and it is based on improvement and excellence.

4.5.2.2 The CNA collaborates with other quality control organizations whenever possible in areas such as the exchange of good practices, capacity generation, and the review of decisions, joint projects or staff exchanges.

As part of Strategic Lines 1 and 3 described above, the CNA has been implementing actions that allow it to exchange good practices, generate capacity, revise decisions, develop group projects, and even exchange staff. Additionally, in the framework of these strategies, the processes of regional and international accreditation stand out, as well as other important processes, which are shown in the Annex "Internationalization Report". In order to highlight the above, the experience in the ARCU-SUR System is focused on from this point on, which develops activities including the following:

- Exchange of good practices: The accreditation guidelines are exchanged regularly and in accordance with the regulation of new areas of knowledge in the ARCU-SUR System, as well as outstanding experiences and good practices of the Quality Assurance System. Starting with the regional accreditation received by national institutions, the exchange of experiences among other national and regional HEIs is promoted. A joint project is established for the creation of guidelines for regional accreditation of academic programs, exchanging information about the operation and procedures of the quality assurance systems. For construction of the regional criteria, advisory commissions have been created by area of knowledge, which now allows the joint guidelines to be presented for the

accreditation of higher education programs in the areas of agronomy, engineering, medicine, architecture, nursing, veterinary science and dentistry.

⬥ Through regional accreditations, since 2012, work has been carried out on structuring and implementing the Regional Academic Mobility of MERCOSUR (MARCA, for the Spanish original) program, aimed at facilitating the mobility of students in the regionally accredited programs (ARCU-SUR).

⬥ As part of the CNA's international accreditation processes, capacity building, and staff exchange and training processes are carried out. This is achieved specifically by training academic peers using the platform of the ARCU-SUR System. Through this platform, with the participation of seven more countries, the database of peers is formed for the implementation of the external quality assessment processes, which among other characteristics allow the training of national assessors using international accreditation models. Regional training workshops have been carried out for this purpose. Just in 2016, 155 new international peers were trained in the regional workshops, two of which were held in Bogotá.

⬥ In the ARCU-SUR framework, the exchange of technical staff has been implemented for strengthening capacity in the quality assessment processes, and in the development of the ARCU-SUR procedures, which permit regional accreditation. Similarly, as a result of the joint work with foreign government entities, accreditation agencies and higher education institutions, internship programs and training and study visits have been carried out that promote integration with different quality assurance systems. Since 2012, they have received at least 10 delegations of countries, including Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile, Nicaragua, Panama, the Dominican Republic, Australia, and Paraguay.

The aforementioned initiatives permit collaboration with external organizations in mutual understanding, the development of joint programs, the consolidation of portfolios of good practices, and a better understanding of the sector by the CNA's staff. Additionally, further information can be consulted in the annexes, which are described below.

ANNEXES

Annex Reference	Document Title
A28	Technical Specifications - Assessment of Initial Conditions
A29	Technical Specifications – External Assessment Visit
A30	Technical Specifications – Issue and Reconsideration of Opinion
A29	Technical Specifications – External Assessment Visit
A30	Technical Specifications – Issue and Reconsideration of Opinion
A30	Perception Study Report and Inquiries
A31	Internationalization Report

Cross-Border Higher Education Quality Assurance

"The agency has policies on imported and exported higher education. These policies take into account the characteristics of the providers and the receivers, and refer to all kinds of cross-border higher education."

4.6 Cross-border higher education quality assurance

As previously mentioned, the CNA has been gradually implementing strategies through internationalization, defined with the objective to "strengthen the CNA's internationalization to promote national and international recognition of the accredited academic programs and institutions, and help to consolidate the internationalization of the country's higher education". This improves relations between the academic community, society, and Colombia's Higher Education Quality Assurance System, permitting the development of public policy in higher education, and maintaining communication and feedback with the international community and global trends in quality assurance.

4.6.1 Criteria for cross-border higher education

4.6.1.1 In a country of origin, the CNA makes it clear that the provider institution is responsible for ensuring that the equivalent quality of the education provided; that the institution understands the regulatory frameworks of the receiving countries; and that the institution provides clear information about the programs offered and their characteristics.

Taking into account the organization of the higher education system in Colombia, and as part of the Quality Assurance System, in accordance with its mission, the CNA has been encouraging the culture of quality assurance and is responsible for delivering the highest quality standards to society of the higher education institutions and programs to which it grants certification of accreditation.

In accordance with the structure established by the 1991 Political Constitution and Decree 2094/1994, the system's characteristics in terms of the existence of bodies with specific roles to ensure quality, and the framework of cross-border education, the CNA has been approaching the internationalization process through strategies described in Guideline 5. This accounts for the means and levels through which official channels and public dissemination communicate what is equivalent to an accreditation recognition, and its meaning in terms of the coherence of the academic programs, activities, and certificates delivered by higher education institutions in Colombia.

Similarly, in all the actions carried out by the council, the regulatory framework is established and disclosed, and the guidelines and criteria for the quality assessment process are made known. Through the legally defined procedures and steps, it is decided to recommend the certification of compliance to the state and to recognize the culture of quality assurance developed by the institution and/or program.

To facilitate access to information, the CNA has been implementing different strategies, where it uses the different higher education information systems, which include the SNIES and SACES, its website, different awareness-raising events on the accreditation model, and its guidelines; as well as an

organizational structure where the internationalization group encourages knowledge of the National Accreditation System, its agents, processes and results. This has facilitated communication with national government entities and with official entities of other countries, universities, and educational institutions, among others.

4.6.1.2 The students and other stakeholders receive clear and complete information about the awards granted.

In accordance with the above and in compliance with the Quality Assurance System, when offering its qualifications, each higher education institution and program is endorsed by a qualification certification granted by the Ministry of National Education and a recognition of accreditation in compliance with the CNA's guidelines, and it provides the information contained in the official registration of endorsed academic programs and institutions to operate, as well as its characteristics and related information.

The stakeholders, which include students and national and international institutions, can find registered and certified information on the websites, and in the information systems such as SNIES and SACES. They are also notified about the nature of the institutions, the qualifications, level of education, and complementary information about the operating license and quality assurance applicable to the certification obtained.

4.6.1.3 The rights and obligations of the parties involved in transnational education are clearly established and fully known by the parties.

The regulation of cross-border higher education or the actions of agents in the framework of this sector's internationalization are still under construction by the authorities responsible for the system, based on the guidelines established by Decree 1295/2010, whereby "the qualification certification of Law 1188/2008 and the provision and development of higher education academic programs are regulated".

By means of the aforementioned regulatory decree, the education system has clear regulations on conditions, obligations, characteristics, assessment, agents and other issues involved in the internationalization processes of higher education, as well as the different categories and guidelines on the academic programs of higher education, and their requirements to be offered in accordance with international trends.

In accordance with the above, the CNA has been promoting compliance with regulations on this subject, disclosing the legally established guidelines, as well as the promotion of good practices by the higher education institutions, which carry out actions in internationalization as part of quality assurance. One of the results of this was the call for applications for the recognition of these processes, and its records were compiled in the document: "Importance and Quality of the HEIs' Internationalization Processes as part of Accreditation: 2013 CNA Regional Meetings".

4.6.2 Collaboration between agencies

4.6.2.1 The CNA cooperates with local agencies in the exporting and importing countries and with international networks. The aim of this cooperation is to improve mutual understanding, have a clear and complete concept of the regulatory framework, and share good practices.

As part of the processes for its mission, the CNA has defined the objective to: "strengthen the CNA's internationalization to promote national and international recognition of the accredited academic programs and institutions, and help to consolidate the internationalization of the country's higher education."

As a clear policy, the CNA has outlined its field of action in internationalization around three essential central themes:

1. Participation in networks and regional events

2. International and regional accreditation

3. Internationalization of the National Accreditation System

As a result of this clear internationalization policy, the CNA has managed to consolidate bilateral relations of technical and administrative cooperation with agencies and networks. Out of which, the following stand out: the MERCOSUR Education Group; RANA; Regional Accreditation System of University Degrees for MERCOSUR (ARCU-SUR, for the Spanish original), RIACES, CONSUAN, RCI, and the Challenge Your Knowledge (CCYK) network of accredited Colombian universities.

Additionally, cooperation relations have been established and strengthened with foreign government entities, and agencies responsible for promoting higher education, the recognition of qualifications and quality accreditation. Out of which, relations with the following stand out: the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD, for the German original); Alliance Française; British Council; Netherlands Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education (Nuffic); the E-NARIC centers in countries such as Holland, the United Kingdom, France, and Spain; CEAACES of Ecuador; the National, Assessment, Accreditation and Certification System (SINEACE, for the Spanish original) of Peru; the Argentine Accreditation Organization (OAA, for the Spanish original); the National Commission for University Assessment and Accreditation (CONEAU, for the Spanish original) of Argentina; ANECA of Spain; and ministries of education and diplomatic missions of other countries with presence in Colombia or its regions.

To summarize, this is a partial description of the relations created by the CNA as part of regional and international cooperation, which has permitted increased awareness of the international sphere by the institution, as well as the exchange of good practices, training of staff and the establishment of joint collaboration programs.

4.6.2.2 The CNA seeks ways of cooperating in external quality control in the provision of transnational education, for example, through mutual recognition.

As part of the CNA's cooperation and internationalization processes, collaboration programs have arisen between agencies and institutions of other countries. The following of which stand out: support modalities for the training of experts, and technical and administrative staff in accreditation and quality assurance processes; cooperation for the development of joint accreditation processes; training and exchange of assessment peers; participation in international higher education events; and agreements for mutual recognition of quality assurance systems.

Therefore, through the internationalization group, the CNA highlights the signing of the agreements described below, as well as the start of programs such as:

- JOQAR – MULTRA: In 2012, thanks to the good work of the CNA, Colombia participated in JOQAR: Joint Programmes: Quality Assurance and Recognition of Degrees Awarded, as part of Agreement no. 2010-3677/001-001 EMA3-PP, for which it signed the corresponding mandate as a co-beneficiary. The project aims to promote quality assurance, and multilateral recognition of qualifications through accreditation. This project corresponds to Action 3 "Promotion of European Higher Education as part of the 'Erasmus Mundus' program" which aims to improve the quality of higher education and promote dialog and understanding between people and cultures through academic cooperation and movement.

  Although this lasts three years, it is an important recognition for the CNA to be one of the non-European participating agencies, which demonstrates the global awareness of the work carried out in the agency.

  - CeQuInt: The CeQuInt project was developed by the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA) with the aim to implement a framework for action that permits quality assessment of internationalization in higher education institutions (HEIs) as well as programs. Once the self-assessment, external visit and assessment by the experts of the ECA are completed, the program or institution will obtain a certificate of quality in internationalization if it meets all the standards.

  The certificate aims to show that a program or institution has successfully incorporated an international and intercultural dimension into the purpose, role and service of its education. The CNA was invited by the ECA to develop an assessment process as part of this pilot project. The Universidad de la Salle was the Colombian institution selected to participate in CeQuInt in 2014. The CNA was responsible for the assessment process, following that established by the ECA for this activity.

  - MARCA: The MARCA program refers to mobility of students, academics, researchers and administrative staff of higher education institutions and programs accredited by ARCU-SUR. Colombia's focus point for MARCA is the International Cooperation Office of the Ministry of National Education, but the CNA's work was to support this office through direct and constant communication with the network.

- Education internships and exchange of information about the accreditation system and agency:

  o Vice-Minister of Assessment and Accreditation of the Dominican Republic
  o ESPE Delegation of Ecuador
  o Delegation of the CEAACES
  o Higher Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA), Australia
  o Campus Hungary, Hungary
  o National Agency for the Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education (ANEAES, for the Spanish original), Paraguay
  o Ministry of Education, Peru

- Bilateral proximity and exchange of information about the systems: The technical commission was held on December 4, 2015, with the participation of the TEQSA in order to present the National Quality Assurance System of Higher Education and to know the quality assurance model of both countries, as well as outlining spheres of joint cooperation.
- For 2016:
o CEAACES: The president of the CEAACES of Ecuador, Dr. Francisco Cadena Villota, visited the CNA in March. The purpose of this visit was to strengthen cooperation connections, as well as joint work and the exchange of good practices by the CNA.
o New Zealand: On April 8, Ms. Karen Chalmers, International and Policy Director of the New Zealand Qualification Authority (NZQA), visited the CNA to learn about Colombia's accreditation model.
o DAAD: On March 14, a high-level commission of the DAAD visited the Ministry of National Education. As part of the visit, it requested to see firsthand the agencies or entities that comprise the Colombian Education System, and the CNA presented the agency and accreditation model.

- The CNA has participated in the bilateral, technical commissions for the construction and start-up of the mutual recognition agreements of the quality assurance and accreditation systems, as well as the validation of qualifications with countries such as:

🇪🇸	Suscrito: 4 de diciembre de 2010 Ratifica: Ley 1611 de 2013 **VIGENTE**	⬜	Suscrito: 9 de noviembre de 2012. **RATIFICACIÓN - CONGRESO DE LA REPÚBLICA**
🇪🇨	Suscrito: 28 de enero de 2014. **RATIFICACIÓN - CONGRESO DE LA REPÚBLICA**	🇵🇹	Suscrito: 15 de noviembre de 2012. **RATIFICACIÓN - CONGRESO DE LA REPÚBLICA**
MERCOSUR	Adhesión al ARCUSUR: 30 de junio de 2008. **RATIFICACIÓN - CONGRESO DE LA REPÚBLICA**		

- Additionally, the CNA has signed specific cooperation agreements with:
  o CEAACES to establish cooperation connections and to outline the mechanisms that allow the two institutions to carry out joint activities and exchanges, and to use expert academic peers, technical and managerial staff, as well as technological materials, in order to efficiently run the assessment, accreditation and quality assurance processes of higher education.

In accordance with the above, the CNA has created a roadmap of internationalization in order to make the actions carried out by the council visible, as well as achieving the continuous improvement of the system by learning from other models and technical cooperation focused on specific results. For example, the mutual recognition of qualifications, as carried out with the Government of the United Kingdom, which is in the final phase of negotiation of the terms of the agreement, which will be signed during the official visit of the Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos to the United Kingdom in 2016.

Table 50. Areas for the CNA's Participation in the International Environment

Scenario	Main Objective
Vice-Chair of the RIACES Executive Committee	Event at which the network's lines of action for the upcoming years are currently discussed. The main objective of RIACES is to consolidate a regional area to ensure the quality of higher education. The following lines of action were approved at the General Assembly held on February 18 and 19, 2016, in Havana, Cuba: 1. Make RIACES an umbrella accreditation authority of entities responsible for higher education quality assurance. 2. Cooperation projects with the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture (OEI, for the Spanish original), and the UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean. 3. Approval of the network's action plan. 4. Creation of an international bank of assessment peers, which will be hosted on the RIACES website.
Member of the INQAAHE	Supranational network that steers educational activity for world-class quality and assurance. Thanks to its good practices mechanisms, it has permitted the extension of the agency's network of contacts and the CNA's internal assessment. Additionally, the agencies can also participate in continuous improvement strategies of their quality processes, reflected in their national work on the quality of higher education. Globally certifies the management quality of the accreditation processes.
Actively participates in the calls for application by ARCU-SUR for program accreditation	Regional Accreditation System of University Degrees for MERCOSUR As the structure of the MERCOSUR Education Sector, which has a quality accreditation system of university education, it aims to achieve ongoing improvement in the training of people, following the quality patterns required for the promotion of the economic, social, political and cultural development of the MERCOSUR area. Increases the number of programs in MERCOSUR with the accreditation of the ARCU-SUR System. The CNA has encouraged simultaneous accreditation with ARCU-SUR. Consequently, since 2011, nine academic programs have been accredited in Colombia in engineering, medicine and agronomy programs. In 2016, programs in architecture, agronomy, veterinary science and nursing will be accredited. Simultaneously, processes are carried out to train academic peers who will be part of the ARCU-SUR bank of peers, including the invited Colombian academic peers.
Member of the RANA	In the education sector of MERCOSUR, the RANA is directly connected to the Regional Coordinator of Higher Education. The CNA is part of the RANA, and actively participates in its meetings, as well as observing its guidelines.
First non-European agency to sign the Multilateral Agreement on the Mutual Recognition of Accreditation Results regarding Joint Programmes (MULTRA)	This agreement is signed as part of the project: Joint Programmes: Quality Assurance and Recognition of Degrees Awarded (JOQAR), developed by the *European Consortium for Accreditation* (ECA). Through the CNA, Colombia has actively participated in this project since 2011. The MULTRA agreement was designed with the aim to simplify accreditation and recognition of joint programs and qualifications granted, as well as offering an efficient way of extending mutual recognition to more countries. The agencies who sign this agreement commit to apply the principles and procedures of the ECA regarding joint programs; and within their competency, they accept the results of the accreditation processes of joint programs carried out by other agencies that have signed the MULTRA.
CeQuInt project on a certificate for quality in internationalization	The objective is to verify its degree of compliance with the quality standards of internationalization proposed as part of the ECA's CeQuint project on a certificate for quality in internationalization. This project aims to develop a framework for action (i.e., a methodology) that can be used to assess the internationalization of a program or institution, and that leads to a certificate of internationalization if it is successfully completed. The certificate aims to show that a program or institution has successfully incorporated an international and intercultural

	dimension into the purpose, role and service of its education. The project is based on the common framework agreed by the ECA for internationalization, and it is based on improvement and excellence.
Partner of the JOQAR Project: *The CNA was selected as a co-beneficiary of the JOQAR Project, for which it signed the corresponding mandate*	The project incorporates the accreditation agencies, as well as the recognition organizations (European Network of Information Centres (ENIC) and National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC) in the European Union). The purpose is to ensure that the "Erasmus Mundus" program (and joint programs in general) progress in two specific areas: accreditation and recognition. The project aims to promote a single accreditation procedure through: - The development of a multilateral recognition agreement on quality control and the results of accreditation. In this line, missions are carried out to observe countries in order to find out about the processes developed, establish possible comparison, and design a methodology that can be transferred or applied in other countries. - The establishment of a Europe coordination center to ensure the external quality and accreditation of joint programs.

ANNEXES

Annex Reference	Document Title
A1	CNA Inventory of Rules
A22	Academic Peer Training Handbook
A23	Technical Specifications - Assessment of Initial Conditions
A24	Technical Specifications – External Assessment Visit
A25	Technical Specifications – Issue and Reconsideration of Opinion
A26	Code of Ethics for Academic Peers Responsible for External Assessment for High Quality Accreditation
A31	Internationalization Report

The overall objective of the Continuous Improvement System is to ensure that the Accreditation System is world-class.

CHAPTER 5 CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND ACTION PLAN

5.1   Institutional strategic plan

The National Accreditation Council is an academic body with the mission to "help promote a culture of quality in higher education institutions and assure society that the accredited institutions and programs meet the highest quality requirements and achieve their aims and objectives".

In view of the above and based on the educational policy, existing regulations and trends of the national and international educational sectors, the following vision has been established for the National Accreditation System and the National Accreditation Council (CNA, for the Spanish original):

"The National Accreditation System will be consolidated as a benchmark of high quality in the national and international context, which will act in coordination with the higher education system in the execution of policies, adoption of strategies and use and integration of information systems and technology according to the requirements and trends of the globalized world."

The strategic lines below, which guide the actions of the National Accreditation Council, are defined in the framework of this vision:

Strategic Line 1: Assess and Accredit Undergraduate Programs and Higher Education Institutions

This constitutes the primary theme of the CNA's mission and the purpose established in legislation to help promote high quality of higher education and assure society that the accredited institutions and programs meet the highest quality standards, and achieve their aims and objectives.

Strategic Line 2: Accredit Postgraduate Programs: Master's Degree and Doctorate Programs

As a step forward in the development of its mission, in 2010, the CNA began processes for the accreditation of master's degree and doctorate programs, thus contributing to the consolidation of the National Policy on Science and Technology and the development of the country through research.

Strategic Line 3: Strengthen the Internationalization of the CNA

The purpose of this line is to consolidate the international recognition of the CNA as the accreditation agency of the quality of higher education through coordination and cooperation with networks of accreditation agencies, the adoption and promotion of good assurance practices, and the harmonization of criteria and mechanisms for assessing quality. In turn, these actions are focused on facilitating and promoting the recognition of qualifications and the academic mobility of students and professors of accredited institutions and programs, which constitute some of the main incentives and benefits of accreditation.

Human resources training processes, as well as those for the creation, dissemination and application of knowledge are increasingly carried out in transnational areas, thus reflecting the globalization of science and education. This leads to an intense process of internationalization of the universities, higher education and the assessment and accreditation systems. In this regard, the premise is assumed that international recognition of the CNA is a source of opportunities and benefits for the international recognition of the accredited institutions and programs.

Strategic Line 4: Strengthen the National Accreditation System

This line contains activities to expand coverage of the Accreditation System through the promotion and strengthening of a culture of quality that will contribute to the continuous improvement of higher education. It also aims to consolidate the mechanisms of the CNA's communication and interaction with higher education institutions that are part of the system, and to provide the technical assistance and support required to progress in the self-assessment and accreditation processes.

Strategic Line 5: Consolidate the CNA's Organization

In light of the challenges assumed by the CNA to meet the national and international demands of higher education and the Accreditation System itself, it is necessary to strengthen its internal organization in terms of structure, human resources, and financial and physical resources, so that it can increase its institutional efficiency.

The CNA will continue to develop and implement the Integrated Information System, which has objectives including: facilitating transparency, verifiability of decisions, interaction with the agents of the process, and establishing indicators to analyze the impact of accreditation on higher education in Colombia.

This line also contains the efforts and actions related to the management of the technological resources, such as the implementation of the CNA's Information System, the website and the supporting resources (information and communication systems) of the Ministry of National Education.

5.2   2012-2016 Action Plan

Based on the strategic lines defined above, three central themes of development have been proposed. The action plans of the last five years have been structured according to these themes, which respond to the logic of the budget execution (investment and operating resources) of the public sector in Colombia. These themes are:

Strategic Line 1: Assess and Accredit Undergraduate Programs and Higher Education Institutions

Objectives:

1. **Review and adjust the model for the accreditation of undergraduate academic programs and institutions in the conceptual documents and methodological guides of the CNA. This objective includes specifics to be considered for the renewal of the accreditation of academic programs and institutions.**

   Actions:

   - In order to encourage the responsible exercise of the autonomy of accredited programs of institutions and promote the accreditation of new programs, in 2011, the **guidelines for accreditation and renewal of the accreditation of programs of accredited institutions** were established, in order to provide an clear and efficient procedure, considering the high level of trust generated by high quality institutional accreditation (Agreement 03 / 2011).

✚ According to the new trends in higher education for the 21st Century and the recommendations made by the INQAAHE and RIACES during the 2012 accreditation visit, and in the framework of an interactive exercise with the academic community, a new proposal of **guidelines for accreditation of undergraduate programs** was prepared and approved. This proposal reflects the effort to improve the self-assessment processes and harmonize the criteria with the new challenges of higher education in the context of national and global trends.

✚ **2015 Institutional Accreditation Guidelines.** This new version is the result of joint work between the National Accreditation Council and the academic community, based on the accumulated experience of the council and the participating institutions. This new proposal included new challenges in terms of greater demands on the requirements and conditions for access to institutional accreditation. It was also built in line with the new guidelines for program accreditation.

By December 2015, there were 860 accreditation processes for undergraduate programs in the different stages of assessment:

Table 51. Number of Undergraduate Program Accreditation Processes

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS	NUMBER OF PROGRAMS
Completed	99
Processing visit by council members (initial conditions)	70
Approved to start self-assessment	130
In self-assessment	144
Completed self-assessment	27
Shortlisting peers (external assessment)	60
Adjustment of peers	1
Peers appointed	49
Awaiting report by peers	7
With peers' report	39
Review of External Assessment Report	20
For comments by the dean	28
For presentation by the council member	98
Total	860

Source: CNA Statistical Bulletin - December 2015.

Table 52. Number of Institutional Accreditation Processes

STAGE OF THE PROCESS	NUMBER OF HEIs
Completed self-assessment	3
Shortlisting peers (external assessment)	1
For comments by the dean	2
For presentation by the council member	1
With opinion	5
Recommended	4
Total	16

Source: CNA Statistical Bulletin - December 2015.

2. **Improve the participation of academic peers in external assessment for accreditation regarding their selection, training and monitoring of their performance**.

Actions:

In addition to strictly observing the general regulations regarding public ethics, academic peers must put into practice the criteria of the accreditation model and promote respect for the values and universal

examples that comprise the academic *ethos*. To this effect, the **Code of Ethics** was established for the academic peers responsible for external assessment.

Additionally, in 2012, the "**Academic Peer Training Handbook**" was published, with the purpose of ensuring aptitude in the development of their duties, based on knowledge of regulatory, procedural and ethical aspects regarding this role in the National Accreditation System.

Also, in the framework of the **training and reinduction** sessions, there is an opportunity for interaction to provide the professionals selected as peers with practical and conceptual elements to develop the right skills for the external assessment. These sessions include regulatory and procedural aspects, practical activities and reflections regarding the importance of this work for the National Accreditation System and the CNA. These activities are also intended to update and strengthen the **bank of eligible peers** and increase the capacity for action in the various regions of the country and in the different disciplines and areas of knowledge.

In 2016, to strengthen the bank of peers, a peer database was created for the external assessment visits of the education programs (bachelor's degree programs), and the peers were invited to take part in six training sessions carried out in the following cities:

CITY	PARTICIPANTS
CARTAGENA (Caribbean Coast)	26
MANIZALES (Coffee Belt)	66
SOUTHWEST – CALI - (Cali, Neiva, Pasto)	52
MEDELLÍN	60
BUCARAMANGA	30
BOGOTÁ	194
TOTAL	**428**

Also, with the recent approval of the guidelines for medical specialties, academic peer training and dissemination sessions have been planned for these programs in November this year.

The country's entire academic community is invited to the **regional meetings,** which are recognized as an opportunity for reflection on topics of quality, including peers, who also contribute a comprehensive perspective of the accreditation system based on their academic distinction.

Internationally, the CNA has managed to increase the number of peers trained in accordance with the regional models and guidelines, through the ARCU-SUR system, making progress in the training of 77 new peers in 2013 and 145 in 2016. These peers take part in the assessment process of academic programs in areas of engineering, medicine, veterinary science, architecture and agronomy.

Table 53. Number of Academic Peers Appointed for Visits in the Last Three Years

Number of Peers Appointed by Type of Accreditation Process 2014 - 2015 - 2016				
Term	**Type of Accreditation Process**	**Initial Accreditation**	**Renewal of Accreditation**	**Total**
2014	Institutional	31	28	59
	Postgraduate	68	0	68
	Undergraduate	359	184	543
	2014 Subtotal	**458**	**212**	**670**
2015	Institutional	46	6	52
	Postgraduate	57	0	57
	Undergraduate	160	185	345
	2015 Subtotal	**263**	**191**	**454**
2016	Institutional	24	8	32
	Postgraduate	21	0	21
	Undergraduate	67	16	83
	2016 Subtotal	**112**	**24**	**136**
Overall Total		**833**	**427**	**1260**

Source: CNA data.
Cut-off date for information: April 2016.

Regarding the monitoring of the work carried out by the academic peers, the dean's comments serve as evidence of compliance with their activities in the accreditation process, as well as in the ethical framework.

3. **Establishment of mechanisms that ensure the follow-up of improvement plans of higher education institutions and programs that have voluntarily participated in the accreditation process.**

The CNA is currently verifying compliance with the improvement plans when conducting the visits for renewal. However, monitoring mechanisms are being assessed during the term of accreditation, in order to promote the timely and ongoing implementation of activities to help consolidate a culture of quality.

4. **Prepare the official procedure for response to and processing of requests for reconsideration about decisions adopted by the council and in the framework of the characteristics of the Colombian model.**

Actions:

The CNA has provided the academic community with the "**Technical Specifications: Issue and Reconsideration of Opinion**", which describe the final stages of the accreditation process, in which the technical/academic opinion is issued regarding the quality demonstrated by a higher education institution or program based on the results of self-assessment and the external assessment conducted by the CNA, as well as the response to requests for appeal (reconsiderations or appeals for replacement) regarding the decisions when they are not accepted by the institutions.

Strategic Line 2: Accredit Postgraduate Programs: Master's Degree and Doctorate Programs

1. **Review the model for the accreditation of postgraduate academic programs (master's degree and doctorate programs).**

Actions:

Considering the arguments and reasons expressed by academia regarding some of the characteristics and indicators of postgraduate programs in the area of health, particularly medical specialties, which differ from master's degree and doctorate programs in terms of the purposes of training and the characteristics of the academic activities, the CNA started a dialog process with the academic and scientific communities in the area of health, which resulted in the creation and approval of the **2016 Guidelines for Medical Specialties**.

Based on the CESU's approval of the guidelines, dissemination meetings will be held in five cities in the country in October and November 2016, with the participation of HEIs, medical associations and the country's networks of hospitals. The event that will be a new opportunity to bring the CNA and the academic communities together.

2. **Communicate and disseminate the Guidelines for Accreditation of Master's Degree and Doctorate Programs in the academic community, using different technology and media.**

Actions:

The accreditation guidelines will be communicated in every area where the CNA interacts with HEIs. In said areas, there is no discrimination as regards the accreditation processes, whether they are undergraduate, postgraduate or institutional programs.

In addition to the supporting activities described in detail in Section 3 of this same strategic line, we will place emphasis on this item in the **regional meetings,** since they are the opportunities for interaction par excellence between the council and the country's academic community to discuss and communicate accreditation-related topics. They are held in different regions with the participation of all the higher education institutions. Between 2012 and 2015, the issues addressed at these meetings were:

2012 - Update of the Guidelines for Accreditation of Undergraduate Programs and practical reflections on self-assessment and the External Assessment Report.

The 2012 regional meetings were held as part of the process of updating the Guidelines for Accreditation of Undergraduate Programs. Consequently, the council established an agenda with the central theme of communicating the main structural and methodological changes of these guidelines from the 2006 version. Additionally, the meetings were the perfect opportunity to bring the HEIs and academic peers up to date on self-assessment and preparation of the External Assessment Reports.

2013 - Importance of the internationalization processes of HEIs as part of accreditation.

The regional meetings in 2013 were the stage for the presentation of the good practices selected in the call for applications: "Internationalization Best Practices (IBPs) of Higher Education Institutions in the High Quality Accreditation Framework". Additionally, renowned experts in the field of higher education quality internationalization were invited.

2014 - Internal HEI quality assurance models and communication of the proposal to update the guidelines for institutional accreditation.

The purpose of the 2014 CNA regional meetings was to discuss the relevance of the Internal Quality Assurance Systems of Higher Education Institutions as part of the self-assessment processes, and to communicate the new proposal to update the Guidelines for Institutional Accreditation.

2015 - University good governance and roundtables with the CNA's stakeholders.

In 2015, the CNA proposed addressing the issue of good governance in higher education as one of the challenges faced by higher education institutions.
Additionally, as part of the process of renewing the CNA's international certification of compliance with good quality assurance practices, roundtables were organized in the afternoon session with the CNA's stakeholders to complement the study of perception of the CNA's management with the identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the National Accreditation System.

2016. Accreditation of engineering programs - national and international context.

Five regional accreditation roundtables have been created to revise the accreditation models for engineering programs in order to motivate these processes. In Colombia, only 23% of engineering programs provided has high quality accreditation, and these programs are concentrated in the country's main cities; in order of amount, Medellín, Bogotá and Cali.

It can be observed that the CNA has implemented strategies, which keep it in constant communication with the academic community in activities for respectful and constructive dialog. Not only do these activities provide the necessary support to carry out the accreditation processes or intentions of the HEIs, but they also provide feedback and construct a perception of the management carried out. This makes these activities significant and beneficial strategies for the institutions visited and supported as part of the self-assessment and improvement plan of the CNA.

3. **Support in the self-assessment stage of the master's degree and doctorate programs that meet the official requirements to request accreditation.**

As part of this objective, the CNA not only provides ongoing assistance for HEIs in person and by phone, but it also carries out the following activities to support the institutions: visits on initial conditions, additional visits, support visits or meetings, talks, training on using the SACES-CNA application and the regional meetings. **These areas for interaction with HEIs address topics related not only to the self-assessment stage, but also to the entire accreditation process of undergraduate, postgraduate and institutional programs in general**, with the following coverage:

Table 54. Support Activities Carried out by the CNA

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Visits on initial conditions	13	25	25	27	7
Additional visits	1	3	3	7	3
Support visits or meetings	81	134	140	185	86
Talks (*)	0	0	0	0	93
SACES management training	0	0	0	4	5
Regional meetings (number of regions where the meetings were scheduled)	5	5	5	5	0

Note: *Cut-off date of information: July 31, 2016.

4. **Invite the HEIs to start the master's degree and doctorate program accreditation process.**

The call for institutions to apply for the accreditation of undergraduate, postgraduate and institutional programs is ongoing. However, in 2015, a calendar was implemented with the stages of the process in order to guide institutions regarding the application dates and the external assessment periods. Although this calendar was not published in 2016, the organization of the activities of receiving the applications and scheduling the assessment stages has been maintained in accordance with the time needed to carry out the process.

Table 55. Evolution of Postgraduate Accreditation Processes, 2011-2016

INSTITUTION	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Overall Total
UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL DE COLOMBIA		6	15	9	15	2	47
UNIVERSIDAD DE ANTIOQUIA - UDEA	1	9	4	5	2		21
UNIVERSIDAD DEL VALLE			1	1	8	4	14
UNIVERSIDAD DE LOS ANDES	1	1	3	1	5	2	13
UNIVERSIDAD EAFIT					4	1	5
PONTIFICIA UNIVERSIDAD JAVERIANA					5		5
UNIVERSIDAD TECNOLÓGICA DE PEREIRA - UTP		1	1		1		3
UNIVERSIDAD PEDAGÓGICA NACIONAL - UPN						1	1
UNIVERSIDAD DEL NORTE						1	1
UNIVERSIDAD DE MANIZALES					1		1
Overall Total	2	17	24	16	41	11	111

Table 56. Evolution of Institutional Accreditation Processes, 2003-2016

Type	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Overall Total
University	8	1	8	4	4	8	5	38
University institution			1	1	2	2		6
Technology institution			1	1				2
Special regime institution						1		1
Overall total	8	1	10	6	6	11	5	47

Source: CNA Statistical Bulletin - December 2015. NOTE: There is a total of 47 accredited HEIs broken down by city, because it includes three accredited campuses of the Universidad Nacional other than Bogotá (Medellín, Palmira and Manizales), two of the Universidad Javeriana (Bogotá and Cali), and five of the Universidad Santo Tomás (Bogotá, Bucaramanga, Medellín, Villavicencio and Tunja).

Strategic Line 3: Strengthen the Internationalization of the CNA

Objectives:

1. **Strengthen the Internationalization Policy of the National Accreditation System, which provides greater visibility and recognition of the quality of Colombian higher education**.

   Actions:

   As a key agent of the National Accreditation System, the CNA has consolidated participation in international networks as one of its lines of action regarding internationalization, as well as the promotion of joint actions with agencies, public entities, ministries of education and accreditation agencies, among others, to strengthen mutual work, understanding of the quality assurance systems, and the improvement of the guidelines, procedures and tools of the National Accreditation System. In order to do so, the council has joined actions implemented by the Colombian Network for the Internationalization of Higher Education (RCI, for the Spanish original), the Colombia Challenge Your Knowledge (CCYK) network of accredited universities, the Association of Colombian Universities (ASCUN), and strategic actions of the Ministry of National Education, among others.

2. **Participate in the projects developed by the National Accreditation Council and the higher education institutions of the system as part of regional events and networks of assessment and accreditation agencies.**

   Actions:

   As a result of the processes of interaction and learning from other external and international experiences, the CNA has undertaken projects that show development based on models, such as that of regional

accreditation, which is being implemented particularly in the framework of the ARCU-SUR system. It is also important to mention the assessment project under the CeQuint[33] guidelines.

In addition to the above, in 2014, the update of the accreditation guidelines included the "national and international visibility" factor as a criterion to assess the academic quality of higher education institutions, as well as programs.

ARCU-SUR System. The CNA has made three calls for applications to jointly assess programs based on the assessment criteria agreed between the accreditation agencies of the ARCU-SUR countries.

In 2014, three academic programs —two in medicine and one in agronomy— achieved regional or international accreditation, all within the framework of the MERCOSUR regional quality recognition system, ARCU-SUR.

In 2016, the CNA opened the new call for applications for the parallel accreditation of programs in the CNA and ARCU-SUR – MERCOSUR in the areas of architecture, agronomy, veterinary science and nursing. Taking into account these areas of knowledge and their national accreditation expiry date, a national call for applications for thirteen programs was made.

Also, in the framework of cooperation with regional accreditation agencies, specifically the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA), the first process to certify the quality of internationalization was carried out together with said entity, based on the guidelines of the **CeQuint** project, a process in which the Universidad de la Salle voluntarily participated during the 2013-2014 period.

3. **Promote activities for cooperation and the exchange of good practices that are established with counterpart agencies and those that have signed agreements with the CNA.**

    Actions:

    As a result of participation in international networks, the CNA has been implementing regional accreditation processes, mainly in the ARCU-SUR System, and the following actions have been carried out in this respect:

    - Exchange of good practices: The accreditation guidelines are exchanged regularly and in accordance with the regulation of new areas of knowledge in the ARCU-SUR - CeQuint System, as well as outstanding experiences and good practices of the Quality Assurance System. Starting with the regional accreditation received from international institutions, the exchange of experiences of other national and regional HEIs is promoted.
    - Joint projects are carried out, such as the establishment of regional guidelines for the recognition of the region's accreditation systems and, therefore, for the implementation of the regional accreditation system in the ARCU-SUR framework. As a result, since 2012, work has been carried out on structuring and implementing the Regional Academic Mobility of MERCOSUR (MARCA, for the Spanish original) program. Also, in the framework of cooperation with regional accreditation agencies, specifically the European Consortium for Accreditation, the first process to certify the quality of internationalization was carried out together with said entity, in accordance with the guidelines of the CeQuint project, a process in which the Universidad de la Salle voluntarily participated during the 2013-2014 period.
    - As part of the international accreditation processes of the CNA, capacity building processes are carried out, specifically through the training of academic peers using the platform of the ARCU-SUR System. The peer database was created with the participation of seven countries, and national assessor training and education activities are carried out based on previously coordinated quality criteria.

        As part of the CNA's cooperation and internationalization processes, collaboration programs have arisen between agencies and institutions of other countries. The following of which stand out: support modalities for the training of experts, and technical and administrative staff in accreditation and quality assurance processes; cooperation for the development of joint accreditation processes; training and exchange of assessment peers; participation in international higher education events; and agreements for mutual recognition of quality assurance systems, among others.

4. **Adopt and implement quality assurance criteria and guidelines that will enable an international external assessment of the CNA, with results that will provide the national and international academic community with greater reliability regarding the decisions and actions to be carried out regarding the quality of academic programs and institutions of Colombia's National Accreditation System.**

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[33] The CeQuint project has developed a methodology to assess the quality of internationalization in higher education. The general objective of the project partners was to assess, improve and reward internationalization. The project was co-funded by the EU's Lifelong Learning Programme.

Actions:

As part of its roles and responsibilities for the recognition of the National Accreditation System, in April 2012, the National Accreditation Council (CNA) obtained the certificate of alignment with good practices of accreditation granted by the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and the Ibero-American Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (RIACES), valid for five (5) years. It also signed the *Multilateral Agreement on the Mutual Recognition of Accreditation Results regarding Joint Programmes* after an external review by the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA), where the processes implemented by the CNA were validated according to the European Standards of Accreditation.

Strategic Line 4: Strengthen the National Accreditation System

1. **Reinforce the CNA's interaction and support in the academic community for the development of self-assessment and accreditation processes that strengthen the culture of quality and continuous improvement.**

   Actions:

   As discussed in Section 4.2.1.2 of Chapter 4 of the report, the CNA has undertaken different activities to achieve this objective.

   These strategies have been carried out to maintain permanent contact with the academic community through respectful and constructive dialog, in which information is provided to carry out the accreditation processes, the institutions' questions and concerns are answered, and guidance and recommendations are provided regarding good practices for internal quality assurance. These activities have a significant impact on the self-assessment exercise of the institutions and programs, and also serve as a source of feedback for the management of the CNA itself.

2. **Development of the National Accreditation System for the inclusion of new institutions and programs in the National Accreditation System by means of guidance and technical support.**

   Actions:

   The achievement of institutional accreditation reflects significant progress in the quality assurance processes, because it is the result of appropriate academic processes, consolidation of resources and advances in research and social outreach with an impact on the development of the regions and the country.

   To this effect, the existence of a high concentration of accredited institutions has been identified in few areas and cities in the country. Based on this reality, the new institutional guidelines were created using the multicampus model in order to promote the comprehensive accreditation of institutions with national coverage or that provide higher education programs in multiple cities. The objective is to get the more complex institutions, in terms of size and coverage, to prepare and submit their applications for accreditation in a unified, rather than partial manner. This aims to increase the offering of accredited HEIs and programs in a larger number of cities and municipalities in the country.

Figure 14. Nationally Accredited HEIs - 2016

ACCREDITED HEIs ON THE NATIONAL LEVEL

44

Department	Count
Magdalena	1
Atlántico	2
Santander	2
Bolívar	3
Caldas	3
Antioquia	8
Boyacá	1
Risaralda	1
Cundinamarca	2
Valle del Cauca	3
Cauca	1
Bogotá D.C.	17

ACCREDITED HEIs BY DEPARTMENTS

Fuente: SNIES, Septiembre de 2016

MINEDUCACIÓN   TODOS POR UN NUEVO PAÍS PAZ EQUIDAD EDUCACIÓN
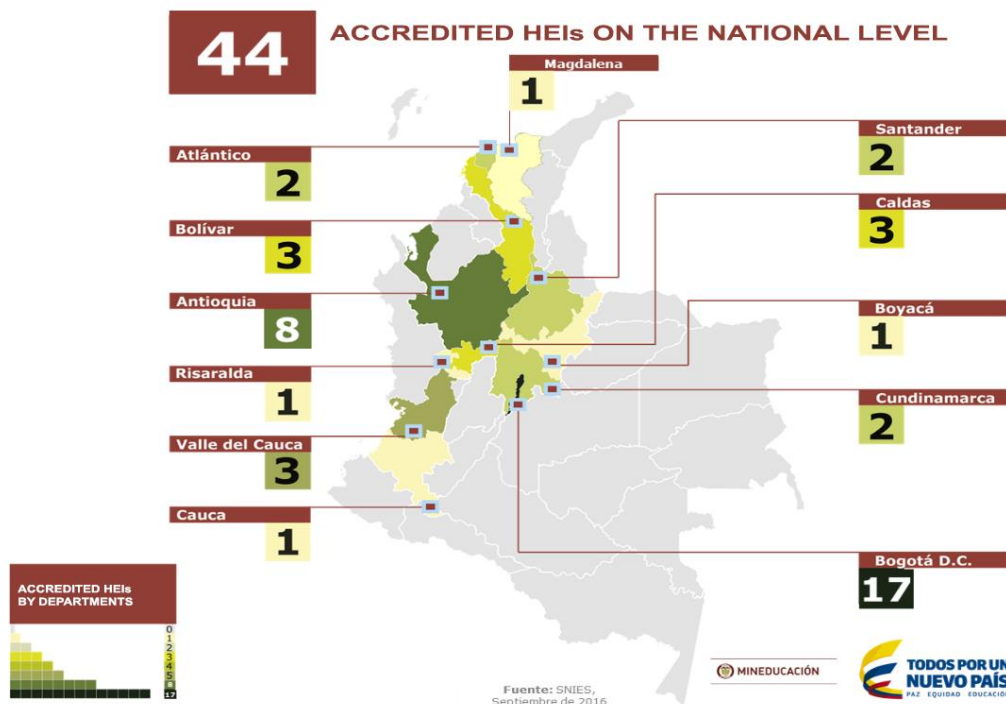
Source: Ministry of National Education.
Cut-off date of information: August 2016

As mentioned in item 1 of this strategic line, the CNA maintains constant contact with national HEIs in order to have an impact on higher education institutions throughout the country. Regional meetings, academic peer training processes and activities related to support actions are scheduled in different regions.

Strategic Line 5: Consolidate the organization of the CNA

1. **Implement technological information and communication mechanisms that permit feedback on the CNA's guidelines, processes and management.**

   Actions:

   Improvement of the hardware, software and connectivity that support the CNA's operations. Regarding this point, actions have been carried out to update office equipment and database servers, and increase the capacity of the internet communication channel and backup power system. There is also access to the technical support resources (help desks) of the Ministry of National Education.

   The Ministry of National Education hires an **internet service** for the CNA with an external provider that hosts the cna.gov.co domain, for the website, email and SACES–CNA information system. This ensures the necessary computer security to keep the required communications active and available for the CNA's processes.

   There is also **access to the intranet of the Ministry of National Education**, which has important information systems for the CNA's work, such as: CORDIS (record and control of correspondence), STONE (Administrative and Financial System), the Commission System (for employee and council member transfers), and the Integrated Management System, which consolidates the processes and procedures in the Quality Assurance System.

   The **CNA's website** contains information that allows all users to find out about the National Accreditation System and activities carried out by the council; the strategic projects; guidelines, guides and indicators related to the accreditation processes; access to the SACES-CNA application; and general information such as frequently asked questions, regulations and access to sites of interest. The website also has a search engine to find accredited institutions and programs, which can be accessed by the public to learn about the quality conditions and characteristics of the programs and institutions that currently have high quality accreditation

2. **Strengthen the Continuous Improvement System of the CNA by coordinating the planning exercises and the self-assessment process.**

   Actions:

   The coordination of the CNA's strategic framework in the five (5) strategic lines has involved the logic defined in the planning exercises carried out by the CNA. It also includes the importance for the National Accreditation System to be recognized based on the criteria and guidelines of good practices for accreditation agencies, defined by consensus by an international certification body.

   To this effect, the comments and recommendations by the international Assessment Panel appointed by the INQAAHE in 2011 were taken into account in the action plan, and the following actions stand out:

   - Regarding the need to establish a more inclusive quality policy that will not only establish limits on the principle of "flexibility" currently applied to high quality accreditation, but will also call on the technical/technological institutions in the framework defined by the Development Plan, it is important to mention the project described in Chapter 1, regarding the National Higher Education System led by the Ministry of National Education; the development of which will establish its impact on the National Accreditation System and, therefore, on the CNA. This development will also help to identify the interactions that the qualification certification and the accreditation processes will have in these new contexts.

   - Regarding the CNA's capacity to respond to the increase in applications from HEIs with the resources available at the time of the visit (2011), it is important to mention the description provided in Section 4.1.3.3 and the Annex: "Internal Structure of the CNA and Management Processes," in relation to the creation of the functional groups, showing the different means of support currently available to the CNA to carry out its activities in a timely and efficient manner.

   - With respect to the improvement of academic peer management, calls for applications have been made to strengthen the bank of peers in areas of knowledge, where the number of processes has been increasing, as is the case in the area of education (bachelor's degree programs) and the area of medical specialties. This has also been accompanied by peer induction, reinduction and training processes, in order to ensure that they meet the training requirement in topics related to the Colombian accreditation model.

   - The council is currently studying the issue of the term of validity for program and institutional accreditation. The possibility has been studied of carrying out follow-up actions on the improvement plans proposed by the HEIs at regular intervals during the term of accreditation. This would allow the provision of timely and effective assistance for the HEIs by monitoring the commitments and progress in their improvement plans.

   - The CNA has carried out actions to strengthen internationalization, as demonstrated in the development of Guideline 6 and the attached internationalization report.

     The internationalization model adopted by the CNA has been developed in two areas. Firstly, the external area, where efforts have been made to approach and work together with agencies, accreditation agency networks and other foreign entities involved in quality assurance. Secondly, the internal area, by means of inclusion of the factors of international recognition and visibility of the academic programs and higher education institutions as important quality criteria for the recognition of accreditation, particularly since 2013. In this context, the main actions that have been carried out are:

     o Participation in projects for the international accreditation of programs.
     o Participation in networks and actions carried out with international agencies.
     o Participation in, and coordination or support of international events on quality assurance.
     o Agreements and participation in international cooperation projects.
     o Visibility of the CNA and recognition of the model's good practices.
     o Coordination with the MEN's Cooperation Office.
     o Processes to transfer knowledge through peer training.

3. **Adapt the CNA's organic structure and in-house staff in order to adequately respond to the established mission and vision, to the expectations of the academic community, and to the current demands of higher education in the national and international context.**

The steps taken by the council to support the CNA's professional team demonstrates the decision-making aimed at mitigating the risks inherent to the growing volume of applications by HEIs, and in turn, benefits knowledge management, which is so important to the CNA. In this regard, the most important actions are:

- The CNA's basic team is comprised of qualified, experienced in-house staff that carries out the mission activities, which ensures the continuity of the processes in the event of any possibility in the support team.
- The formation of the technical/academic group that, in addition to providing support for council members in collecting relevant information for preparing the presentations, improves the capacity to respond to the growing number of applications made by HEIs.
- Internationalization actions are strengthened, as tasks of strategic importance to the National Accreditation System are now carried out with great aptitude.

It is essential to highlight the importance that the Ministry of National Education has given to this issue through the Subdivision of Quality Assurance, because it has had the financial and administrative support to improve the contracting of support staff in the conditions required by the CNA.

4. **Define the technical requirements and develop the SACES-CNA module to facilitate the management of the accreditation processes, and interaction with other higher education information systems and higher education institutions.**

   Actions:

   In order to develop the SACES-CNA application, the stages of the accreditation process were analyzed, along with the agents that interact in each of them; the characteristics of the information; and the aspects that ensure the custody, security and integrity of the information, the transparency of the processes and the traceability and information regarding the status thereof.
   Based on these elements, a four-module application was designed and developed: one module for each type of process (undergraduate programs, postgraduate programs and higher education institutions) and one module that contains the academic peer database.
   The application was designed and developed between 2010 and 2012. It was in the adjustment and testing stage between 2013 and 2014, and it was finally implemented in February 2015 for the accreditation processes of undergraduate programs and the bank of peers module.

5. **Increase the use of the SACES-CNA by the different internal and external agents of the program and institutional accreditation process.**

   Actions:

   SACES-CNA. In 2015, the module that allows the entry of information to apply for the accreditation of undergraduate programs was made available to the different agents (HEI staff, academic peers and council members). Last year, the production and improvement stage ended, which permitted the stabilization of the system, responding to the users' observations. At the same time, the CNA has provided assistance to all its users online, by phone and in person on an ongoing basis to achieve a better understanding of how to handle the system, its advantages and functionality.

   During the first year of implementation, 817 processes were carried out through the application, distributed in the following statuses:

Figure 15. SACES-CNA Active Accreditation Processes

Stages of the Process

PROCESOS 817				
Con. Iniciales 238 - 29%	Autoevaluacion 283 - 35%	Ev. Externa - Pares 147 - 18%	Com. Rector 110 - 13%	Con concepto 39 - 5%
1° Vez | Renv. 100% - 0%	1° Vez | Renv. 20% - 15%	1° Vez | Renv. 7% - 11%	1° Vez | Renv. 6% - 7%	1° Vez | Renv. 2% - 3%
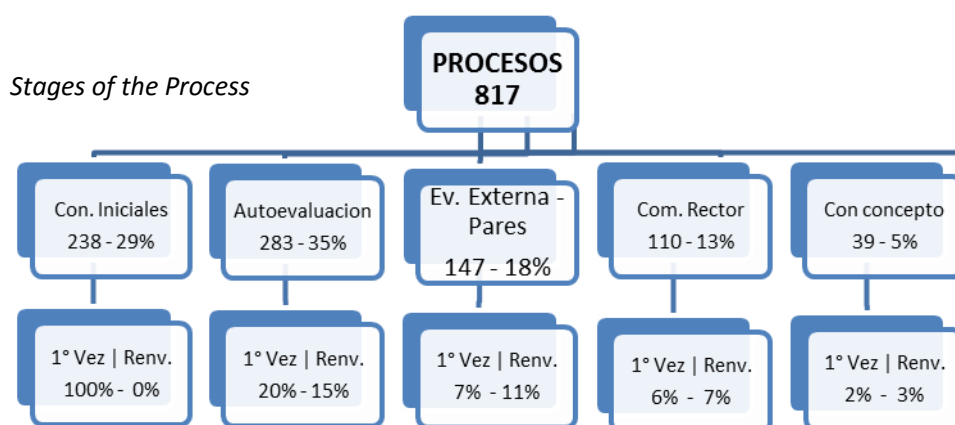
Source: SACES-CNA. Figures with the cut-off date of May 1, 2016.

5.3   General Table of Indicators

Related Indicators	2011 Baseline	2015 Figures
STRENGTHEN AND UPDATE THE NATIONAL ACCREDITATION SYSTEM		
Guidelines for Accreditation of Undergraduate Programs	8 factors 42 characteristics 183 indicators	10 factors 40 characteristics 17 indicators
Guidelines for Accreditation of Postgraduate Programs	10 factors 29 characteristics 95 indicators	10 factors 29 characteristics 14 indicators
Guidelines for Institutional Accreditation	10 factors 34 characteristics 154 aspects to be considered	10 factors 34 characteristics 91 indicators
No. of participants in the regional meetings on accreditation	507	920
No. of accreditation coordinators participating in the inquiry	67	120
No. of peers participating in the survey	201	378
No. of activities to support the HEIs to carry out their self-assessment processes for accreditation purposes	220	228
No. of peers registered in the CNA bank of peers	3,357	3,983
No. of national peers registered in the bank of peers who have carried out at least one (1) external assessment visit	1,100	1,674
No. of foreign peers registered in the CNA bank of peers	70	99
QUALITY ASSESSMENT FOR PROGRAM AND INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION PURPOSES		
No. of programs assessed by the CNA following the self-assessment process	1,212	860
No. of institutions assessed following the institutional self-assessment process	29	16
No. of national peers appointed for external assessment visits	510	454
No. of foreign peers appointed for national visits of programs and institutions	21	74
No. of academic peer induction sessions	20	25
No. of visits on initial conditions	14	27
INTERNATIONALIZATION		
No. of networks in which the CNA participates	Three (3): INQAAHE, RIACES, and RANA of MERCOSUR	Three (3): INQAAHE, RIACES, and RANA of MERCOSUR
No. of accredited Colombian programs that have participated in international accreditation experiences	Two (2): RIACES Six (6): ARCU-SUR	ARCU-SUR call for applications in progress for programs in architecture, agronomy, veterinary science and nursing

No. of national peers certified in the ARCU-SUR-MERCOSUR System	Four (4)	Peer training workshop: ARCU-SUR System - 9 peers from the areas of agronomy and architecture (June 9, 2016). Second session - 12 peers from the areas of agronomy and architecture (June 15, 2016). Third session - 4 academic peers (July 13, 2016).
No. of foreign peers who have participated in the external assessment of national programs, including international experiences	70	74

5.4   Improvement plan

The following improvement plan has been structured, taking as a point of reference the contribution of each participant in the perception study conducted in 2015; consultation of former council members, members of the CESU, professional associations and agencies; and the activity plan defined by the council for the 2016-2017 period.

STRATEGIC LINE	GOAL - OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES	START DATE	END DATE	COMPLIANCE INDICATOR
STRENGTHEN AND MODERNIZE THE NATIONAL ACCREDITATION SYSTEM	REORGANIZATION OF THE BANK OF PEERS	Establish strategies to strengthen the bank of assessment peers	February 2016	February 2017	CNA act of approval
		Establish selection criteria for assessment peers	February 2016	February 2017	CNA act of approval
		Communicate with the HEIs to request support for the formation thereof	March 2016	March 2017	Communication by the CNA to the HEIs indicating the strategy to strengthen the bank of peers
	NEW ACCREDITATION GUIDELINES	Create Guidelines for Medical Specialties	March 2015 - April 2016	August 2016	CESU agreement of approval
		Communicate the new guidelines and academic peer training	September 2016	October 2016	CNA act of approval
		Study the relevance of other specific guidelines	June - August 2016	June 2017	Document discussed and approved by the CNA
	INTERNAL STRENGTHENING OF THE CNA	Optimize the operation of the SACES-CNA program - undergraduate module	February 2016	June 2016	Stable operation of the SACES-CNA platform - undergraduate module
		Strengthen the CNA's technical team	January 2016	March 2016	Appointment of new human resources Acquisition of technological equipment for the CNA
		Submit the draft reform of CESU Agreement 04/2013 regarding the CNA's operation	April 2016	June 2017	Agreement approved by the CESU
		Establish a system of indicators to support the CNA's administrative work and mission	August 2016	June 2017	Approval - CNA act of approval Established system of indicators
		Design and implement an internal and external communications plan for the disclosure of academic activities and results of the CNA's management, so that they are fully known and valued by the stakeholders and society	August 2016	March 2017	Approval - CNA act of approval Designed and implemented communications plan
		Develop the postgraduate module in the SACES-CNA	February 2017	September 2017	Design, production and tests
		Improve the accountability mechanisms of the actions, procedures and results of CNA's management in the academic community	October 2016	June 2017	CNA's management report
QUALITY ASSESSMENT FOR PROGRAM AND INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION PURPOSES	OPTIMIZATION OF PROGRAM AND INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION PROCESSES	Encourage institutional accreditation processes in the regions	March 2016	February 2017	Activities carried out by the CNA
		Strengthen the accreditation processes of postgraduate courses and programs, as well as technical and technology institutions	May 2016	December 2017	Activities carried out by the CNA
		Make the interim support and follow-up visits to the accredited institutions	January 2017	December 2017	Opinions issued by the CNA Assessment of the actions implemented

	Establish mechanisms that ensure the follow-up of improvement plans of higher education institutions and programs that have voluntarily participated in the accreditation process	October 2016	March 2017	CNA act of approval
	Follow-up and monitor the impact of accreditation on education and on the higher education institutions in order to show whether it complies with the essence of accreditation and the opportunities to improve its effectiveness	October 2016	March 2017	CNA publication
	Promote CNA publications as mechanisms to disseminate the academic products, and as a support strategy and guidance on issues regarding accreditation	October 2016	March 2017	Official publications
RECERTIFICATION OF THE CNA	Carry out CNA self-assessment process and improvement plan	June 2015 - July 2016	June 2015 - July 2016	Self-assessment document approved by the CNA and endorsed by the CESU
	CNA's letter of interest in recertification sent to international assessors	September 2016	October 2016	Official communication of application by the CNA and the MEN
	Visit of assessment peers and preliminary opinion	September - December 2016	November - December 2016	Visit carried out and preliminary opinion issued by the assessors CNA's comments on the panel's report
	Final opinion issued by the panel of assessors	March - April 2017	March - April 2017	Document with the final report of the panel of assessors
INTERNATIONALIZAT ION COMMITMENTS	ARCU-SUR-MERCOSUR commitments	April 2016	July 2017	Peer training workshop International event on the benefits of international accreditation HEI participation in the calls for applications of programs for accreditation with MERCOSUR.
	Activities in RIACES	January 2016	December 2017	Minutes of RIACES meetings
	Project with the AUDIT program	To be defined	To be defined	MEN-ANECA Agreement
	Make progress in the consolidation of mechanisms to facilitate the transnationalization of the National Accreditation System in order to respond to the requests of countries that are familiar with and appreciate the Colombian accreditation model	January 2017	June 2017	Academic papers for discussion

ANNEXES

Annex Reference	Document Title
A1	CNA Inventory of Rules
A2	Law 1753/2005 – 2014-2018 National Development Plan (Everyone for a New Country)
A3	National Council of Higher Education 2034 Agreement for Higher Education
A4	2010-2014 Sectoral Plan, Document 9, Ministry of National Education
A5	State of the Art National Accreditation System and Identification of Roadmaps and Subjects for Research and Development to Improve Quality Conditions
A6	Ministry of National Education - 2010-2014 Sectoral Plan
A7	National Accreditation Council – Document: 20 Years of Commitment to High Quality Accreditation in Higher Education
A30	Perception Study Report and Inquiries

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A6	Ministry of National Education - 2010-2014 Sectoral Plan
A7	National Accreditation Council – Document: 20 Years of Commitment to High Quality Accreditation in Higher Education
A8	Guidelines for Institutional Accreditation
A9	Guidelines for Accreditation of Undergraduate Programs
A10	Guidelines for Accreditation of Programs of Accredited HEIs
A11	Guidelines for Institutional Accreditation
A12	Guidelines for High Quality Accreditation of Master's Degree and Doctorate Programs
A13	Procedure Guide for Self-Assessment for Accreditation of Undergraduate Programs
A14	Guide – Assessment of Initial Conditions for Accreditation of Programs
A15	Guide – Assessment of Initial Conditions for Institutional Accreditation (2015)
A16	Guide for External Assessment for Accreditation: Undergraduate, Master's Degree and Doctorate Programs and Institutions (2015)
A17	Guide for Reports by External Peers of Postgraduate Programs
A18	Procedure Guide for External Assessment for Accreditation of Undergraduate Academic Programs
A19	Procedure Guide for the Renewal of Accreditation of Undergraduate Academic Programs
A20	Procedure Guide for Self-Assessment for High Quality Accreditation of Master's Degree and Doctorate Programs
A21	Guide for Reports by External Peers of Postgraduate Programs
A22	Academic Peer Training Handbook
A23	Technical Specifications - Assessment of Initial Conditions
A24	Technical Specifications – External Assessment Visit
A25	Technical Specifications – Issue and Reconsideration of Opinion
A26	Code of Ethics for Academic Peers Responsible for External Assessment for High Quality Accreditation
A27	Report – Actions for Support, Update, Training and Promotion of the Culture of Quality, 2015 – 2016
A28	Statistical Bulletin - National Accreditation Council, 2015
A29	Report - Internal Structure of the CNA and Management Processes
A30	Perception Study Report and Inquiries
A31	Internationalization Report

GLOSSARY

Academic community: The group of people who work in the disciplines, professions, occupations or jobs that higher education prepares for and who know the foundations, limits and areas for the corresponding work. For each one of these practices, the academic community defines the basic requirements that must be met to legally practice the work. This refers to the academic community that the academic peers who form the (national and international) group belong to, which has the knowledge and knows the foundations and practices related to the discipline, profession, vocation or job.

Academic nature: Nature or vocation in the academic work of a higher education institution (HEI). These institutions are classified according to their academic nature, as follows: university, university institution, technology institution or professional technical institution.

References:
- Article 16 of Law 30 / December 28, 1992, whereby the public service of higher education is organized.

- Articles 1 and 2 of Law 749 / July 19, 2002, whereby the public service of higher education is organized into the categories of technological and professional technical education.

Academic peer: "Peer" means equal or similar. Regarding accreditation, "peer" refers to a member of the community who has the authority to judge the quality. In the accreditation process, "peers" are responsible for issuing opinions on quality. Therefore, the opinions must be recognized by the community, which respects the peers as long as they are outstanding examples of the community, and are professionally identified as having the authority to issue these opinions.

Academic qualification: Express academic recognition granted to an individual upon completion of the program for having acquired specific knowledge in a higher education institution. This recognition consists of a certificate granted by the institution.

References:
- Article 24 of Law 30 / December 28, 1992, whereby the public service of higher education is organized.

Accreditation: Act whereby the Colombian government adopts and discloses the academic peers' recognition of the quality of a program or institution based on a prior assessment process with the intervention of the institution, academic communities and the National Accreditation Council.

Accreditation guidelines: The CNA guidelines for accreditation and that synthesize the model's structure include a conceptual framework, some quality criteria that direct the different assessment stages, some factors or areas of institutional development, and some quality characteristics or ideals. The model also proposes variables and indicators, establishes the methodology and defines the tools required for both the self-assessment and the external assessment of programs and institutions (CNA, 1998).

Accredited academic programs: Programs that have current public recognition of their highest levels of quality granted through an administrative act by the Ministry of National Education, with the prior opinion of the CNA. Higher education institutions that have accredited programs can provide and develop them extensively, once they have obtained the qualification certification by means of an administrative act without having to carry out the assessment procedure.

References:
- Article 39 of Decree 2566 / September 10, 2003, whereby the minimum conditions of quality are defined and the guidelines for obtaining the qualification certification are established.

Accredited higher education institutions: Those which have current public recognition of their highest levels of quality and fulfillment of their social role granted through an administrative act by the Ministry of National Education, with the prior opinion of the CNA.

Area of knowledge: Grouping of academic programs, taking into account certain similarity in the content, in the specific fields of knowledge or in the fields of action of higher education for educational purposes of research or carrying out vocations, professions or disciplines. There are eight areas of knowledge: a) agronomy,

veterinary science and related topics; b) fine arts; c) education sciences; d) health sciences; e) social and human sciences; f) economics, management, accounting and related topics; g) engineering, architecture, urban planning and related topics; and h) mathematics and natural sciences.

Capacity: Systematic and dynamic set of aptitudes and attitudes that allow a person to gain awareness, understand, assess, interpret, make decisions and appropriately interact with reality.

Competency: A complex structure that integrates knowledge, potential, skills, abilities, practices and actions that are shown while acting in specific situations and in specific contexts (knowing how to do something right). Competencies are built, and develop and evolve continuously.

Curricular guidelines: The epistemological, educational and curricular guidelines defined by the Ministry of National Education with the support of the academic community to support the process of laying the foundations and planning the mandatory and fundamental areas defined by Article 23 of the General Education Law. The curricular guidelines serve as references that support and guide this work in the process of preparing the Institutional Education Projects and their corresponding study plans by cycle, level and area, together with the contributions made by the institutions and their teachers through their experience, education and research.

Departments: The 1991 Constitution establishes that Colombia is a unitary republic that is administratively and politically divided into 32 departments, which are governed from the capital city. The departments form geographical, cultural and economic regions.

Additionally, there are special districts and metropolitan areas. The former correspond to urban centers of national importance, such as the Capital District of Bogotá, and the latter correspond to the subregional integration of the departments' capital cities. Sovereignty lies in the nation as a unit, and in turn, Colombia has administrative decentralization through which a large part of the state's administration is divided among the 32 departments and their municipalities.

Each department has its own organizations to exercise executive, legislative and legal powers. The departments are subdivided into municipalities governed by a mayor and a municipal council, which are elected by popular vote for the same period as the departmental dignitaries. Some departments with an elevated number of municipalities have chosen to recognize the existence of provinces, districts, regions or subregions. These are a set of municipalities with cultural, geographical or historical similarities, where an urban center of great importance is established as the capital and local institutions operate with jurisdiction over the other municipalities. These subregions are not legally recognized.

Doctorates: Postgraduate programs that grant the highest educational qualification with the purpose of training researchers with the capacity to autonomously carry out and guide academic and research processes in a specific area of knowledge.

References:
- Articles 7 and 8 of Decree 1001 / April 3, 2006, whereby the offer of postgraduate programs is organized and other provisions are issued.

Educational category: This refers to field of action and the educational purposes of the academic programs. There are the following categories in higher education according to level of education:

a) Undergraduate: According to their education purpose, undergraduate programs are grouped in the following categories:

• Professional technical: Predominantly practical education for the exercise of specific practical or auxiliary activities. Leads to a professional technical qualification in the corresponding area.
• Technological: Education for the exercise of practical activities based on the scientific principles that sustain it. Its research activity is aimed at creating and adapting technologies. The development of one of its programs leads to the technologist qualification in the respective area.
• University: Characterized by its ample social and humanist content with emphasis on the scientific and research foundations aimed at the creation, development and verification of knowledge, techniques and arts. The denomination of this category's qualification will be the one that corresponds to the name of the respective profession or academic discipline.

- Professional technical specialization: Leads to continuing education in the respective occupation.
- Technology specialization: Supports continuing education in the respective profession, referring to the field of technology.

b) Postgraduate: These programs are classified in the following categories:

- Specialization: Permits continuing education in the specific profession or discipline in the fields of technology, science, humanities, arts and philosophy. Entry at this level requires a professional qualification or a qualification in an academic discipline.
- Master's degree: Extends and develops knowledge for the solution of disciplinary, interdisciplinary and professional problems and equips students with the tools that prepare them as researchers.
- Doctorate: Doctorate programs are based on advanced education of researchers.

External assessment: External assessment is part of the accreditation process and is carried out once self-assessment is completed. It is carried out by academic peers with a renowned record in the field of the educational program, who are appointed by the CNA. Their task is focused on determining coherence between the information in the self-assessment report and the effective findings in the institution. The peers issue their opinions on quality based on the information obtained and even on aspects not considered in the self-assessment, but that are also relevant to assess the quality of the institutions and programs in a specific field. As a result of the external assessment, the peers submit a report to the CNA. These people are academic peers, who work as a team to ensure the rigorous examination of the different aspects of quality, and to apply the criteria, tools and procedures established by the CNA (the organization that appoints them).

Grade: Ordered execution of the study plan for one academic year in order to achieve the objectives proposed in said plan.

Graduate: Individual who after completing the academic program and meeting the legal requirements and requisites of the respective higher education institution receives the academic qualification.

References:
- This is based on the different definitions contained in the student regulations of Colombian and foreign higher education institutions.

Higher education: An ongoing process that facilitates the all-round development of human potential, which occurs after secondary or upper secondary education, and that aims for the full development of the pupils and their academic or professional education.

Higher education institutions (HEIs): Establishments organized to provide the public service of education at any of the different levels of higher education. Colombian law establishes that higher education institutions can be organized into: a) technical professional institutions; b) technology institutions; c) university institutions or technology schools; and d) universities.

References:
- Article 138 of Law 115 / February 8, 1994, whereby the General Education Law is issued.

Higher Education Quality Exams (ECAES, for the Spanish original): Official and mandatory academic exams for the purposes of: a) testing the degree of development of the competencies of students in the last year of undergraduate academic programs provided by the higher education institutions; and b) serving as a source of information for creating assessment indicators of the education service that promote the qualification of the institutional processes and the formation of policies, and that facilitate the decision-making process in all the orders and components of the education system. The ECAES include the essential areas and components of knowledge that identify the education of each profession, discipline or vocation pursuant to the laws that regulate the quality standards.

References:
- Articles 1 and 2 of Decree 1781 / June 26, 2003, which regulate the ECAES for students of undergraduate academic programs.

Institutional data: The institutional data that allow searches to be carried out by institutions are: department, municipality, academic nature (university, university institution, technology institution, or professional technical institution), origin (public or private), and link to the institution's website. The institutions' websites can be accessed through this option.

Levels of education: Higher education has two levels or stages of academic education characterized by their objectives and type of study. These stages are: professional technical, technological and university, which correspond to the undergraduate academic level; and specialization, master's degree and doctorate, which belong to the postgraduate academic level.

References:
- Article 1 of Decree 1001 / April 3, 2006, whereby the offer of postgraduate programs is organized and other provisions are issued.

Undergraduate education has the following categories and leads to the following academic qualifications:

Professional technical: Leads to the qualification of "Professional Technician in..."

Technological: Leads to the qualification of "Technologist in..."

Professional: Leads to the qualification of "Professional in..." In this case, the denomination of the academic qualification may be preceded by this qualification or not, or it can only correspond to the denominations that the legislator has established in compliance with its role of regulating the professional practice.

Professionally, qualifications related to the area of education correspond to "Bachelor's degree in...".

Education in the undergraduate academic programs has the aim of work in vocations and the exercise of a specific profession or discipline of a technological or scientific nature, or in the area of humanities, arts and philosophy. There are also multidisciplinary undergraduate programs, such as liberal arts studies.

References:
- Article 9 of Law 30 / December 28, 1992, whereby the public service of higher education is organized.

The postgraduate programs help to strengthen the foundations for the generation, transfer, appropriation and application of knowledge, and to keep the disciplinary and professional knowledge taught in the undergraduate programs up-to-date. The postgraduate level is comprised of specializations, master's degrees and doctorates.

References:
- Article 1 of Decree 1001 / April 3, 2006, whereby the offer of postgraduate programs is organized and other provisions are issued.

According to the preparation requirements and requisites, postgraduate education leads to the following academic qualifications:

Specialization: Leads to the qualification of "Specialization in..."

Master's degree: Leads to the qualification of "Master's Degree in..."

Doctorate: Leads to the qualification of "Doctor in..."

Methodology: According to the teaching methodology, academic programs may be offered in person or through distance learning.

    a) In-person:

        • Daytime classes: If the class times for students of an academic program are between 6 am and 6 pm.

• Evening classes: If most of the classes taken by students of an academic program are taught after 6 pm.

• Mixed hours: If the class hours combine both of the aforementioned schedules.

b) Virtual

• Distance-learning programs: Programs with an education methodology characterized by using teaching and learning strategies that overcome limits of space and time among participants in the educational process (Decree 1295, Article 16).

•Online programs: Online programs require the use of internet networks as the main environment in which all or at least eighty percent (80%) of the academic activities are carried out (Decree 1295, Article 17).

c) Preparatory cycles: For the accreditation of programs offered in the preparatory cycle category, the institution shall simultaneously submit all the programs for assessment. "Preparatory cycle programs must have the following characteristics:

1. Technological and professional technical programs must respond to auxiliary, assistance, complementary, innovative and proactive fields of the professions so that their denomination is differentiable and permits a clear distinction of the vocations, disciplines and professions. 2. The competencies of each level must be identified and maintain harmony and coherence with the denomination, justification, organization systems of the academic activities, study plan, and other elements that are part of the program's curricular structure. 3. The technological and professional technical programs must be theoretically compatible with the area of knowledge of the vocation, discipline or profession they intend to develop. 4. The technological and professional technical programs that are part of the preparatory cycle training proposal must contain the preparatory component in their curricular structure, which allows students to continue to the next level of education." (Decree 1295/2010, Art. 15).

National Accreditation Council (CNA, for the Spanish original): Academic organization comprised of people of the highest scientific and professional qualities, with national and international presence, with the essential role of promoting and executing the accreditation policy adopted by the CESU and coordinating the respective processes. Therefore, it guides higher education institutions so that they carry out their self-assessment; it adopts the quality criteria, tools and technical indicators that are applied in external assessment; it appoints the external peers that perform the external assessment; and it conducts the final assessment.

References:
- Articles 1 and 8 of Agreement 002 / June 23, 2005, whereby National Council of Higher Education Agreement 001/2000 is subrogated, the CNA regulations are issued, and the integration and roles of the CNA are established.

National Accreditation System: A set of policies, strategies, processes and organizations with the main objective to assure society that the higher education institutions that form part of the system meet the highest quality requirements and achieve their aims and objectives.

References:
- Article 53 of Law 30 / December 28, 1992, whereby the public service of higher education is organized.

National Council of Higher Education (CESU, for the Spanish original): Colombian government entity linked to the Ministry of National Education with coordination, planning, recommendation and advisory roles. Specifically, it has the following roles: propose policies and plans for the operation of higher education; recommend the regulations and procedures to organize the accreditation system; organize the national information system; organize state exams; establish guidelines on the nomenclature of qualifications and the creation of higher education institutions; establish the requirements for the creation and operation of academic programs; suggest the suspension of the legal capacity granted to higher education institutions; propose mechanisms to assess the academic quality of higher education institutions and their programs; develop its own rules of procedure; and propose the roles that it deems relevant in the implementation of Law 30 / December 1992.

References:
- Articles 34 and 36 of Law 30 / December 28, 1992, whereby the public service of higher education is organized.

National Information System on Higher Education (SNIES, for the Spanish original): A set of coordinated sources, processes, tools and users, which make possible and facilitate the collection, disclosure and organization of relevant information about higher education for the planning, monitoring, assessment, advice, auditing and oversight of the sector. This system was created with the main objective to disclose information to guide the community on the quality, quantity and characteristics of the system's academic programs and institutions.

References:
- Article 56 of Law 30 / December 28, 1992, whereby the public service of higher education is organized.

- Article 1 of Decree 1767 / June 2, 2006, whereby the National Information System on Higher Education (SNIES) is regulated and other provisions are issued.

National Institute for the Blind (INCI, for the Spanish original): Entity affiliated with the Ministry of National Education. A Colombian public entity that proposes policies, plans and programs that improve the quality of life of the blind and visually impaired as part of respect for differences and equal opportunities.

National Institute for the Deaf (INSOR, for the Spanish original): A Colombian public entity with legal capacity, administrative autonomy and independent ownership, affiliated with the Ministry of National Education through Decree 1823/72 and restructured with Decree 2009 / August 14, 1997.

Its roles include: 1) Advising the national, departmental and municipal governments on making policies, plans, programs and projects for the all-round development of the hearing impaired through education. 2) Nationally promoting and leading research processes on the problem of hearing impairment and serving as a center of information and disclosure, statistics and guidance. 3) Ensuring the quality of education for the hearing impaired, for the achievement of their goals, and the best moral, spiritual, affective, intellectual, and physical education of this population. 4) Ensuring the adequate coverage of the public education service for the hearing impaired, with the participation of regional entities, society and families. 5) Promoting and coordinating the execution of inter-sectoral prevention and care plans that permit the all-round development of the hearing impaired.

National Inter-sectoral Commission for Higher Education Quality Assurance (CONACES, for the Spanish original): A government organization connected to the Ministry of National Education, that has the main roles of coordinating and guiding quality assurance of higher education and evaluating fulfillment of the requirements for the creation of higher education institutions, their transformation and redefinition of their academic programs.

References:
- Article 39 of Decree 4675 / December 28, 2006, whereby the structure of the Ministry of National Education is amended and other provisions are issued.

National Science and Technology System: A set of programs, strategies and activities designed to consolidate the development of science, technology and innovation in order to contribute to the country's social and economic development. This system promotes a new corporate culture based on the evaluation of human resources, the development of creativity and knowledge, corporate cooperation, and long-term vision. It also supports the modernization processes, strengthens the research infrastructure, motivates private investment and encourages interaction between technology centers, companies and universities.

References:
- Colombian Institute for the Development of Science and Technology Francisco José De Caldas (COLCIENCIAS), Science, Culture and Communications Division.

Origin of the institution: According to their origin, the higher education institutions are classified as follows: State or public, private or solidarity economy.

References:
- Article 23 of Law 30 / December 28, 1992, whereby the public service of higher education is organized.

Preparatory cycles: Organization of higher education in sequential and complementary cycles. Each of which provides an all-round education corresponding to the cycle and leads to a qualification that permits the exercise of a profession corresponding to the education obtained and continuation of the following cycle. The first cycle —which corresponds to professional technical education— is aimed at generating skills and intellectual development, such as aptitudes, skills and abilities by teaching the technical knowledge required for work in an activity, in specific areas of the productive sector and services sector. The second cycle —which corresponds to technological education— offers basic common training that is based on and appropriates scientific knowledge and theoretical understanding to develop innovative and intelligent thinking with the capacity to design, build, execute, control, transform and operate the means and processes that promote the problem-solving required by country's productive sector and services sector. The third cycle corresponds to professional education and complements the second cycle in the respective area of knowledge in coherence with the theoretical foundations and methodological proposal of the profession, and makes explicit the principles and purposes that orientate it from a comprehensive perspective, considering aspects including the characteristics and skills that the future professionals are expected to have. This cycle involves scientific and technical knowledge.

References:
- Article 3 of Law 749 / July 19, 2002, whereby the public service of higher education is organized into the categories of technological and professional technical education, and other provisions are issued.

- Article 10 of Decree 2216 / August 6, 2003, whereby the requirements are established for redefining and changing the academic nature of public and private, technology and professional technical institutions.

Professional education: Education that offers educational programs or training in vocations, professions or disciplines; or specializations, master's degrees, doctorates or post-doctorate programs. Universities are the institutions currently recognized as such and those that accredit their performance with universal criteria in the following activities: scientific or technological research, academic education in professions or disciplines, and the production, development and transition of knowledge and of universal and national culture (Law 30/1993).

Professional technical education: Education that provides educational programs in operational and practical vocations and specialization in their respective field of action, without detriment to the humanistic aspects of this level (Law 30 / 1993).

Professional technical institutions: Higher education institutions that are characterized by their vocation and identity expressed in the fields of knowledge and work in technical activities, duly based on the nature of the knowledge, where their education must ensure interaction between intellectual, practical and operational elements and technical knowledge. These institutions may offer and develop education programs up to professional level only for preparatory cycles and in the areas of engineering, information technology and administration, provided that they are derived from the professional technical and technological education programs that they provide, and with prior compliance with the legal requirements. They may also provide and develop specialization programs in their respective field of action.

References:
- Article 17 of Law 30 / December 28, 1992, whereby the public service of higher education is organized.

- Article 1 of Law 749 / July 19, 2002, whereby the public service of higher education is organized into the categories of technological and professional technical education.

Quality Assurance System: Through the Higher Education Quality Assurance System (SACES, for the Spanish original), academic programs and institutions are assessed on two occasions: once on a mandatory basis, upon their creation; and the other on a voluntary basis through high quality accreditation. For their creation, they must demonstrate fulfillment of the requirements established in Decree 1478/1994 in the case of private institutions; and in Law 30/1992 in the case of public institutions. Regarding academic programs, from the time they are created, they must comply with 15 minimum quality conditions. This is an essential requirement for them to be granted the qualification certification for seven years, and its renewal is subject to a process of verification and monitoring.

It is the responsibility of the Ministry of National Education to grant the qualification certification by means of a duly motivated administrative act that orders the respective incorporation into the National Information System on Higher Education (SNIES, for the Spanish original) and allocation of the corresponding code.

Accreditation is voluntary and is comprised of an act whereby the state adopts and discloses the academic peers' recognition of an organization's verification of the quality of higher education institutions or their

academic programs, their organization and operation, and the fulfillment of their social role. For an academic program or institution to be eligible for the accreditation, it must first have achieved the qualification certification granted by the Ministry of National Education.

References:
- Article 1 of Decree 2904 / December 31, 1994, which regulates Articles 53 and 54 of Law 30/1992. Colombia has the National Accreditation System created by Law 30/1992 with the main objective to assure society that the institutions that form part of the system meet the highest quality requirements and achieve their aims and objectives.

From the start, this process has been closely linked to the idea of autonomy and self-regulation, complemented by the accountability required from higher education by the different social sectors. The accreditation model prepared by the council is derived from an ideal of higher education, and aims to coordinate the universal references with the specific references defined by the mission and the institutional project.

Qualification certification: Recognition by the state of fulfillment of the minimum quality conditions for the appropriate operation of higher education programs. This recognition is valid for seven (7) years and is granted by the Ministry of National Education through an administrative act. A qualification certification is required to provide and develop a higher education academic program.

References:
- Articles 22 and 25 of Decree 2566 / September 10, 2003, whereby the minimum conditions of quality are defined and the guidelines to obtain the qualification certification are established.

"Quality Access to Higher Education" (ACCES, for the Spanish original) project: A project led by ICETEX with the aim to facilitate access to higher education for vulnerable young people through relevant, quality programs with flexible funding. The project aims to grant loans to more than 100,000 students in undergraduate education and prioritizes technological and technical professional education.

Regional Centers of Higher Education (CERES, for the Spanish original): Strategy for the higher education institutions to provide relevant and high quality programs for socially or geographical marginalized areas. They are conceived as a partnership between the Colombian government, departmental and local governments, civil society, the production sector and academia in order to generate opportunities of access to higher education.

School dropouts: Students' abandonment of the school system caused by a combination of factors that arise inside the system as well as in social, family and personal contexts and their environment. The intra-annual dropout rate only takes into account the number of students who leave school during the school year, and it is added to the inter-annual dropout rate, which calculates the students who dropout at the end of the school year.

Self-assessment: Critical and in-depth process of self-assessment or internal review carried out by the academic programs or institutions to verify their conditions of quality, whereby they assess the achievements and mistakes made during a period in processes as well as results in order to build and start improvement plans for excellence. Self-assessment starts with the mission and educational project, since it aims to maintain the characteristics of the institution or program. (Article 1 of CESU Agreement 6/1995). It is an ongoing, interactive and thoughtful process that establishes the strengths and weaknesses of the academic processes and institutions, facilitating continuous improvement. It is framed in the concept of self-regulation, which allows the university to assume autonomous responsibility to build its own destiny through action for change and continuous quality improvement, based on the informed and responsible decision of the members of the university community to achieve the mission and vision established in the educational project.

Skill: A skill is a process through which tasks and activities are carried out effectively and efficiently.

Specializations: Postgraduate programs for the qualification of professional practice and the development of competencies that facilitate continuing education in the same vocation, profession, discipline, or similar or complementary areas.

References:
- Article 3 of Decree 1001 / April 3, 2006, whereby the offer of postgraduate programs is organized and other provisions are issued.

State exams: Official academic exams for the purposes of: a) testing the minimum levels of aptitudes and knowledge; b) verifying knowledge and abilities for issuing qualifications to graduates of programs without valid authorization; c) issuing certifications on the approval or rejection of courses carried out in institutions in dissolution, where the legal capacity has been suspended or canceled; and d) standardizing and validating qualifications of higher education studies carried out abroad when deemed appropriate in the opinion of the CESU.

References:
- Article 27 of Law 30 / December 28, 1992, whereby the public service of higher education is organized.

Study plan: The structured system of the mandatory, essential and optional areas with their respective subjects which form part of the educational establishments' curricula. The study plan must contain at least the following aspects:

a) The intention and identification of the contents, topics and problems of each area, indicating the corresponding educational activities.

b) The distribution of time and sequences of the educational process, indicating in which grade and academic period the different activities will be implemented.

c) The achievements, competencies and knowledge that the students must reach and acquire by the end of each period of the school year in each area and grade, as defined in the Institutional Education Project in the framework of the technical curricular standards issued by the Ministry of National Education. It will also include the criteria and procedures to assess the learning, performance and development of the students' capacity.

d) The general design of special support plans for students with learning difficulties.

e) The applicable methodology for each one of the areas, indicating the use of teaching material, school texts, laboratories, audiovisual support, educational IT or any other medium that guides or supports teaching.

f) Performance indicators and quality targets that permit institutional assessment.

Technological education: Offers educational programs in vocations, academic education programs in professions or disciplines, and specialization programs (Law 30 / 1993).

Technology institutions: Higher education institutions that are characterized by their vocation and identity expressed in their technological fields of knowledge and professions with a scientific or research basis. These institutions may offer and develop education programs up to professional level only for preparatory cycles and in the areas of engineering, information technology and administration, provided that they are derived from the technological education programs that they provide, and with prior compliance with the legal requirements. They may also provide and develop specialization programs in their respective field of action.

References:
- Article 2 of Law 749 / July 19, 2002, whereby the public service of higher education is organized into the categories of technological and professional technical education.

Transfer students: Students who withdrew from an academic period to continue their studies in another period, campus, educational institution, municipality or country, or in the private sector. Although they no longer from part of the academic period, they continue to be part of the education system because they continue their studies.

Universities Higher education institutions that carry out the following activities with universal criteria: scientific or technological research; academic education in professions or disciplines; and the generation, development and transition of knowledge and of universal and national culture. These institutions are authorized to provide education programs on vocations, professions or disciplines, specializations, master's degrees, doctorates and post-doctorate programs pursuant to the law. Similarly, these institutions have the power to provide education programs on vocations, professions or disciplines; specializations, master's degrees, doctorates and post-doctorate programs pursuant to current law.

University community: The group of students, teachers, graduates, administrative and services staff, and other people who are part of higher education work.

University institutions or technology schools: Higher education institutions legally authorized to provide vocational education programs, academic education programs in professions or disciplines, and specialization programs in their respective fields of action.

References:
- Article 213 of Law 115 / February 8, 1994, whereby the General Education Law is issued.
- Article 18 of Law 30 / December 28, 1992, whereby the public service of higher education is organized.

Validation: Recognition by the Colombian government of a higher education qualification awarded by a foreign institution, indicating its equivalent qualification and denomination in the Colombian system.

Voluntary accreditation: Type of accreditation in which higher education institutions commit to achieve the highest quality standards through a voluntary process. It is temporary and very demanding. It is granted for periods of three to ten years for programs and of six to twelve years for institutions.

ACRONYMS

ACCES Acceso con Calidad a la Educación Superior (Quality Access to Higher Education)

ACFA Asociación Colombiana de Facultades de Arquitectura (Colombian Association of Schools of Architecture)

ACFO Asociación Colombiana de Facultades de Odontología (Colombian Association of Dentistry Schools)

ACICAPI Asociación Colombiana de Instituciones Técnicas Profesionales (Colombian Association of Professional Technical Institutions)

ACIET Asociación Colombiana de Instituciones de Educación Superior con Formación Técnica y/o Tecnológica (Colombian Association of Technical and/or Technology Higher Education Institutions)

ACIS Asociación Colombiana de Ingenieros de Sistemas (Colombian Association of Computer Engineers)

ACIUP Asociación Colombiana de Instituciones Universitarias Privadas (Colombian Association of Private University Institutions

ACOFACIEN Asociación Colombiana de Facultades de Ciencias (Colombian Association of Schools of Science)

ACOFAEN Asociación Colombiana de Facultades de Enfermería (Colombian Association of Nursing Schools)

ACOFANUD Asociación Colombiana de Facultades de Nutrición (Colombian Association of Schools of Nutrition)

ACOFARTES Asociación Colombiana de Facultades y Programas de Artes (Colombian Association of Art Schools and Programs)

ACOFI Asociación Colombiana de Facultades de Ingeniería (Colombian Association of Schools of Engineering)

ACOLFACTO Asociación Colombiana de Facultades de Terapia Ocupacional (Colombian Association of Occupational Therapy Schools)

ACOVEZ Asociación Colombiana de Médicos Veterinarios y Zootecnistas (Colombian Association of Veterinarians and Zootechnicians)

AFACOM Asociación Colombiana de Facultades y Programas Universitarios de Comunicación (Colombian Association of University Communications Programs and Schools)

AFADECO Asociación Colombiana de Facultades, Programas y Departamentos de Economía (Colombian Association of Economics Schools, Programs and Departments)

ASCOFADE Asociación Colombiana de Facultades de Educación (Colombian Association of Schools of Education)

ASCOFADE Asociación Colombiana de Facultades de Educación (Colombian Association of Schools of Education)

ASCOFAFI	Asociación Colombiana de Facultades de Fisioterapia (Colombian Association of Physiotherapy Schools)
ASCOFAME	Asociación Colombiana de Facultades de Medicina (Colombian Association of Schools of Medicine)
ASCOFAPSI	Asociación Colombiana de Facultades de Psicología (Colombian Association of Schools of Psychology)
ASCOLFA	Asociación Colombiana de Facultades de Administración (Colombian Association of Business Schools)
ASCUN	Asociación Colombiana de Universidades (Association of Colombian Universities)
ASENOFT	Asociación Nacional de Instituciones de Educación para el Trabajo y el Desarrollo Humano (National Association of Institutions of Education for Work and Human Development)
ASFACOP	Asociación Colombiana de Facultades de Contaduría Pública (Colombian Association of Public Accounting Schools)
ASOFON	Asociación Colombiana de Facultades de Fonoaudiología (Colombian Association of Phonoaudiology Schools)
CERES	Centros Regionales de Educación Superior (Regional Centers of Higher Education)
CESU	Consejo Nacional de Educación Superior (National Council of Higher Education)
CNA	Consejo Nacional de Acreditación (National Accreditation Council)
COLCIENCIAS	Departamento Administrativo para el Desarrollo de la Ciencia y la Tecnología (Administrative Department of Science, Technology and Innovation)
CONACES	Comisión Nacional para el Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Educación Superior (National Inter-sectoral Commission for Higher Education Quality Assurance)
DANE	Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (National Administrative Department of Statistics)
FODESEP	Fondo de Desarrollo de la Educación Superior (Higher Education Development Fund)
GCR	Gross coverage rate
HEIs	Higher education institutions
ICETEX	Instituto Colombiano de Crédito Educativo y Estudios Técnicos en el Exterior (Colombian Institute for Educational Credit and Technical Studies Abroad)
ICFES	Instituto Colombiano para el Fomento de la Educación Superior (Colombian Institute for the Promotion of Higher Education)
ICT	Information and communications technologies
MEN	Ministerio de Educación Nacional (Ministry of National Education)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OLE	Observatorio Laboral para la Educación (Labor Observatory for Education)

SABER 11	Skills assessment exam for graduation from 11th grade for all high school students, which is a requirement to access higher education
SABER PRO	Higher Education Quality Exams (formerly known as ECAES)
SAC	Sistema de Aseguramiento de la Calidad (Quality Assurance System)
SACES	Sistema de Información para el Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Educación Superior (Higher Education Quality Assurance System)
ScienTI	Sistema Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología (National Science and Technology System)
SECAB	Secretaría Ejecutiva del Convenio Andrés Bello (Executive Secretariat of the Andrés Bello Agreement)
SGR	Sistema General de Regalías (General Royalties System)
SIET	Sistema de Información de Educación para el Trabajo (Professional Education Information System)
SNA	Sistema Nacional de Acreditación (National Accreditation System)
SNIES	Sistema Nacional de Información de la Educación Superior (National Information System on Higher Education)
SPADIES	Sistema de Prevención y Análisis de la Deserción en las Instituciones de Educación Superior (System for the Prevention and Analysis of the Dropout Rate in Higher Education Institutions)
ST+I	Science, technology and innovation
STIA	Science, technology and innovation activities
SUE	Sistema Universitario Estatal (State University System)
SUE	Sistema Universitario Estatal (State University System)
T&T	Technical and technology institutions
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VES	Viceministerio de Educación Superior (Vice-Ministry of Higher Education)

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