

GUIDE TO THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM OF ECUADOR AND ASPECTS TO CONSIDER FOR THE RECOGNITION OF HIGHER EDUCATION TITLES AND DEGREES IN COLOMBIA

INTRODUCTION

The *Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia (MEN)*, Ministry of National Education of Colombia, has been working, in recent years, in the construction of guides for the educational systems of different countries. These guides have the objective of assisting the decision-making process on where and what to study abroad, as well as providing guidance on the process and requirements for the recognition of higher education titles and degrees in Colombia.

The *Dirección de Calidad de la Educación Superior del MEN*, Quality Office of Higher Education of the MEN, made a diagnosis on the Educational Systems Guides that are already published on the website. The need to bring the technical language of education closer to the citizen, as well as to generate an interactive instrument, was highlighted. Therefore, the MEN partnered with the *Asociación Colombiana de Universidades (ASCUN)*, Colombian Association of Universities, to update and redesign the Educational Systems Guides.

We have gathered information from different official sources in order to offer a practical and relevant instrument for the citizen. Relevant information is framed on four central aspects: 1) the higher education system; 2) the legality of higher education programs and institutions; 3) quality assurance of higher education institutions and programs; and 4) the elements to start the process of recognition of higher education titles and degrees obtained abroad.

All the information enclosed herein includes the different accessibility requirements in WEB tools and products that ease the access for people with disabilities. This work was possible thanks to the invaluable collaboration of the *Instituto Nacional para Ciegos (INCI)*, National Institute for the Blind.

1. HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM OF ECUADOR

The *Ministerio de Educación de Ecuador*, Ministry of Education of Ecuador, according with article 39 of the *Ley Orgánica de Educación Intercultural – (LOEI)*, is the body responsible for the education structure at initial, basic, and *Bachillerato* level; those levels that belong to the National Education System. The *LOEI* is the framework that governs its scope. (Ministry of Education, 2012).

There are different kinds of institutions in the field of education: public, fiscal, and private. In addition, education can be taught in different ways: full and partial classroom learning, online, distance, and the hybrid that integrates full and partial classroom learning and/or distance.

For information in more detail, please visit the following link:

http://gaceta.ces.gob.ec/inicio.html?id_documento=234533#

The education system of Ecuador is structured at educational levels. The first level corresponds to infants, the second level to General-Basic and High School education, while the third and fourth levels refer to higher education. Art. 39 of the *Ley de Educación Intercultural – (LOEI)* and Art. 118 of the *Ley Orgánica de Educación Superior - (LOES)*.

- **Primer nivel o nivel inicial:** First Level or Initial level, contemplates the educational structure for infants.

- **Segundo nivel de educación general básica y bachillerato:** Second Level of General-Basic Education and High School, this level is an interdisciplinary learning where citizenship skills are established, and its learning allows entry to higher education.
- **Tercer nivel técnico-tecnológico de grado:** Third Technical-Vocational level; this level is the early stage of higher education in Ecuador, and is divided into a Third Technical-Vocational level, which offers professional titles of *Técnico Superior*, Higher Technician, *Tecnólogo Superior*, Higher Technologist and, *Tecnólogo Superior Universitario*, Higher University Technologist. These degrees can be awarded by the following institutions: Technical-Vocational, Pedagogical, Arts, and Higher Conservatories.

The main goal of this learning is to achieve the ability to perform a profession or master a field of study. Therefore, at this level also we can find Undergraduate Titles or Polytechnic Professional Titles, which are granted by Universities or Polytechnic Colleges.
- **Cuarto nivel o de posgrado:** Forth or Post-Graduate Level, at this level you can find technological and academic post-graduate titles.

Technological post-graduate: Technological Specialist, and the Academic Degree of Technological Master.

Academic post-graduate: University Specialties and the academic degrees of Master, and PhD.

The postgraduate degrees are awarded by qualified Universities and Polytechnic Colleges with superior quality research.

Higher Education in Ecuador is coordinated by the *Consejo de Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Educación Superior – (CACES)*, the *Secretaría Nacional de Educación Superior, Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación (SENESCYT)*, and the *Consejo de Educación Superior - (CES)*.

The *Consejo de Educación Superior (CES)* is the body responsible for planning, regulating, and coordinating the Higher Education System of Ecuador, and is overseen by the above mentioned bodies.

The *Sistema de Educación Superior (SES)*, higher education system is regulated by the *Ley Orgánica de Educación Superior*. Art. 166, 170, and 182 – (LOES).

The *Ley Orgánica de Educación Superior – (LOES)*, Organic Law of Higher Education is the main standard that regulates the education system, and establishes the organisms and institutions that coordinate the education in Ecuador.

Additionally, the LOES provides the types, categories, and levels at education as well as institutions, programs, policies, resources and actors of the process. For information in more detail about the higher education system, please visit the following link: <https://www.ces.gob.ec/documentos/Normativa/LOES.pdf>

- ***Institutions of higher education***

The *Ley Orgánica de Educación Superior – (LOES)* was created in 2010 with the main purpose of improving the quality of higher education in Ecuador. The (LOES) also established the aim of: a) academic and professional learning based on a scientific and humanistic vision, b) scientific and technological research, and c) the spread of knowledge. The *Constitución Política de Ecuador*, Constitution of Ecuador, article N° 351 mentions that the Higher Education System is articulated to the *Plan de Nacional de Desarrollo*, National Development Plan.

The structure of higher education levels is mentioned in article N° 14 of the (LOES). It specifies the institutions of higher education system: 1) *universidades y escuelas politécnicas*, universities and polytechnical schools;

2) *institutos superiores técnicos, tecnológicos y pedagógicos*, higher technical, technological and pedagogical institutes; and 3) *conservatorios superiores de música y artes*, superior conservatories of music and arts.

Higher Institutes and Conservatories may have the status of *Superior Universitario* after fulfilling the requirements of the Law and the requirements issued by the *Consejo de Educación Superior* for this purpose. The *Consejo de Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Educación Superior – (CACES)*, Council for Quality Assurance in Higher Education recognize the Institutes that can offer technological technical postgraduate courses. (*Asamblea Nacional República de Ecuador, 2018*).

Superior Conservatories must be affiliated to a university, or have university status to grant third-level technical, technological and technological university degrees in the field of Arts.

Higher public and private conservatories offer undergraduate and graduate degrees and programs according to the regulations issued by the *Consejo de Educación Superior*.

In the same way, the *Consejo de Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Educación Superior – (CACES)* provides the framework to grant the fourth-level titles in the field of arts.

Higher Institutes of Arts in Ecuador are institutions of higher education dedicated to learning and applied research in these fields.

For information in more detail please check articles N° 15, 16 and 105 of the *Reglamento del Régimen Académico – (RRA)* in the following link:

http://gaceta.ces.gob.ec/inicio.html?id_documento=234533

- ***Access to Higher Education***

The *Secretaría Nacional de Educación Superior, Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación* – (SENESCYT) is the body in charge of the admission process to access the academic programs offered by public higher education institutions. This process is carried out through the *Sistema Nacional de Nivelación y Admisión (SNNA)*. The admission is made based on the merit of each student.

The SENESCYT is the body responsible for overseeing that the academic offer in higher education programs holds the required authorizations and are offered by legally recognized institutions.

IMPORTANT REMARK: applicants who want to access public third-level institutions of higher education must submit a mandatory test of skills and competences, called *Examen para el Acceso a la Educación Superior – (EAES)* within the framework of *Sistema Nacional de Nivelación y Admisión (SNNA)*.

For information in more detail, please visit the following link: <https://eaes.ec/>

The Ministry of Education must certify the information on the degrees awarded, as well as those homologated based on the legal requirements. This procedure should be done on the dates provided for this purpose.

The Sistema Nacional de Nivelación y Admisión (SNNA) establishes in the article N°14 of its regulation, two annual calls for admission process to access public higher education. The process has two alternatives: 1) registration to take the *Examen para el Acceso a la Educación Superior – (EAES)*, or 2) enabling the account for those who wish to take a new test.

After taking the test, applicants should submit an application for five careers as per their professional interests. By merit of student's grades, the quotas will be

assigned based on the applicants with the best scores in the careers they wish to study.

One mandatory requirement for accessing higher education is that applicants must hold a *Título de Bachiller*, High School degree. The institutions of the higher education system accept High School Degrees obtained abroad, recognized by the Ministry of Education.

Applicants for the *Universidad de las Artes, los conservatorios e institutos superiores de artes* University of Arts, Higher Conservatories and Superior Institutions of Arts, must hold the *Título de Bachiller* and also the *Título de Bachiller en Artes* affiliated to *Sistema Nacional de Educación*.

If the applicant does not fulfill this requirement, a sufficiency test for admission must be taken, developed by the Institutions of Higher Education.

Academic Periods

Academic periods are defined in the Higher Education System as ordinary and extraordinary.

- **Ordinary:** Higher Education Institutions provide two (2) ordinary academic periods per year, each lasting at least 16 weeks. The *Reglamento del Régimen Académico – (RRA)* foresees that each year, the beginning of the first ordinary academic period will be from January to May and from August to November, the second.
- **Extraordinary:** Higher Education Institutions, according to eventualities, add extraordinary academic periods between four and 15 weeks. There are exceptions in the Higher Education Institutions covered by an international agreement or those in the field of health or

postgraduate programs, since all have autonomy and can plan their own periods.

– ***Forth Level or Postgraduate***

The fourth level of higher education in Ecuador, also called Postgraduate, has the aim of providing advanced academic and professional learning, as well as the research in the fields of humanistic, technological and scientific knowledge. This education level involves the technological Postgraduate Programs, where the Technological Specialties and the Technological Master are classified.

Academic postgraduate courses under the name of Specialties and academic degrees of Master's, PhD or its equivalent belong to this higher education level, also.

The education system in Ecuador defines a Master's Degree as an academic degree that seeks to expand knowledge in a specific area. This degree offers two alternatives: Technical-Technological Master's Degree and Academic Master's Degree.

Doctorate is the highest academic degree of the fourth level, which is granted to a professional with an Academic Master's Degree and also is mandatory to develop a dissertation that is integrated into the *Sistema Nacional de Información de la Educación Superior del Ecuador*, National Information System of Higher Education of the Ecuador.

REMARK: Online or remote Doctoral Degrees will not be recognized by the Ministry of Education of Ecuador.

POSTGRADUATE LEVELS IN ECUADOR

Ley Orgánica de Educación Superior – (LOES)		
POSTGRADUATE	ARTICLE	COMMENTS
SPECIALTIES	Art. 119 of LOES	Academic programs for advanced professional learning at the technical-technological or academic postgraduate level.
MASTER'S DEGREE	Art. 120 of LOES	Academic programs with specialized education for professionals in a specific area that enhances complex know-how and teacher-training for technical or technological higher education.
		Academic degree that seeks to expand, develop and manage a discipline, or specific area of study. Also provides the knowledge to enlarge investigative, theoretical and instrumental capabilities in the chosen field of study.
DOCTORATE DEGREE	Art. 121 of LOES	It is the highest fourth-level academic degree awarded by a university or polytechnic to a professional with an academic Master's Degree. This learning is focused on a professional or scientific field of study to contribute to the evolution of knowledge, basically through scientific research.

* *Note.* Own elaboration adapted from the Ley Orgánica de Educación Superior – (LOES) of Ecuador published in: <https://www.epn.edu.ec/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/LOES.pdf>

Medical Specialties

The *Comisión Nacional de Especializaciones en Ciencias de la Salud* collects committees for each group of specialties in the field of health, with the purpose of guaranteeing the quality of the specialties programs offered by Higher Education Institutions and also performs as an advisory entity of the *Consejo de Educación Superior - (CES)*.

The *Comisión Nacional de Especializaciones en Ciencias de la Salud* is consolidated by:

- a) A (CES) counselor, delegated by the Plenary, who will preside;



- b) The Minister of Public Health or his delegate;
- c) A counselor of the *Consejo de Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Educación Superior – (CACES)* delegated by the Plenary, or his delegate;
- d) The representative of the *Comité de Especializaciones en Ciencias de la Salud*;
- e) A representative of the *Unidades de Asistencia Docente públicas y particulares*, chosen among them; and,
- f) A representative of the public and private higher education institutions that offer postgraduate programs in health sciences chosen among them. The health sciences specialties committees hold each group of specialties in the health field.

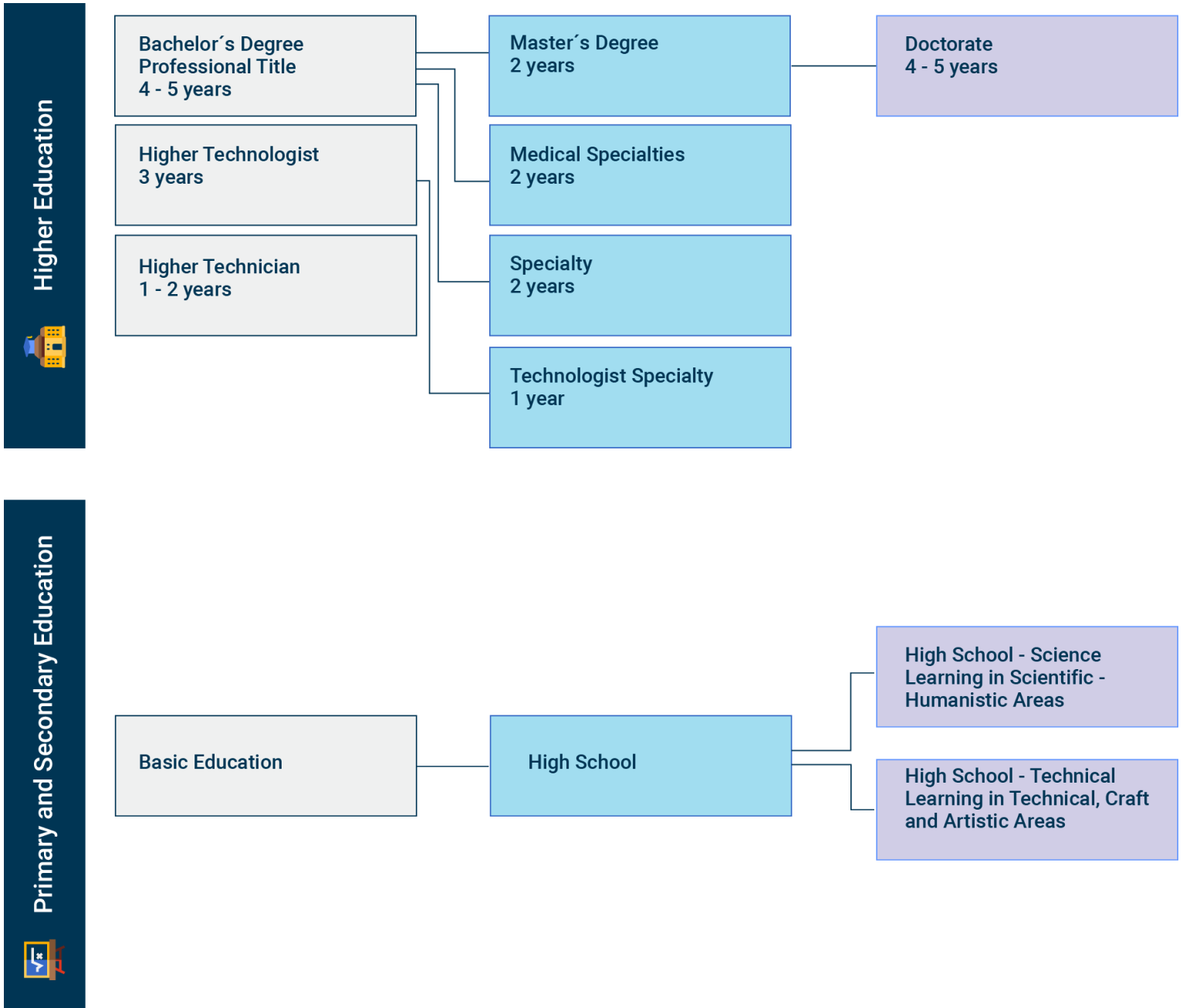
Applicants for education in the field of health in Ecuador should review the *Régimen Académico*, which is available in the Official Gazette of the Digital Repository of higher Education. For information in more detail about the academic regulations in the field of health, visit the following link:

http://gaceta.ces.gob.ec/inicio.html?id_documento=234533#

Specialties in the field of health offer the highest level of cognitive, scientific and professional skills. As a result, admission to a specialty program in this field, without exception, is carried out through a public competition of merits and opposition. Each Higher Education Institution handles the competition, rules and performance.

Moreover, professionalism in the field of specific knowledge of health is a requirement that must be met with a third-level degree, registered in the *Sistema Nacional de Información de Educación Superior – (SNIESE)*, and in the National Health Authority.

Structure of the Education System of Ecuador



*Note. Own elaboration adapted from the *Ley Orgánica de Educación Superior – (LOES)* 2018.

1.1 Comparative table of educational levels in Ecuador and Colombia

It is essential to understand the characteristics of the educational levels in both countries: Ecuador and Colombia. Therefore, herein you can find a comparative table of the two educational systems. This comparison is done based on the higher education levels:

- Level 8: Doctorate Degree or equivalent level
- Level 7: Master's Degree or equivalent level
- Level 6: Bachelor's Degree or equivalent level
- Level 5: Short-cycle tertiary education

Comparative table of educational levels in Ecuador and Colombia:

ISCED LEVEL	LEVEL NAMES IN ECUADOR	YEARS	LEVEL NAMES IN COLOMBIA	YEARS
8	Doctorate Degree	4-5	Doctorate Degree	4-5
7	N/A	N/A	Surgical Medical Specialty	1-5
7	Medical Specialty	2	Medical Specialty	2
7	Master's Degree with a Research Path	2	Master's Degree	2
7	Master's Degree with a Professional Path	1.5		
6	Bachelor's Specialty	1	Bachelor's Specialty	1
6	Bachelor's Degree Professional Title	4-5	Bachelor's Degree Professional Title	4-5
5	Technological Specialist	1	Technological Specialty	<1
5	N/A	N/A	Technical Specialty	1
5	Higher Technologist	3	Technologist	3
5	Higher Technician	1-2	Professional Technologist	2

*Note. Own elaboration adapted from the *Ley Orgánica de Educación Superior de Ecuador*, the Ministry of Education of Colombia and article N° 23 of the (RRA).

It is relevant to mention the measure of time corresponding to the educational level and its comparison with international standards:

- a) **Academic Credits:** in both Colombia and Ecuador, the estimated time of the student's academic activity, based on the academic competencies that the program is expected to develop, is measured in units called Academic Credits.
- **Academic Credit in Ecuador:** An academic credit is the quantitative unit of measurement for time and academic dedication by the student, which integrates different activities: classroom learning, autonomous learning and practical/experiential learning.
- One academic credit is equal to forty-eight (48) total hours of student activity on the different learning activities established in the syllabus.

The *Reglamento de Régimen Académico – (RRA)* establishes the length in time of the professional careers in the article N° 18 of its regulation. In the third Technical-Technological level, we can find different academic credits assignment. Higher Technician holds between 30 and 60 academic credits; Higher Technologist holds between 60 to 75 academic credits; and the University Higher Technologist holds between 90 to 105 academic credits.

At the third degree level, between 120 and 150 academic credits are established for undergraduate and professional degrees.

Academic programs offered at the fourth or postgraduate level also have different academic credit assignment. Specialties have between 15 and 30 academic credits, the Academic Master's Degree (AM) with a Professional Path (PP) has between 30 and 45 academic credits, the Academic Master's Degree (AM) with a Research Path

(RP), between 45 and 60 academic credits, and the Doctorate Degree, between 120 to 150 academic credits. For information in more detail, please visit the following link: http://gaceta.ces.gob.ec/inicio.html?id_documento=234533

- **Academic Credit in Colombia:** is the unit of measure of the student's academic work that suggests the effort to be made to achieve the results of previous learning. It is equivalent to forty-eight (48) hours for an academic period. The institutions must decide the proportion between the classroom and home learning based on the syllabus and the learning results expected from the program.

Institutions must express in academic credits all learning activities included in the syllabus.

(Decree 1330 of 2019, article 2.5.3.2.4.1)

- b) **ISCED Levels:** the International Standard Classification of Education- ISCED led by The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), is the global reference classification for assembling, compiling and analyzing cross-nationally comparable data on the education systems of countries worldwide.

2. LEGALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND INSTITUTIONS

The *Ley Orgánica de Educación Superior*, in its latest version of 2018, defines internal quality assurance as a set of actions carried out by higher education institutions, to develop and apply effective policies to promote the constant development of the quality of careers, academic programs, in coordination with other actors of the higher Education System (LOES 2018, Art. N° 96).

The Constitution of Ecuador, article N° 354, mentions that the foundation of universities and polytechnical schools, both public and private, is established by a law.

In addition, the Higher Technological, Technical and Pedagogical Institutes, as well as Higher Conservatories will be created by resolution of the body in charge of planning, regulating and coordinating the education system, after a favorable report from the institution of quality assurance and the national planning body (Art. N° 354 of the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador).

Higher Education Institutions must fulfill different academic requirements established in its curricular organization, and also have qualified academic personnel to obtain the approval of its academic programs.

Academic programs in the field of health should have research as the learning base.

The *Consejo de Educación Superior – (CES)* is the body in charge of planning, regulating, and coordinating the education system of Ecuador. The *(CES)*, through the *Sistema Nacional de Información de Educación Superior de Ecuador – (SNIESE)*, updates the database on its website with the legally recognized list of universities, polytechnical schools, and Higher Technical and Technological Institutes in Ecuador.

In the following link, you can find the institutions of higher education in Ecuador which have official recognition: <https://infoeducacionsuperior.gob.ec/#/>

The academic degrees and titles, which are not adjusted to the regulations, and obtained in careers or programs that do not have the approval of the *(CES)* for their academic offer or execution, will not be recognized as valid nor registered in the *(SNIESE)*.

3. QUALITY ASSURANCE

The *Consejo de Aseguramiento de la calidad de la Educación Superior – (CACES)* is the public body responsible for regulating, planning, and coordinating the Quality Assurance System of higher education in Ecuador. As a result, qualitative and quantitative assessment criteria were decided based on Resolution N° 016.SE-07-CACES, 2019.

The regulations for the approval of the External Evaluation Model of Universities and Polytechnical Schools were approved on June 14, 2019.

For information in more detail, please visit the following link:

<https://www.caces.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2019/12/RESOLUCI%C3%93N-No.-016-SE-07-CACES-2019.pdf>

Based on the official quality criteria, the accreditation process is granted for institutions of higher education and academic programs.

Institutions of higher education in Ecuador, public or private, must submit their careers and programs to external evaluation and accreditation process. Additionally, they must create processes that guarantee internal quality assurance.

- You can visit the following link to identify the academic offer of institutions of Higher Education in Ecuador: <https://infoeducacionsuperior.gob.ec/#/>
- You can visit the following link to identify the Higher Education Institutions accredited by CACES, which are part of the higher education system: <https://infoeducacionsuperior.gob.ec/#/ies-acreditadas>

The government of Ecuador made a reform to (*LOES*) in 2018. The changes include the addition of the processes of self-evaluation, external evaluation, and accreditation, which are contemplated in the principle of quality assurance in higher

education. This reform provides the relevance of the balance between teaching, research and innovation; the relationship with society, responsible autonomy, integrity, democracy, knowledge's production; and the citizen values established in Article 93.

Learning results of the academic programs are evaluated through a test to students who are in the last year of their career. The test is called *Examen Nacional de Evaluación de Carreras*.

The institutions of higher education during the accreditation process are located in one of three following categories: accredited, in the accreditation process or not accredited.

Accredited professional careers certify compliance with the minimum quality criteria required to perform and guarantee adequate learning for their students.

For information in more detail about the qualification for professional practice, please visit the following link: <https://www.caces.gob.ec/ehep-2019/>

4. ELEMENTS TO START THE PROCESS OF DEGREES AND TITLES RECONGNITION OF HIGHER EDUCATION OBTAINED IN ECUADOR

The *Ministerio de Educación Nacional*, Ministry of National Education of Colombia, through Resolution 10687 of 2019, rules the recognition of higher education degrees and titles obtained abroad. Also, it acknowledges the quality assurance systems of the international issuing countries.

The process of recognition of higher education degrees and titles in Colombia is part of the *Sistema de Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Educación Superior*, which guarantees that the titles and degrees obtained abroad has the recognition of the official quality of the countries where the titles were issued. Same as the quality criteria are also met at the academic offer in Colombia.

IMPORTANT REMARK: if your undergraduate title is in Law, Accounting, Education or the Health field, additional requirement must be verified. Those are mentioned in chapters one and two of Resolution 10687 of 2019 of the *Ministerio de Educación Nacional*, available at the following link:

https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1759/articles-401316_archivo_pdf.pdf

Essential Elements for recognition process

The recognition of titles and degrees obtained abroad is not a mandatory process. Nevertheless, it is required in the following scenarios:

1. For regulated professions in which professional associations require official recognition.
2. For professionals who wish to work in the public sector as a contractor or public official.
3. In the case of public tenders, in which the tender specifications suggest it as needed.
4. In the case of teachers of public education institutions, to be placed in the official ranks (*Escalafón*).

The recognition process of titles and degrees obtained in Ecuador considers the following:

1. Titles and Degrees must be granted by an institution of higher education legally recognized in Ecuador.
2. Titles and degrees must have apostille or legalization chain.

Apostille is a certification by stamp or seal, marked on the document that the signatures that appear on the document are authentic and that the person who signed it is vested with authority to do so.

This process is carried out by the *Coordinaciones Zonales* of Ecuador and in the Consular Offices of Ecuador abroad. You can find information in more detail in the following link: <https://www.gob.ec/mremh/tramites/emision-apostilla-legalizacion-documentos>

3. According to the field of study and the institution of higher education that grants the title, please consider there are different criteria for the process of degrees and title recognition.

In the case of having a degree issued by an institution of higher education in Ecuador, and the recognition is required, the following questions and answers can help to understand the process in Colombia:

- ¿When do I have to get the title recognition for a foreign higher education degree? you will find the answer in the following link:
<https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/portal/convalidaciones/Convalidaciones-Educacion-Superior/350670:Conozca-el-proceso>

- ¿What is the difference between homologate and title recognition? you will find the answer in the following link:
<https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/portal/convalidaciones/Convalidaciones-Educacion-Superior/355353:Preguntas-Frecuentes>
- If I need assistance ¿who can guide me in the title recognition process? you will find the answer in the following link:
<https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/portal/convalidaciones/Convalidaciones-Educacion-Superior/355353:Preguntas-Frecuentes>
- ¿What are the steps for title recognition of higher education degrees? you will find the answer in the following link:
<https://www.gov.co/ficha-tramites-y-servicios/T366>
- ¿What are the costs of the title recognition process of higher education degrees? you will find the answer in the following link:
<https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/portal/convalidaciones/Convalidaciones-Educacion-Superior/350995:Costo-y-duracion>

For further information about the recognition process, please visit the following link:
<https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/portal/convalidaciones/Convalidaciones-Educacion-Superior/355353:Preguntas-Frecuentes>

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