

# CNA

Ministry of National Education  
Republic of Colombia

## GUIDE 02

### INITIAL CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMS AND HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION .....	5
INTRODUCTION .....	6
1. PURPOSE.....	7
2. ACTIVITIES OF THE INITIAL CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT STAGE.....	9
2.1 Request for Initial Conditions .....	11
2.2 Verification of the request to assess initial conditions .....	11
2.3 Visit to assess initial conditions.....	11
2.4 Report of the visit to assess initial conditions.....	12
2.5 Opinion on the assessment of initial conditions .....	12
3. INITIAL CONDITIONS OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMS.....	14
4. INITIAL CONDITIONS OF INSTITUTIONS.....	21
4.1 MULTICAMPUS INSTITUTIONS.....	26
4.1.1 Request for initial conditions assessment.....	26
4.1.2 Verification of the request to assess initial conditions.....	26
4.1.3 Visit to assess initial conditions .....	26
4.1.4 Report of the visit to assess initial conditions .....	27
4.1.5 Opinion on the initial conditions assessment .....	27
5. SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION AND MASTER TABLES.....	33
6. DEFINITIONS.....	33

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# INTRODUCTION

The National Accreditation Council, throughout its 25 years of continuous operation, has conceptualized and built an accreditation model aimed at higher education institutions as part of a system that respects and recognizes university autonomy, diversity and the particularities of institutional contexts, which has allowed the development of guidelines for undergraduate academic programs, master's and doctoral programs, medical-surgical specializations and higher education institutions. As part of the updating of the Higher Education Quality Assurance System undertaken by the Ministry of National Education with the support of the National Higher Education Council (CESU), the National Accreditation Council (CNA), the National Intersectoral Commission for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (CONACES, for the Spanish original), the Permanent Quality Commission and the national academic community, the updating of the high quality accreditation model was consolidated through Agreement 02/July 1, 2020 of the National Higher Education Council, and, previously by the amendment of Decree 1075/2015 through Decree 843/2020.

The updating of the high quality accreditation model incorporates the most relevant international trends in accreditation matters and the recommendations provided by leading national and international organizations in these matters, especially those contained in the external assessment reports received in compliance with good practices for certifying agencies, carried out by the National Accreditation Council before the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE, for the Spanish original) and the Ibero-American Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (RIACES, for the Spanish original). Similarly, it is based on the history and processes of assessment of high quality in the country, building on what is already in place, recognizing the diversity of institutions, the different modalities and levels of academic programs, and the standardization of the Higher Education Quality Assurance System.

For the purposes of implementation of Agreement 02/2020 by the National Accreditation Council and the internalization by higher education institutions, and in general by the academic and scientific community, procedural guidelines must be developed to guide the accreditation processes in their different stages and enable their implementation by institutions within their communities and provide them with elements for the preparation of the documents that must support the specific stages that the institution shall go through. In order to facilitate the work of the institutions, the guides have been summarized in four documents:

- **Guide 01** refers to the accreditation procedure and explains the steps and timelines.
- **Guide 02** provides guidelines for the initial conditions assessment of academic programs and institutions.
- **Guide 03** provides guidelines for the self-assessment of academic programs and institutions.
- **Guide 04** provides guidelines for carrying out assessment and follow-up visits regarding the improvement plans of both academic programs and institutions.

This guide, "**Initial conditions assessment of academic programs and higher education institutions**", from the perspective of quality assurance, provides guidelines for institutions to prepare themselves to undergo the initial conditions stage in order to begin high quality accreditation processes.

The National Accreditation Council explicitly recognizes the different areas and people of the higher education sector, the Minister, the Vice-Minister of Higher Education, the Directorate of Quality, the National Council of Higher Education, the CONACES Chambers, and the Permanent Quality Commission, among others, for their support throughout this process of updating the high quality accreditation model.

# INTRODUCTION

The high quality accreditation of academic programs and institutions [1]<sup>1</sup>, aims to establish whether they meet the highest standards of quality and that they achieve their purposes and objectives, considering the legal nature, identity, mission, type, training levels and modalities; this recognition is granted by the Ministry of National Education, after the completion of the assessment process conducted by the National Accreditation Council (CNA) for high quality accreditation purposes with the National Accreditation Council.

The accreditation process was initially regulated by Decree 2904/1994, which regulated Articles 53 and 54 of Law 30/1992 and established in Article 3 that "The accreditation process begins with the self-assessment, followed by the external assessment performed by academic peers, followed by the comprehensive assessment performed by the National Accreditation Council and ends, if the outcome is positive, with the act of accreditation by the State." However, in the ordinary course of activities of the National Accreditation Council, it became evident that the institutions and academic programs required guidance before starting accreditation processes, so that they could move forward to self-assessment for accreditation purposes while being informed of the National Accreditation System and the high quality accreditation model in order to prepare to carry out a self-assessment process in the best conditions; thus, the initial conditions assessment stage was established.

As an important part of the updating of the accreditation model, through Agreement 02/2020 of the National Council of Higher Education (CESU), it was established that the initial conditions assessment of academic programs and higher education institutions had to be an integral part of the accreditation process, and for this purpose the Ministry of National Education managed the issuance of Decree 843 [2]<sup>2</sup>/June 13, 2020, which amended Decree 1075/2015, which states that "The procedure for accreditation of both academic programs and institutions shall be carried out through the following stages: (i) initial conditions assessment, (ii) self-assessment, (iii) external assessment by academic peers, (iv) comprehensive assessment, and (v) issuance of the administrative act granting accreditation or providing recommendations for the institution". This decree also integrates the actors of the National Accreditation System and establishes the high quality accreditation model as the foundation of the system.

In this regard, the initial conditions are a set of qualities and requirements to be met by the institution or academic programs that voluntarily wish to apply for high quality accreditation and provide a consistent baseline that addresses the factors and characteristics of assessment defined in CESU Agreement 02/2020. The initial conditions assessment is carried out as part of the National Accreditation Council's function of guiding institutions in their self-assessment processes for accreditation purposes. For this purpose, the council members carry out the respective verification, which is not meant to be a complete assessment of the institution or its academic programs.

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[1] For all purposes, institutions are understood to be the higher education institutions, as well as all those authorized by law to offer and develop higher education academic programs.

[2] This decree adds Chapter 7 to Title 3 of Part 5 of Book 2 of Decree 1075/2015 - Single Regulatory Decree for the Education Sector.

# 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of the initial conditions assessment stage is to establish whether an academic program or a higher education institution that voluntarily aims to obtain high quality accreditation for the first time, has the potential to continue with the accreditation procedure.

The purpose of the initial conditions assessment is to have a preliminary overview of the dynamics and functioning of the institution as a whole, for which, considering the level of training and modality of the academic program, and the legal nature, identity, type and institutional mission, the degree of association between the different institutional conditions and strategies and the resources available for the proper performance of the functions of teaching, research, social outreach and internationalization are analyzed, using indicators that measure achievement of the teaching-learning processes by the students and indicators that measure the impact of the institutions in their different regional contexts.

It also allows the academic program or higher education institution to advance in the high quality accreditation procedure through the identification and validation of a culture of continuous improvement in the processes of self-regulation and self-assessment, as well as of its strengths and the implementation of the recommendations by the National Accreditation Council provided as part of the opinion issued in the initial conditions assessment.

Multicampus institutions may opt for multicampus institutional accreditation, for which purpose they shall submit a single document at the initial conditions assessment stage, in which the conditions set forth in Article 25 of Agreement 02/2020 are discussed, for districts and municipalities in special categories 1 and 2.

When the institution also has higher education academic offerings in municipalities in categories 3, 4, 5 or 6, in addition to the aforementioned document, it must submit the regionalization plan and the progress thereof. The National Accreditation Council shall conduct the visit to assess initial conditions in the districts and municipalities of special categories 1 and 2 and determine the relevance of said visit in those of different categories [3]<sup>3</sup>.


However, if the main campus of the multicampus institution is located in a municipality in categories 3, 4, 5 or 6, a document must be submitted discussing the initial conditions provided in Article 25 of Agreement 02/2020, in which the districts and municipalities of Special categories 1 and 2 shall be incorporated, if the institution has an academic offering of higher education in these categories.

In the case of accreditation by place of development, the multicampus institution shall submit the information corresponding to the place(s) of development it intends to accredit.

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[3] Subsection b) of Article 7 of CESU Agreement 02/2020.

**ACTIVITIES  
OF THE INITIAL  
CONDITIONS  
ASSESSMENT STAGE**



## 2. ACTIVITIES OF THE INITIAL CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT STAGE

The initial conditions assessment is the first stage to be carried out in order to access the National Accreditation System and is applicable when the institution decides to apply for the accreditation of academic programs or of the institution itself for the first time.

The initial conditions assessment includes five activities, as follows:

- (I) Request for initial conditions assessment by the institution's Registered Agent.
- (II) Verification of the request for initial conditions assessment.
- (III) Visit to assess initial conditions.
- (IV) Report of the visit to assess initial conditions.
- (V) Opinion of the initial conditions assessment.

The initial conditions assessment stage for academic programs and institutions begins with the request by the Institution's registered agent in which he/she expresses the desire to initiate the accreditation process and ends with an opinion issued by the Council indicating compliance with the initial conditions, when it is demonstrated that the academic program or institution has met the conditions to advance to the self-assessment stage for the purpose of high quality accreditation, or an opinion of strengths and aspects to be improved has been provided when it is considered that the academic program or institution does not fully comply with such conditions [4]<sup>4</sup>. The sequence of this activity is described in Figure 1.

If the General Chamber of the National Accreditation Council considers that the institution or the academic program does not meet the conditions, it shall confidentially provide the institution's Registered Agent with recommendations for improvement, and the institution may file a new request for an initial conditions assessment, in which in addition to the information related to the aspects established in Articles 24 and 25 of CESU Agreement 02/2020, it must submit the documentation that provides evidence of the actions taken to address the aspects to be improved contained in the opinion issued by the National Accreditation Council in the previous request [5]<sup>5</sup>.

The request for an initial conditions assessment shall be submitted by the institution's Registered Agent through the Higher Education Quality Assurance System (SACES-CNA, for the Spanish original) or its equivalent, indicating the intention of initiating the high quality accreditation procedure, either for one of its academic programs or for the institution [6]<sup>6</sup>.

Undergraduate academic programs of institutions with current high quality institutional accreditation do not require the initial conditions assessment [7].<sup>7</sup>

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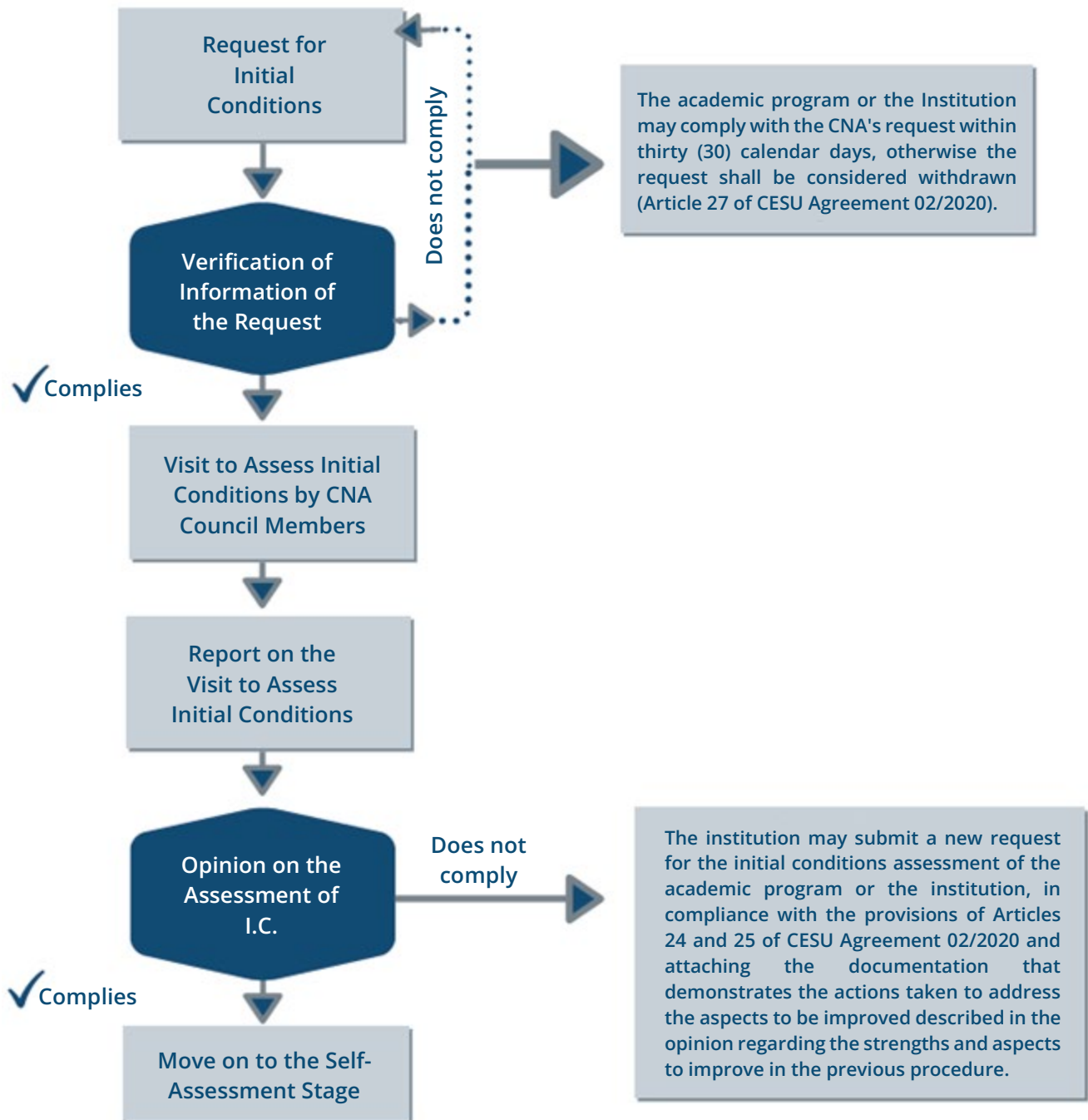
[4] Article 30 of CESU Agreement 02/2020.

[5] Article 30 of CESU Agreement 02/2020.

[6] Article 26 of CESU Agreement 02/2020.

[7] Paragraph 1 of Article 26 of CESU Agreement 02/2020.

**Figure 1. Initial conditions assessment stage**



All institutions, with or without institutional accreditation, must undergo the initial conditions assessment stage for the first-time accreditation of postgraduate programs [8]<sup>8</sup>.

If the institutional or academic program's high quality accreditation expires without the corresponding self-assessment report having been submitted for renewal, the institution must once again request the initial conditions

[8] In the case of undergraduate programs of institutions with high quality accreditation, compliance with the requirements must be guaranteed.

assessment [9]<sup>9</sup>. In the case of academic programs that have a single qualified registration, for the first time high quality accreditation, the initial conditions shall be assessed jointly and simultaneously.

Academic programs that have high quality accreditation and are subject to modification due to an extension of the place of development or due to a single qualification certification in which new places of development and/or modalities are included, shall not require the initial conditions assessment for the new places of development and/or modalities.

In the case of academic programs designed based on preparatory curricular cycles, the institution must request the initial conditions assessment for each and every one of the programs that make up the training proposal by cycles, and not separately.

## **2.1 Request for Initial Conditions**

The Registered Agent of the higher education institution shall submit the request for the initial conditions assessment through the Higher Education Quality Assurance System (SACES-CNA) or its equivalent, stating the intention to initiate the high quality accreditation procedure, either of one or more of its academic programs or of the institution, attaching the appropriate information to address the matters set forth in Articles 24 and 25 of CESU Agreement 02/2020, and in the guides or technical documents established by the National Accreditation Council [10]<sup>10</sup>.

## **2.2 Verification of the request to assess initial conditions**

The National Accreditation Council shall verify, within the following ten (10) business days, whether the information referred to in Articles 24 and 25 of CESU Agreement 02/2020 is complete, and within the same term may request additional information.

If the institution of higher education does not comply with the request of the National Accreditation Council within the following thirty (30) calendar days, the request shall be deemed withdrawn, unless before the expiration of this term the institution requests an extension for up to the same term, which shall be granted one time only [11]<sup>11</sup>.

## **2.3 Visit to assess initial conditions**

Once the verification of the request for the initial conditions assessment has been completed, the National Accreditation Council shall appoint, within the following fifteen (15) business days, the council members who shall carry out the corresponding visit, which shall be carried out upon arrangement of the dates and agenda with the institution's Registered Agent. The visit must be carried out within thirty (30) calendar days following the date of appointment of the council members responsible for the visit.

The initial conditions assessment of academic programs, for the first time, shall be carried out at all places of development.

In the case of multicampus institutional accreditation, the National Accreditation Council shall visit the places of development located in municipalities or districts of Special categories 1 and 2 and determine whether those in different categories are relevant.

The initial conditions assessment can be carried out in person or using digital technologies according to the recommendation of the National Accreditation Council and subject to acceptance by the institution.

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[9] Paragraph 2 of Article 26 of CESU Agreement 02/2020.

[10] Article 26 of CESU Agreement 02/2020.

[11] Article 27 of CESU Agreement 02/2020.

In the initial conditions assessment visit, both in person and using digital technologies, the institution must provide the council members with all the logistical support and information required.

Logistical support includes:

- An office or similar space, computer, Internet connection and meeting table.
- Availability of the institution's staff for interviews with the commission, as agreed upon in the agenda.

If the initial conditions assessment visit is carried out using information and communication technologies, the Technical Secretariat of the National Accreditation Council shall make the respective agreement with the appointed council members and the institution, in relation to times and mechanisms of interaction, as well as the platform to be used and the access links.

The agenda of the visit must include at least the following activities:

- Meeting with the President and Directors, which includes a general presentation of the institution.
- Interviews with students and professors.
- Interviews with employers and graduates.
- Tour of the facilities and visit to the premises.
- Private work meeting of the council members who conducted the visit.
- Final meeting with the President and Directors in which the council members shall verbally report general aspects on the initial conditions assessment.

When the visit is conducted using information and communication technologies, the tour of the facilities and the visit to the premises can be carried out by means of videos sent in advance or by using 3D technologies that facilitate the tour.

## **2.4 Report of the visit to assess initial conditions**

The council members who carried out the initial conditions assessment visit shall prepare and submit the respective report to the National Accreditation Council within ten (10) business days following the date of the visit, through the Higher Education Quality Assurance System (SACES-CNA) or its equivalent.

## **2.5 Opinion on the assessment of initial conditions**

The National Accreditation Council shall issue an opinion of compliance with initial conditions if it finds that the academic program or institution meets the conditions to move on to the self-assessment stage for the purpose of high quality accreditation, or an opinion regarding strengths and aspects for improvement if it considers that the academic program or institution does not comply with such conditions. The respective opinion shall be reported to the institution's Registered Agent through the Higher Education Quality Assurance System (SACES-CNA) or its equivalent within five (5) calendar days following the date of issue.

If within one year following the date of communication of the opinion of compliance with initial conditions the institution does not submit the self-assessment report for the purpose of high quality accreditation of the process filed, it must once again request the initial conditions assessment [12]<sup>12</sup>.

If the institution or the academic program does not fully comply with the initial conditions, it may file a new request for an initial conditions assessment in which, in addition to the information related to the aspects set forth in Articles 24 and 25 of CESU Agreement 02/2020, it must submit the documentation that demonstrates the actions taken to address the aspects to be improved contained in the opinion issued by the National Accreditation Council in the previous procedure.

No appeals may be filed against the opinion issued by the National Accreditation Council [13]<sup>13</sup>.

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[12] Paragraph 2 of Article 27 of CESU Agreement 02/2020.

[13] Article 30 of CESU Agreement 02/2020.

# **INITIAL CONDITIONS OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMS**



### 3. INITIAL CONDITIONS OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Article 24 of CESU Agreement 02/2020 states that: "The initial conditions assessment of academic programs consists of the analysis of the following aspects of the institution:

- a)** Verify that the program is accreditable pursuant to the provisions of subsection a) of section 2.3 of Article 2 of the Agreement.
- b)** Have a clearly formulated mission that is consistent with its legal nature, identity and type, and that is of public knowledge. The mission must be reflected in the institution's academic activities, and it must be possible to assess its achievements.
- c)** Be consistent with the institution's educational purposes with regard to the different modalities of academic offerings.
- d)** Have qualified and dedicated professors with contracts in a number that is consistent with the number of enrolled students, with the planned learning outcomes, with the educational, academic, teaching, scientific, cultural and extension activities, with the pedagogical strategies used and the level and modality of the academic program.
- e)** Have strategies in place that enable demonstrating the added value provided by the academic program and the relative contribution of the institution, as defined by the Colombian Institute for the Promotion of Higher Education (ICFES) or the competent entity, and evidence of their incorporation in actions for improvement.
- f)** Demonstrate a tradition in terms of academic, scientific, creative and/or innovative productivity and/or in the appropriation of technology by its professors, in its insertion in academic and scientific networks, and in its effective impact in the region and the country, in accordance with the declarations of each academic program. In the case of professional technical and technological academic programs, the academic productivity of its professors shall be related, at least, to technological and innovative developments aimed at solving problems within the respective field of the academic program, at saving efforts to perform a task, or at optimizing aspects associated with human activities.
- g)** Demonstrate national and international interaction that has led to achievement by the academic community of joint actions with national and foreign communities, in accordance with the legal nature, identity, mission and type of the institution.
- h)** Have policies in place that drive the performance of professors and students in a global environment, so as to strengthen conditions for the development of inter - and multi-cultural competencies in other languages.
- i)** Demonstrate spaces for the participation of professors, students and graduates in decision-making processes and their influence on the continuous improvement of the academic program, in accordance with the legal nature of the institution and in accordance with the bylaws and other regulations.
- j)** Demonstrate the use, relevance and updating of the physical and technological infrastructure, in accordance with the legal nature of the institution and the planned learning outcomes of the educational, academic, teaching, scientific, cultural and extension activities.
- k)** Maintain and demonstrate its financial sustainability, supported by public and audited information; have financial planning that enables it to cover the requirements arising from its various planning and improvement needs to adequately use the resources it has available, in a manner that is consistent with its legal nature, identity, mission and type.
- l)** Demonstrate the implementation of a learning outcomes assessment model supported by the internal quality assurance system and the strategies and actions undertaken to use such assessments for the continuous improvement of the academic program.

- m)** Demonstrate student results in research, innovation and creation activities derived from their participation in a set of curricular activities that enables viewing their advancements in the area of knowledge and in the academic program's educational process.
- n)** Demonstrate the implementation of the institutional well-being model in the academic community, demonstrating its commitment to diversity, inclusion and equity in a manner that creates conditions to fulfill various requirements other than those arising from the academic dynamics.
- o)** Demonstrate a culture of self-assessment and self-regulation; and have an internal quality assurance system in place to support decision-making for the continuous improvement of the academic program.
- p)** No penalties must have been imposed either on the institution or its directors, registered agents, council members, managers, statutory auditors or any other person who exercises management and/or control in the higher education institution, in the latest five (5) years, for non-compliance with higher education regulations, and the institution must not have any preventive or special supervision measures currently in place.
- q)** The institution must be up-to-date with the information requirements for the National Information System for Higher Education (SNIES) or the system serving as such, pursuant to current regulations".

An academic program is accreditable if it is authorized to be offered and provided by the institution and has been operating for at least eight (8) continuous years, which can be verified in the National Information System for Higher Education (SNIES, for the Spanish original). The academic programs of the professional technical, technological, university, master, medical-surgical specialty and doctoral levels of education are considered to be accreditable.

Programs structured by preparatory cycles may enter the National Accreditation System once the qualification certification of each of the levels that make up the training proposal has been achieved and when each level meets the requirements to be accreditable.

Higher education academic programs that require educational practices as part of the framework of the teaching-service relationship shall be subject to prior opinion and assessment of this relationship, in accordance with the regulations in force for such purpose.

In the request for an initial conditions assessment of academic programs, the documentary information listed in Table 1 must be attached, identifying the source where it can be found.

**The institutional information** listed in the table may identify the SNIES, the SACES, and the URL of the institutional website, among others, as a source and must be updated in each request for the initial conditions assessment submitted by the institution to the National Accreditation Council.

**The specific program information** listed in Table 2 must be completed each time the request for accreditation of an academic program is submitted for the first time.

In any case, although this information must be reported, in the case of places of development that have already successfully completed the initial conditions assessment process, the National Accreditation Council shall not conduct a visit to assess such conditions, notwithstanding its authority to verify the completeness of the information reported by the institution as provided in aforementioned Table 2.<sup>14</sup>

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[14] Subsection a) Section 2 (2.3) of CESU Agreement 02/2020.

**Table 1. Documentary information and source**

DOCUMENTATION	DESCRIPTION	SOURCE
<p>General Aspects</p>	<p>Institutional information containing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SNIES Code; Name; Acronym (if its use is considered in the general bylaws); Origin.</li> </ul>	
	<p>Administrative act by which the institution's legal status is recognized or the regulatory provision that determined the creation of the institution. If applicable, administrative acts authorizing the institutional redefinition and/or change of academic nature, or regulatory provisions that determine a new academic nature.</p>	
	<p>Updated certificate of existence and legal representation, issued within the past month.</p>	
	<p>Statement by the Registered Agent indicating that no penalties have been imposed in the last 5 years on the institution, nor its directors, registered agent, council members, managers, statutory auditor, or anyone exercising the management and/or oversight of the institution, nor are there any preventive or special supervision measures currently in place.</p>	
<p>Internal regulations</p>	<p>General bylaws</p>	
	<p>The current faculty bylaws or the equivalent, and previous ones if they have been subject to amendments in the last 5 years.</p>	
	<p>The current student regulations or the equivalent, and previous ones if they have been subject to amendments in the last 5 years.</p>	
	<p>Organizational regime (Administrative and academic structure)</p>	
	<p>Institutional wellbeing regulations or their equivalent.</p>	
	<p>Good Governance Code or its equivalent.</p>	
	<p>Policies and regulations required in CESU Agreement 02/2020.</p>	

**Table 1. Documentary information and source**

<b>DOCUMENTATION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>SOURCE</b>
Academic aspects	Institutional Education Project or its equivalent.	
	Internal quality assurance system.	
	Academic offering, in which all the programs that are active in the SNIES are listed, including and highlighting the program(s) (by preparatory cycles) that are the object of the request for the initial conditions assessment.	
	Learning outcomes assessment model.	
	Evidence from academic value-added analysis	
	Information on professors' level of qualification, hours worked, academic, scientific, creative and/or innovative productivity and/or in the appropriation of technology, and inclusion in academic and scientific networks. For professional technical and technological programs, production related to technological development and innovation aimed at solving contextual problems.	
	Results of the implementation of the institutional wellbeing model.	
Institutional resources	Evidence of the use, relevance and updating of the physical and technological infrastructure.	
	Evidence of the use and updating of bibliographic resources	
	Financial reports	

**Table 2. Information on the academic program(s).**

DOCUMENTATION	DESCRIPTION	SOURCE
Information on the academic program	SNIES code(s) Name(s) Place(s) of development Degree(s) to be awarded Number of credits of each program Modality(ies) Level(s) of training	
Creation information	Internal regulations on creation and authorization to change name and degree to be awarded Number. Date of the regulations Issuing area	
Qualification certification information	SNIES code(s) Name(s) Place(s) of development Degree(s) to be awarded Number of credits of each program Modality(ies) Level(s) of education	
Qualification certification information	Qualification certification in force issued by the Ministry of National Education for the program(s) submitted by the institution for initial conditions assessment, containing the resolution number, date and expiration.	
General information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education project of the program or its equivalent.</li> <li>• Documents in which the curricular matters specific to the program(s) are recorded.</li> </ul> <p>Table listing, by program or academic unit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of professors, their type of contract, their hours dedicated to the program(s) submitted by the institution for the initial conditions assessment, levels of education and results of training, academic, teaching, cultural and outreach work.</li> <li>• Program learning outcomes, evidence of analysis and improvement plans implemented.</li> <li>• Number of students in the program.</li> <li>• Research groups of the program and listing of the productivity reported in their respective GroupLAC according to the nature and level of the Program.</li> <li>• Professors' scientific productivity, its impact on the quality of the program and evidence of national and international visibility and interaction.</li> <li>• Academic value added. Analysis and improvement plans implemented.</li> <li>• Results of the implementation of the strategies for monitoring and follow-up of graduates.</li> <li>• Results of program outreach activities.</li> </ul> <p>Description of the physical infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of areas, use, improvements and maintenance of the physical infrastructure available for the program(s).</li> <li>• Type of availability of each property (ownership or legal contract in force).</li> </ul>	

Program resources	<p>Description of the bibliographic resources relevant to the program(s) submitted by the institution for initial condition assessment and evidence of their use.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of physical degrees.</li> <li>• Characterization of the bibliographic resources available for the program(s), according to the learning objectives or skills to be developed in the program.</li> <li>•</li> <li>• Number of subscriptions to periodicals.</li> <li>• Evidence of use by students and faculty of the program(s).</li> </ul> <p>Description and evidence of the use of logistical resources available to the program(s) submitted by the institution for initial condition assessment. This must include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of use, updating and maintenance of educational resources and learning environments.</li> <li>• Internal and external communications services.</li> <li>• Evidence of use and access to information networks.</li> <li>• Platforms and others.</li> </ul>	
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# **INITIAL CONDITIONS OF INSTITUTIONS**



## 4. INITIAL CONDITIONS OF INSTITUTIONS

The initial conditions assessment of institutions is warranted in either of the following two cases:

- a)** Institutions that express their interest in carrying out the institutional accreditation procedure for the first time.
- b)** Institutions that express their interest in renewing institutional accreditation and wish to do so under the multicampus model. In this case, the initial conditions assessment stage shall apply to the places of development that were not visited in the previous accreditation(s).

Article 25 of CESU Agreement 02/2020 states that: “The initial conditions assessment for high quality accreditation of an institution consists of the analysis of the following aspects:

- a)** Having been in continuous operation for at least five (5) years in the institutional status under which accreditation is sought whenever the Ministry of National Education has authorized a change in its academic nature.
- b)** Having an administrative and academic structure in place, defined as a set of policies, relations, processes, positions, activities and information required to deploy the institution’s functions, demonstrating that it has in place at least the following: a) institutional governance and accountability, b) institutional policies, c) information management, and d) institutional architecture. These components support the strategies, plans and activities of the institution's activities in an effective manner.
- c)** Demonstrate the existence and implementation of a good governance code and actions that demonstrate governance conditions that are consistent with its legal nature, identity, mission and type.
- d)** Demonstrate a culture of self-assessment and self-regulation, and have an internal quality assurance system in place to support planning and decision-making for continuous improvement and the qualification certification and high quality accreditation process. It must have integrated information systems, assessment mechanisms and promotion actions.
- e)** Demonstrate the implementation of a learning outcomes assessment model supported by the internal quality assurance system and strategies and actions to use such assessments for the continuous improvement of curricular aspects.
- f)** The institutions that seek accreditation must operate under an integrated academic system with systematic interactions that enable a holistic and global institutional vision.
- g)** Demonstrate the incorporation of a research culture in its identity, mission and type, supported by professors whose profiles are consistent with the culture, and who consequently contribute to the development of research, technological development, innovation and/or creation projects.
- h)** The institution must be up-to-date with the information requirements for the National Information System for Higher Education (SNIES) or the system serving as such, pursuant to current regulations
- i)** No penalties must have been imposed either on the institution or its directors, registered agents, council members, managers, statutory auditors or any other person who exercises management and/or control in the higher education institution, in the latest five (5) years, for non-compliance with higher education regulations, and the institution must not have any preventive or special supervision measures currently in place”.

In the case of subsection (a), if an institution changes its nature, for example, from a university institution to a university, it must wait five years following the recognition of the new academic nature to be able to request an initial conditions assessment under the new academic nature.

In the case of subsection h), the institution must attach a communication stating that the SNIES information is up to date at the visit request date.

Likewise, a higher education institution is accreditable when it complies with the requirements established in subsections c) and d) of Article 34 of Agreement 02/2020:

**Table 3. Institutional information.**

DOCUMENTATION	DESCRIPTION	SOURCE
Communication from the institution's Registered Agent	<p>The communication shall be addressed to the National Accreditation Council and state:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The intention to initiate the institutional high quality accreditation procedure, indicating whether it is a multicampus institution or has concentrated its offerings in a single place of development.</li> <li>• That it is aware of the contents of the document with the guidelines for Institutional Accreditation.</li> <li>• That the institution complies with the initial conditions indicated in the aforementioned document, which are transcribed in this guide.</li> </ul>	
Information on legal aspects	<p>Recent certificate of existence and legal representation (issued within the past month)</p> <p>Administrative act by which the institution's legal status is recognized or the regulatory provision that determined the creation of the institution. If applicable, administrative acts authorizing the institutional redefinition and/or change of academic nature, or regulatory provisions that determine a new academic nature.</p> <p>Statement by the Registered Agent indicating that no penalties have been imposed in the last 5 years on the institution, nor its directors, registered agent, council members, managers, statutory auditor, or anyone exercising the management and/or oversight of the institution, nor are there any preventive or special supervision measures currently in place.</p> <p>Evidence that the institution is up-to-date with the information requirements for the National Information System on Higher Education (SNIES).</p>	
Duly approved internal regulations	<p>General bylaws</p> <p>The current faculty bylaws or the equivalent, and previous ones if they have been subject to amendments in the last 5 years.</p> <p>The current student regulations or the equivalent, and previous ones if they have been subject to amendments in the last 5 years.</p> <p>Organizational regime (Administrative and academic structure)</p> <p>Good Governance Code or its equivalent</p>	

**Table 3. Institutional information.**

<b>DOCUMENTATION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>SOURCE</b>
	Institutional wellbeing regulations or their equivalent	
	Policies and regulations required in Agreement 02/2020.	
	Institutional Education Project or its equivalent	
	Complete list of all programs offered by the institution and their accreditation or non-accreditation status.	
	Demonstrate the existence of an internal quality assurance system, improvement plans and their respective implementations.	
	Learning outcomes assessment model. Improvement plans and results of the analysis of the learning outcomes evidenced in the internal quality assurance system.	
	Academic value added. Analysis and evidence derived from the analyses of the relative contribution and added value of the institution.	
	Characterization of the faculty (contracts, education and category).	
	Research projects of the institution in the last five years.	
Information on academic aspects	Characterization of students (origin, socioeconomic level and gender).	
	Academic, scientific and technological innovation productivity of professors, showing quotation indexes by professor/publication.	
	Lists of the institution's research groups and the programs that participate in each one of them, with the list of the institution's professors who are members thereof, classified or recognized by the National System of Science, Technology and Innovation.	
	Results of national and international academic agreements in force, active and documented, showing the interaction among professors and students in the development of projects, as well as teaching and extension activities, among others.	
	Results of active and documented extension and social outreach programs.	
	Impact and follow-up with graduates	
Information on institutional resources: For each of the places of development	Report on physical and technological facilities, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of areas, use, improvements and maintenance of the institution's physical infrastructure</li> <li>Type of ownership availability of each property (ownership or legal contract in force).</li> </ul>	

**Table 3. Institutional information.**

DOCUMENTATION	DESCRIPTION	SOURCE
Information on academic aspects	<p>Characterization of students (origin, socioeconomic level and gender).</p> <p>Academic, scientific and technological innovation productivity of professors, showing quotation indexes by professor/publication.</p> <p>Lists of the institution's research groups and the programs that participate in each one of them, with the list of the institution's professors who are members thereof, classified or recognized by the National System of Science, Technology and Innovation.</p> <p>Results of national and international academic agreements in force, active and documented, showing the interaction among professors and students in the development of projects, as well as teaching and extension activities, among others.</p> <p>Results of active and documented extension and social outreach programs.</p> <p>Impact and follow-up with graduates</p>	
Information on institutional resources: For each of the places of development and for each of the campuses operating there.	<p>Report on physical and technological facilities, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of areas, use, improvements and maintenance of the institution's physical infrastructure</li> <li>• Type of ownership availability of each property (ownership or legal contract in force).</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environments of Wellbeing</li> <li>• Service areas (when applicable)</li> <li>• Individual and group work environments for professors, students and administrative staff.</li> <li>• Learning, research and social outreach environments and resources according to the nature, level and modality of the program.</li> <li>• Environments and resources to support professors in order to facilitate their pedagogical and didactic practices.</li> </ul> <p>Bibliographic resources. Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Characterization of the bibliographic resources available in the institution, according to the learning objectives or skills to be developed by the institution's programs.</li> <li>• Number of subscriptions to periodicals</li> <li>• Evidence of use by students and professors of the programs offered by the institution.</li> </ul> <p>Resources for academic and logistical support Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of use, updating and maintenance of educational resources and learning environments.</li> <li>• Evidence of use and access to information networks</li> <li>• Evidence of use of other resources available for academic and logistical support</li> <li>• Description of the technological ecosystem that supports academic management, and faculty and student services.</li> </ul>	
Audited financial and accounting information for the last 2 years (all with disclosure notes)	Financial information in accordance with current regulations governing Higher Education Institutions.	

# **MULTICAMPUS INSTITUTIONS**



## 4.1 MULTICAMPUS INSTITUTIONS

When the assessment of initial conditions is carried out in a higher education institution that is declared to be a Multicampus institution, in accordance with the provisions of subsection g) of section 2.3 of Article 2 of CESU Agreement 02/2020, the Registered Agent must specify whether the request for the initial conditions assessment is for institutional accreditation purposes by place of development and which places of development shall be involved in the procedure, or whether the request is for multicampus accreditation purposes, for which it must, in accordance with the provisions of CESU Agreement 02/2020 (article 7 subsection b), indicate the places of development located in the municipalities or districts in Special categories 1 and 2, and the places of development of other categories.

The initial conditions assessment includes the same five phases defined previously in section 2 of this guide as outlined in Figure 2:

### 4.1.1 Request for initial conditions assessment

In accordance with the provisions of section 2.1 hereof, the intention to initiate the multicampus high quality accreditation procedure shall be stated at this stage, attaching the information to account for the aspects provided for in Article 25 CESU Agreement 02/2020, and in the technical documents or guides established by the National Accreditation Council.

### 4.1.2 Verification of the request to assess initial conditions

It is performed as defined in section 2.2 of this guide.

### 4.1.3 Visit to assess initial conditions

In accordance with the provisions of section 2.3 hereof, in the case of multicampus initial conditions assessment, the National Accreditation Council shall visit the places of development located in municipalities or districts in Special categories 1 and 2 and determine the relevance in those of different categories.

The initial conditions assessment can be carried out in person or by means of digital technologies according to the recommendation of the National Accreditation Council and subject to acceptance by the Institution.

The agenda of the visit for the initial conditions assessment must include at least the activities listed below, and shall be carried out simultaneously at each of the places of development in Special categories 1 and 2 and in other categories according to the relevance defined by the National Accreditation Council.

## ACTIVITIES TO BE PERFORMED

- Meeting with the President and Directors of the Institution, in which a presentation on the institution and its multicampus nature is made.
- Meeting with the directors of each campus, in which a general presentation of each campus is made.
- Interviews with professors and students at each campus.
- Interviews with employers and graduates.
- Tour of the facilities and visit to the premises of each campus.
- Meeting of the council members who conducted the visit.
- Final meeting with the President and Directors. At this meeting, the council members shall verbally inform the President of the general aspects of the initial conditions assessment visit.

When the visit is conducted using digital technologies, the tour of the premises can be carried out by means of videos sent in advance or by using 3D technologies that facilitate the tour.

#### **4.1.4 Report of the visit to assess initial conditions**

It is performed as defined in section 2.4 of this guide.

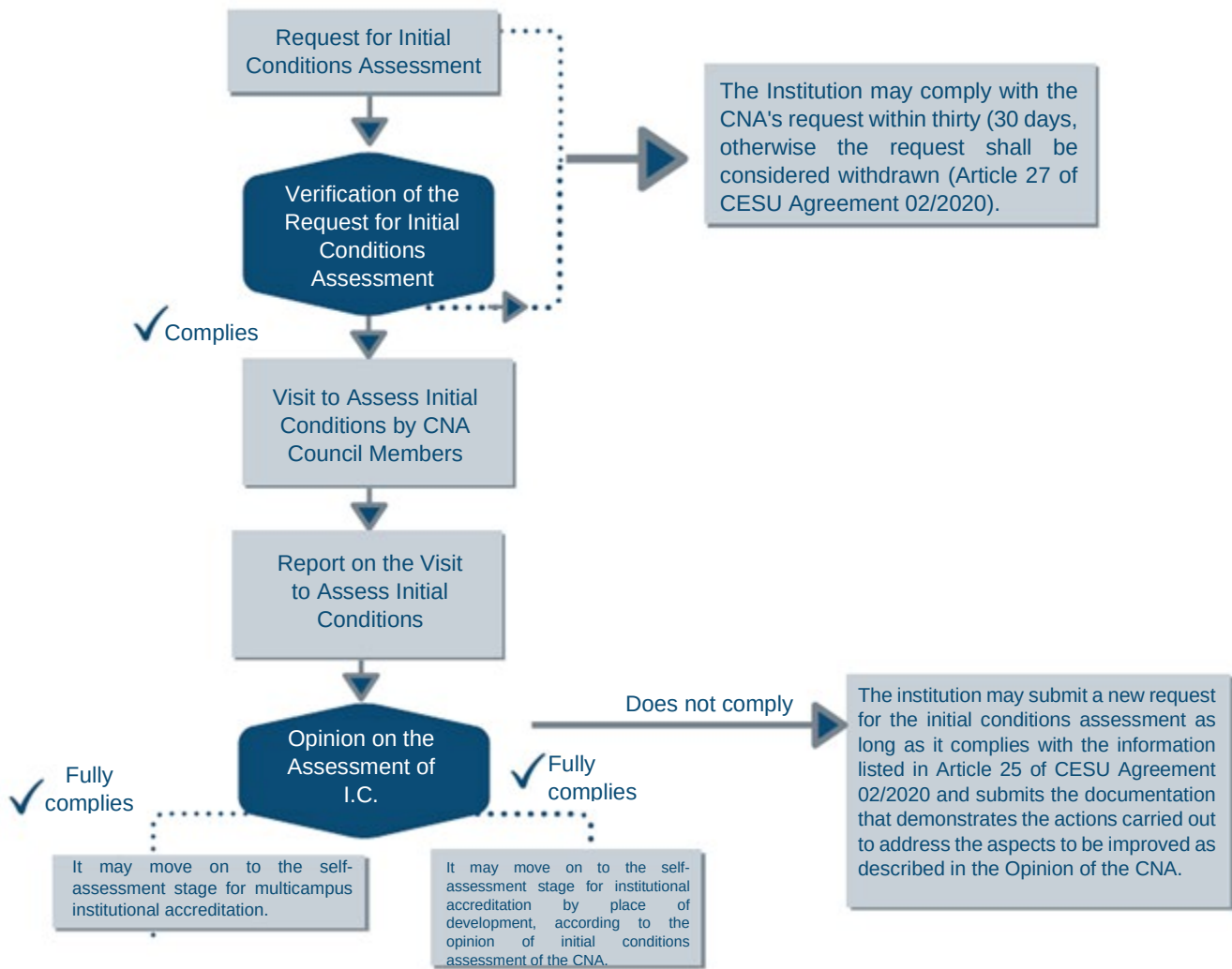
#### **4.1.5 Opinion on the initial conditions assessment**

As defined in section 2.5 of this guide.

According to the assessment made by the National Accreditation Council, one of the following opinions shall be issued:

- Full compliance with the initial conditions, when it is found that the multicampus institution meets the conditions to go on to the self-assessment stage for the purpose of high quality multicampus accreditation.
- Partial compliance with the initial conditions, when it is found that the multicampus institution does not meet the conditions to go on to the self-assessment stage for the purpose of high quality multicampus accreditation in one or more of the places of development. In this situation, the National Accreditation Council may recommend the procedure of institutional accreditation by place of development, as defined in Agreement 02/2020, Article 7, subsection a). In this case, only the specific places of development for which the National Accreditation Council has issued an opinion of compliance with the initial conditions may opt for the self-assessment process for accreditation purposes.
- Non-compliance, in which the strengths and aspects to be improved shall be pointed out, when it is considered that the institution does not fully comply with such conditions.

**Figure 2. Initial Conditions Assessment Stage for multicampus accreditation purposes**



When the opinion of partial compliance with the initial conditions is issued, the institution may choose to submit the self-assessment report as a request for institutional accreditation by place(s) of development, or submit a new request for the initial conditions assessment for the purpose of multicampus institutional accreditation. In this second case, the initial conditions assessment stage shall be carried out again for all places of development.

Article 25 of CESU Agreement 02/2020 establishes the initial conditions for high quality institutional accreditation, which were defined in section 4 of this guide.

The institution's request must be submitted through the Higher Education Quality Assurance System (SACES-CNA) or its equivalent, in a single document of initial conditions for the purpose of multicampus institutional accreditation. The required documentation is shown in Table 4

Table 4. Institutional information for multicampus institutional accreditation purposes.


**Table 4. Institutional information for multicampus institutional accreditation purposes.**

DOCUMENTATION	DESCRIPTION	SOURCE
Communication from the institution's Registered Agent	<p>The communication shall be addressed to the National Accreditation Council and state:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The intention to initiate the high quality multicampus institutional accreditation procedure.</li> <li>• That it is aware of the contents of the document with the guidelines for Institutional Accreditation.</li> <li>• That the institution complies with the initial conditions indicated in the aforementioned document, which are transcribed in this guide.</li> </ul>	
Information on legal aspects	<p>Recent certificate of existence and legal representation (issued within the past month).</p> <p>Administrative act by which the institution's legal status is recognized or the regulatory provision that determined the creation of the institution. If applicable, administrative acts authorizing the institutional redefinition and/or change of academic nature, or regulatory provisions that determine a new academic nature.</p> <p>Statement by the Registered Agent indicating that no penalties have been imposed in the last 5 years on the institution, nor its directors, registered agent, council members, managers, statutory auditor, or anyone exercising the management and/or oversight of the institution. The institution must not have any preventive or special supervision measures currently in place.</p> <p>Evidence that the institution is up-to-date with the information requirements for the National Information System on Higher Education (SNIES).</p>	
Duly approved internal regulations	<p>General bylaws</p> <p>The current faculty bylaws or the equivalent, and previous ones if they have been subject to amendments in the last 5 years.</p> <p>The current student regulations or the equivalent, and previous ones if they have been subject to amendments in the last 5 years.</p> <p>Organizational regime (Administrative and academic structure)</p> <p>Good Governance Code or its equivalent</p>	

DOCUMENTATION	DESCRIPTION	SOURCE
	Institutional wellbeing regulations or their equivalent	
	Policies and regulations required in CESU Agreement 02/2020.	
Information on academic aspects	<p>Institutional Education Project or its equivalent</p> <p>Complete list of all programs offered by the institution and their accreditation or non-accreditation status for each campus.</p> <p>Demonstrate the existence of an internal quality assurance system, improvement plans and their respective implementations. It is up to the institution to decide whether to submit the information at the multicampus or campus level.</p> <p>Learning outcomes assessment model. Improvement plans and results of the analysis of the learning outcomes evidenced in the internal quality assurance system. It is up to the institution to decide whether to submit the information at the multicampus or campus level.</p> <p>Results of the Saber Pro and T&amp;T tests and analysis of academic value added. It is up to the institution to decide whether to submit the information at the multicampus or campus level. Analysis and evidence of the analysis of the relative contribution and added academic value of the institution. It is up to the institution to decide whether to submit the information at the multicampus or campus level.</p> <p>Characterization of professors, for each campus.</p> <p>Research projects of the institution in the last five years, for each campus.</p> <p>Characterization of students, for each of the campuses.</p> <p>Academic, scientific and technological innovation productivity of professors, showing quotation indexes by professor/publication, for each campus.</p> <p>Lists of the institution's research groups and the programs that participate in each of them, with the list of the institution's professors who are members thereof, groups classified or recognized by the National System of Science, Technology and Innovation, broken down by each campus.</p> <p>Results of national and international academic agreements in force, active and documented, showing the interaction among professors and students in the development of each academic activity.</p> <p>Projects, teaching and extension activities, among others, for each campus.</p> <p>Results of active and documented extension and social outreach programs, for each campus.</p> <p>Impact and follow-up with graduates, at each campus.</p>	

DOCUMENTATION	DESCRIPTION	SOURCE
Information on institutional resources: For each of the places of development and for each campus	<p>Report on physical and technological facilities, including: (information for each campus)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of areas, use, improvements and maintenance of the institution's physical infrastructure.</li> <li>• Type of ownership availability of each property (ownership or legal contract in force).</li> <li>• Environments of Wellbeing.</li> <li>• Service areas (when applicable).</li> <li>• Individual and group work environments for professors, students and administrative staff</li> <li>• Learning, research and social outreach environments and resources according to the nature, level and modality of the program.</li> <li>• Environments and resources to support professors in order to facilitate their pedagogical and didactic practices.</li> </ul> <p>Bibliographic resources. These should include: (information for each campus)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Characterization of the bibliographic resources available on campus, according to the learning objectives or skills to be developed by the institution's programs.</li> <li>• Number of subscriptions to periodicals.</li> <li>• Evidence of use by students and professors of the programs offered by the institution.</li> </ul> <p>Resources for academic and logistical support These should include: (information for each campus)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of use, updating and maintenance of educational resources and learning environments.</li> <li>• Evidence of use and access to information networks. Evidence of use of other resources available for academic and logistical support.</li> <li>• Description of the technological ecosystem that supports academic management, and faculty and student services.</li> </ul>	
Audited financial and accounting information for the last 2 years (with disclosure notes)	Financial information in accordance with current regulations governing Higher Education Institutions.	
Regionalization plans	For places of development located in municipalities not belonging to the categories: Special, 1 and 2.	

**SUPPLEMENTARY  
INFORMATION AND  
MASTER TABLES**



## 5. SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION AND MASTER TABLES

The National Accreditation Council shall use the SNIES information as the primary source of the information of the academic program or institution submitted for the initial conditions assessment and the Master Tables with updated information, which must be completed using the forms available on the National Accreditation Council website: <https://www.cna.gov.co>.

## 6. DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are intended to guide Institutions in their submission of Information for the purposes of the Initial Conditions Assessment of the Institutions declared as Multicampus or those that have a regionalized offering.

### Regionalization Plan

A Regionalization Plan is defined as the Institution's strategy to reach several places of development either with its own offering or in an agreement, in one or more modalities. This plan must be approved as a policy by the corresponding governing body (Senior Council, Board of Directors or their equivalent).

In order to offer undergraduate or postgraduate programs in municipalities other than Special categories 1 and 2, the institution must submit an assessment of the regionalization plan that includes commitments to improve in accordance with their level of development. This plan must contain at least:

#### **a) Information on the characteristics of the program offerings**

- number of cohorts, target population and program relevance studies.

#### **b) Performance indicators for this offering**

- dropout and graduation rates, Saber Pro and T&T test results, and graduate performance.

#### **c) Institutional conditions of the offering**

- availability and access to infrastructure, wellbeing and extension.

The regionalization plan must include the places of development in which the institution uses physical spaces for the development of academic programs in an agreement with other entities or institutions. In the case of regionalized academic programs, it must be shown that according to their regionalization or rural education model, professors are sufficient in terms of number, hours and level of education, and the forms of interaction and academic communication between professors and students have been assessed and improved in order to achieve the learning outcomes for their students.

### Places of Development

The municipality or district where the Ministry of National Education authorizes an institution to provide the public service of higher education, by granting the qualification certification for an academic program [15]<sup>15</sup>.

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[15] Subsection c) of Article 2 (2.3) of CESU Agreement 02/2020.

As for the assessment of academic programs for expansion of the place of development, the condition related to professors shall recognize the different regionalization models existing in the country and it shall be an absolute prerequisite for the offering and development of an academic program under this condition that the institution has professors contracted as staff for the municipalities where it intends to expand. Likewise, for the condition related to educational resources and learning environments, the institution must ensure the availability and use of educational resources for the creation of learning environments consistent with the expected outcomes and in accordance with the level of education and modality.

## **Tutoring centers as part of the distance learning strategy**

These are physical spaces that are part of the distance learning strategy where students attend in order to carry out activities that promote the teaching, learning and assessment processes. Therefore, they are the places of development of an academic program that are considered for the distance modality. In these cases, the institution must submit to the Ministry of National Education the internal regulation for the creation of the respective tutoring center for the approval of the academic program offered at these centers.

## **Virtual campuses as part of the virtual learning strategy**

The virtual campus is understood as a digital environment, which can be perceived and experienced audiovisually, and whose purpose is the symbolic interaction in a community through technological mediation for the transfer, exchange, negotiation, transformation and co-creation of meanings (knowledge, practices and values).

The virtual campus considers the use of an LMS (Learning Management System) platform installed on a web server used to manage, distribute and control the non-classroom educational activities in a given community. This platform must allow permanent and stable access to all educational resources and strategies designed for a large number of simultaneous users and for all members of the academic community when they are not connected simultaneously.

In turn, the platform must consider audiovisual learning environments for the development of e-learning activities including synchronous interactions among members of the academic community, such as counseling, exchanges, discussions, dissertations and general interactions with their own academic community, and with other communities or stakeholders, both national and foreign. The virtual campus must also consider different resources and environments for creation and co-creation, both synchronous and asynchronous, to promote and enable autonomous and independent work, as well as collaborative work. The virtual campus must allow for a supported assessment practice that integrates and encourages collaborative work, dialog and continuous interaction among students and between students and professors, as well as self-assessment and co-assessment processes, and provide immediate feedback, in order to make students aware of their own achievements and difficulties in their learning process.

The adoption of this strategy must contribute to the improvement of the quality of the academic processes intended to be carried out, and should be perceived in this manner according to the satisfaction of their participants: of the professors in terms of their effective teaching and of the students in their purpose of learning. Therefore, the adoption of the virtual campus by an institution must not only consider the acquisition of technological and computer resources for carrying out the different training activities (in teaching, research and social outreach). In addition and consistent with the foregoing statement, an academic and administrative structure must exist or be in line with the operational model, especially the action regarding information management through digital technologies. They must also be recognized in guiding documents such as the pedagogical model, the educational project and the institutional pedagogical aspects that guide it, which can be supplemented by other institutional policies that support and harmonize the use of digital technologies to enable, renew, transform and improve the teaching and learning processes.



# CNA

Ministry of National Education  
Republic of Colombia

**National Accreditation Council**  
Final Version - February 8, 2021