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### III. OTHER PROVISIONS

#### MINISTRY OF UNIVERSITIES

**6039** *Resolution of April 6, 2021, of the General Secretariat of Universities, approving recommendations in relation to the evaluation criteria and standards for the verification, modification, monitoring and renewal of accreditation of official undergraduate and master's degrees offered in virtual and hybrid teaching modalities.*

Spanish society, as is the case in almost all the countries around us, is immersed in a broad process of transformation as a result of the impact of the technological disruption that is currently taking place. These transformations, with different rhythms, affect multiple areas, and especially the educational world is being challenged.

In this sense, progress in the application and use of digital information and communication technologies in teaching and learning processes is already a widespread phenomenon, which has taken root with vigor in university education. The dissemination of communication (cell phones, tablets...) and computer tools (desktop computers, laptops...) among almost the entire population and, above all, the emergence of the social and professional use of the Internet and social networks have undoubtedly contributed to this. This process has also been reinforced by the implementation in all the country's universities of virtual teaching campuses, which channel the academic relationship between teachers and students at the level of each subject in the undergraduate or master's degree curricula, a fact that stands out coming from universities, mostly face-to-face, which, taking advantage of the technological educational possibilities, have promoted that some of their subjects or subjects, and even entire degrees, are developed virtually.

At the same time as these processes were taking place, university institutions that base their academic activity essentially on virtual teaching have consolidated, some of which have a long track record in this form of education, which has been contrasted internationally. These types of higher education institutions have shown significant growth both in the number of degrees they offer and in the number of students enrolled, with a considerable increase in the number of foreign students. Likewise, in recent years there has been a considerable emergence of new universities that support their offerings through distance learning.

All this has led to an expansion in the number of official Bachelor's and Master's degrees taught in virtual mode in Spain, together with those taught in hybrid mode -which combines face-to-face and virtual mode- which, with all the nuances and singularities with which they have been implemented in the various university institutions, is showing a significant dynamism. The importance of this phenomenon has led to a solid development of the technologies applied to virtual teaching, and of the methodologies and educational resources used in this type of university education.

One of the factors that is contributing most vigorously to this expansion is the increase in social demand for this type of virtual training. In contemporary societies, the needs for university training, and specifically for virtual training, are becoming more complex. In fact, this broad casuistry includes students who come from secondary schools and who, for various reasons, access non-face-to-face university studies. As well as people who, having already obtained a degree and inserted in the labor market, are looking for refresher training or to complement their existing training in order to open up new opportunities for them.

opportunities. Similarly, there are students residing in foreign countries who want to access Bachelor's and Master's degrees at Spanish universities, but without having to attend in person. Finally, there are people seeking to improve their general and/or cultural education. To these groups we must add students from rural areas for whom virtual teaching becomes in some cases the only possibility to access university studies. This complexity of motivations becomes an important training challenge to be faced by the Spanish university system as a whole and, at the same time, a great opportunity.

Therefore, in view of the robustness and energy shown by virtual university teaching, and the growing social demand for this type of studies, it is necessary to reaffirm the commitment of all universities, public administrations and evaluation agencies to guarantee the overall academic quality of Bachelor's and Master's degrees taught in virtual or hybrid mode, and their academic quality levels must be identical to those achieved in face-to-face degrees as a whole.

In this sense, the recent impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Spanish educational system meant that in the last quarter of the 2019-2020 academic year, all teaching activity in the university system had to be carried out virtually. This unprecedented event has led all university institutions and public administrations to re-evaluate their methodological and technological systems that support virtual teaching, as has happened in universities basically at a distance or online, and, above all, in the mainly face-to-face universities that have to face this important challenge.

In addition, all this has led to a significant boost in hybrid education, which goes beyond traditional blended learning, to become a way of building a Bachelor's or Master's academic project from a global and comprehensive vision of the curriculum in which there are face-to-face and non-face, synchronous and asynchronous teaching developments, which can occur in different subjects that by their nature and objectives make academic sense and coherence with the degree project, or in the same subject that combines the two modalities. In this way, the 2020-2021 academic year is demonstrating how the virtual and hybrid part of the teaching provided by universities has been significantly strengthened throughout the Spanish university system, transforming and evolving the more traditional views of distance learning, maximizing the opportunities offered by the technological and communications revolution.

The objective of this resolution is to offer a general framework of reference through a set of good practices that delimit some essential academic elements common to the entire Spanish university system in relation to virtual teaching; guidelines that may be developed and specified by the respective quality assurance agencies from their autonomy and in their territorial areas of competence.

This objective described above is articulated through the delimitation of recommendations on the academic quality criteria of official university degrees in their virtual and hybrid modalities, so that the institutions of the Spanish university system can draw up the reports of the official non-face-to-face university courses, as well as for the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA) and other evaluation agencies to configure their protocols and guidelines for the evaluation and accreditation of the quality of the different degrees that they must review in the development of the verification, monitoring and accreditation procedures as responsible for them. In this sense, the good practices contained herein are respectful of the responsibilities and competencies of all the evaluation agencies in our country, as well as their necessary independence.

The present resolution takes into consideration the approaches set out in *Considerations for quality assurance of e-learning provision* published January 2018.

No.

by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the European criteria and guidelines. Based on this ENQA positioning, the Spanish Network of University Quality Agencies (REACU) promoted and approved in February 2018 the *Guidelines for the development and evaluation of bachelor's and master's degrees in distance and blended learning*, which has also been taken into account. Likewise, ANECA's Strategy for quality assurance in virtual education has been taken into account, as well as its International Quality Seal for Blended and Blended Learning.

The good practices on the evaluation criteria and standards recommended have been agreed with the evaluation agencies and the General Conference on University Policy has been informed of them.

In accordance with the foregoing, in use of the authorization conferred by the third final provision of Royal Decree 1393/2007, of October 29, 2007, which establishes the organization of official university education, this General Secretariat for Universities resolves to approve the following guidelines and recommendations:

First.

1. The development of curricula and the evaluation of official undergraduate and master's degrees in virtual and hybrid teaching modalities may be guided by the generic guidelines set out in the annex below in the form of recommendations in this regard. These recommendations may be applied in the external evaluation processes for the verification and modification of study plans, as well as in those processes implemented for the monitoring and renewal of accreditation. These recommendations will serve as a reference for external quality assurance agencies, within the scope of their competencies, to develop their own evaluation protocols for non face-to-face degrees, which will also serve universities as a reference for the design of their curricula.

2. In all other aspects not included in the annex, it will be understood that the evaluation and accreditation criteria established by the quality assurance agencies for all official degrees, regardless of their educational modality, are applicable and will be implemented in the verification processes of official university degrees in Spain, or in their modification and renewal of accreditation, as the case may be.

3. The term "hybrid teaching" refers to teaching that combines face-to-face and virtual teaching, while the term "virtual teaching" refers to non-face-to-face or distance teaching, expressions that are included in Royal Decree 1393/2007, of October 29, 2007, which establishes the organization of official university education in Spain.

Second.

1. The guidelines and recommendations approved will not apply to the official university bachelor's and master's degrees accredited prior to the publication of this resolution until their next renewal of accreditation or until a modification is made to teach the degree in virtual or hybrid teaching mode, when the evaluation protocols in accordance with these recommendations approved by the evaluation and quality assurance agencies will apply to them.

2. If, in the application of these evaluation protocols, non-compliances with the established provisions are detected, the universities responsible for the degree must undertake the necessary improvements to overcome such non-compliances, within a limited period of time established in the evaluation report in which they were detected.

3. The Autonomous Communities, in the exercise of their powers, shall ensure that the universities develop such improvement actions.

Third.

The recommendations on the percentages of credits taught in an official degree taken as a reference to define the different teaching modalities will be taken into account by the universities to progressively adapt their curricula to those, following the guidelines established in the corresponding evaluation protocols set by the quality assurance agencies.

Fourth.

The Spanish quality assurance agencies will establish a specific protocol for the definition and delimitation of what should be understood by hybrid teaching modality in the Spanish university system, taking as a reference what is established in this regard in the annex.

Fifth.

The provisions of this resolution shall be applicable as from the day following its publication in the "Official Gazette of the State".

Madrid, April 6, 2021 -The Secretary General of Universities, José Manuel Pingarrón Carrazón.

## **ANNEX**

### **Recommendations for the development and evaluation of virtual and hybrid bachelor's and master's degrees.**

#### *1. Definition of the modalities of virtual and hybrid university courses*

##### **1.1 Teaching articulated through a virtual modality.**

The virtual teaching methodology applied to the curriculum of an official Bachelor's or Master's degree consists of the articulation of the teaching activity through academic interaction between teachers and students without requiring their physical presence. This modality of university teaching is fundamentally characterized by the intensive use of digital information and communication technologies. In terms of credit load, a Bachelor's or Master's Degree may be defined as being taught in virtual mode when at least 80 percent of the academic credits (ECTS) that comprise it are taught in this teaching modality.

These virtual teaching modalities, in specific academic moments that require it at the discretion of the university, may incorporate face-to-face activities such as, for example, the performance of an internship or the development of evaluation tests.

##### **1.2 Teaching articulated through a hybrid modality.**

The hybrid mode refers to an official undergraduate or master's degree in whose syllabus the teaching offer encompasses teaching activities conveyed in classroom and virtual subjects, the latter defined in the previous section, always maintaining the unity of the educational project and coherence in all the most relevant academic aspects, although the combination of the dual teaching mode implies adaptations of the academic elements to the same. The proportion of non-face-to-face credits required for a degree

The hybrid classification shall be that which is between 40 and 60 percent of the total credit load of the bachelor's or master's degree.

## 2. *Procedure for introducing virtual modalities in a title*

The mode or modes of delivery of an official university degree or Master's degree is one of the fundamental defining elements of its academic program and conditions the development and structure of the curriculum, the methodological strategies, the evaluation systems, the way tutorials and internships are organized and, in addition, implies certain technological equipment necessary in the teaching-learning process.

In the standardized procedure for the verification of a new official university degree, the mode or modes of delivery constitute one of the reference registry data to be included in the Registry of Universities, Centers and Degrees (RUCT).

Specifically, apart from the degrees in virtual or hybrid mode, there are two options, to which other variations can be added, of teaching modalities that basically imply partial or total absence of attendance:

- In the first place, it may be an official undergraduate or master's degree, whose verification report is articulated in a face-to-face mode, but which is intended to be transformed into a virtual or hybrid mode and vice versa, requiring its modification from virtual or hybrid mode to face-to-face mode.
- Secondly, it may be an official undergraduate or master's degree whose verification report is articulated in face-to-face mode, but which proposes the incorporation of a virtual curricular itinerary or intensification (a mention in the case of undergraduate degrees and a specialty in the case of master's degrees), or through the establishment of a virtual group.

In both cases, the change will be made through the procedure of substantial modification, given that the core of the academic proposal and of the curriculum is not affected, since, in the first case, the change is limited to the mode of teaching and, in the second, only an optional itinerary is added due to its own academic nature. In the latter case, in addition, the modification must consider all the teaching modalities included in the syllabus and the adaptation to them of relevant academic aspects such as the development and sequencing of the plan, the development of the curricular academic practices, the evaluation system of the students' learning results and the procedures for tutorials and guidance work.

## 3. *External evaluation process*

In the evaluation process developed by the quality assurance agencies of an official university degree in virtual mode, or of those whose origin is a degree that changes from face-to-face to virtual or hybrid mode by means of substantial modification, or that incorporates a virtual itinerary by the same means, all the standardized and protocolized procedures will be followed by the agencies to guarantee its coherence and academic soundness as a training project. In specific terms, the criteria set out in this annex will be taken as a reference, which will be developed and specified in the protocols approved by the quality assurance agencies.

Special attention will be paid to the adaptation to the academic characteristics of the virtual modality of the curriculum, and in the hybrid modality, in relation to the availability of the technological resources and equipment necessary for the appropriate development of virtual teaching, of the systems of evaluation of the results of student learning, of the tutoring and guidance procedures, of the

mechanisms and procedures for carrying out curricular internships, the staffing and characteristics of the teaching staff, and all those aspects inherent to a quality university training project in our country.

Likewise, in these external evaluation processes, when they focus on degrees in virtual or hybrid teaching modalities, the quality assurance agencies will include experts in teaching methodologies and strategies in these virtual modalities, as well as experts in educational technologies. To guarantee homogeneity in the application of the evaluation criteria, the agencies will establish common training and selection processes for people with such profiles.

#### *4. Generic characteristics of the evaluation criteria for the verification or modification of official virtual and hybrid university degrees.*

##### *4.1 Title and description of the title.*

The proposal for an official university degree or virtual or hybrid master's degree must include a name for the degree that is academically coherent with the training objectives and the syllabus of said degree, which are included in the verification report. This name shall be clear and shall not lead to confusion.

If it is considered academically appropriate, mentions may be included in Bachelor's degrees and specializations in Master's degrees. These will not be included in the title of the degree, but will be reflected in the official degree.

In the description of the official undergraduate or on-site Master's degree that has incorporated a virtual or, if applicable, hybrid teaching modality in its curriculum, this incorporation must be explicitly stated.

The proposal shall also indicate the total number of new admission places, which shall correspond to the sum of the places offered for each modality in the event that there is a combination of teaching modalities.

##### *4.2 Justification.*

The proposal for an official undergraduate or master's degree must be justified by the context, the tradition, the global offer of degrees and the potential of the universities proposing it, as well as its academic, scientific and/or professional interest. Specifically, in addition, the adequacy of its virtual modality to the training objectives of the degree, and which give academic sense to the option of developing this degree in virtual format, must be justified in detail. These training objectives are specified, on the one hand, in the competences, understood as the set of fundamental knowledge, abilities and skills that define this degree; and, on the other hand, in the planning of the studies, the systems of evaluation of the learning results, the procedures of quality evaluation, the staffing and characteristics of the teaching staff, and in the equipment, especially in the field of digital information and communication technologies, which will be the vehicle for the development of virtual teaching.

This justification must also be made both in the case of the incorporation of a virtual itinerary in an official face-to-face degree, as well as in the case of the incorporation of hybrid teaching in an official degree.

##### *4.3 Competencies.*

The academic competencies will be the object of special attention by the quality assurance agencies. In this sense, the competencies defined in the training program, and which are included in the verification report, must have academic coherence in relation to the virtual teaching modality and the implications that this modality entails in the development of the teaching activity.

In addition, agencies shall ensure that those competencies that are considered relevant and academically significant in a face-to-face degree to which the student has been admitted shall be considered as relevant and academically significant in a face-to-face degree to which the student has been admitted.



The same safeguard should be applied to the hybrid part of official degrees that are essentially face-to-face and those that are virtual. This same safeguard must be applied to the hybrid part of official degrees that are essentially face-to-face.

#### 4.4 Access and admission of students.

The proposal for the report of an official bachelor's degree or virtual master's degree (likewise if it is a hybrid degree) must include the different procedures and mechanisms for disseminating information about the degree, as well as the mechanisms for access, admission, and the timing and price of the enrollment fees. This information must be available in the information channels of the universities responsible for an official degree, prior to enrollment.

Specifically, in this type of virtual university degrees, the mechanisms and channels for the dissemination of information related to the mode of delivery of the degree, and the implications that this implies in the development of the academic activity, as well as in terms of dedication and autonomous work of the students, will be detailed. This relevant information must also include the basic structure and sequencing of the curriculum, the methodological model and strategy consistent with distance learning, the evaluation system or systems that will be used to measure the academic progress of students in a virtual environment, the operation and mechanics of tutorials and guidance, and, if any, how and when the curricular academic practices will be developed and evaluated.

Likewise, this pre-enrollment information must explain the technological and computer requirements needed to follow the course properly, and, if necessary, the digital skills and knowledge required to follow the programmed teaching activity.

This information must also be provided both in the case of an official university degree in face-to-face mode that incorporates a virtual itinerary, as well as in the case of hybrid degrees.

Likewise, students must accredit, by means of a declaration of acceptance and acknowledgement at the time of registration, that they have been informed of the technological resources they will need in order to be able to develop the virtual teaching activity.

#### 4.5 Teaching planning.

##### 4.5.1 Syllabus.

The report of the official bachelor's or master's degree in virtual mode must include a syllabus that, in a coherent manner with its academic nature, conveys the contents from the various compulsory and optional subjects, the Final Degree Project (TFG) or the Final Master's Project (TFM) respectively, and the curricular external academic internships if any, which are temporally sequenced and distributed in academic years in relation to the training objectives that define the degree.

In the case of the incorporation of a virtual pathway in an essentially face-to-face degree, the report of the official Bachelor's or Master's degree must indicate, in addition to all the corresponding general specifications required in the verification procedure, the specific academic characteristics of a virtual pathway in a manner similar to what is stated in this section.

Likewise, the planned methods of horizontal and vertical coordination of the degree will be indicated, with specific indication of the measures adopted throughout the course for the coordination of the teaching staff through digital information and communication technologies or, if applicable, by means of face-to-face meetings.



#### 4.5.2 Teaching methodology.

The planning of the teaching of a Bachelor's or Master's degree in virtual or hybrid mode will detail the teaching strategies and methodologies that will be implemented in the various subjects and subjects that articulate the curriculum, which must be consistent with the academic involvement in a virtual teaching that is developed through various tools of digital information and communication technologies, which must be available to universities, and access to them by the student body. It must also take into account the diversity of the student body that can participate in this type of virtual or hybrid teaching.

This information on the planning of the study will incorporate the various training activities that the students will have to carry out during the development of the study plan. In this section it will be necessary to state whether this study involves the realization of curricular academic practices, and the form (face-to-face, hybrid or virtual), temporality, specificities of development, tutoring and evaluation that they will have.

Likewise, the significant and academically relevant competencies provided by each of the subjects of the curriculum, which students should acquire during the course of the degree, in relation to the professional profiles of graduation stated in the degree report, should be indicated.

In the case of an official Bachelor's or Master's degree that incorporates a virtual itinerary (a mention in the first case, or a specialty in the second) or a virtual group, or in an official degree under the hybrid modality, the different teaching and training methodologies that will be implemented must be made explicit, justifying the coherence in relation to the global academic project that is a university degree.

Likewise, if the development of the syllabus of this degree in virtual mode includes subjects, academic activity and/or evaluation test that require attendance, it must be detailed and justified, incorporating the equipment to be used, its location and the timing and mechanics of its implementation.

Finally, the verification reports must expressly state, for subjects taught in virtual mode, that the faculty will be obliged to adequately attend to student queries within a period of no more than two school days from their formulation.

#### 4.5.3 The evaluation system.

In the planning of the virtual or hybrid university study, the global evaluation system of the degree program (that is, those evaluation objectives and evaluation mechanisms that characterize the degree program as a whole), its main characteristics and the specific systems of each subject or subject -which will be incorporated into their respective teaching guides- must be detailed and made explicit, bearing in mind that their fundamental objective is to measure the progress of students in the learning and acquisition of the knowledge, competencies and skills that are specified in each subject or subject. These evaluation systems, both global and specific to each subject, must be made explicit in the information channels of the universities, prior to the enrollment periods.

As a general principle, the evaluation systems must ensure adequate control of the authorship of the evaluation tests, as well as that they have been carried out by the student without unauthorized external help. In any case, the evaluation tests leading to the passing of the different subjects shall offer sufficient guarantees that the student can demonstrate the achievement of the expected learning, in a controlled context in which he/she can be reliably identified.

In the different virtual Bachelor's or Master's degrees or in those hybrid degrees, the evaluative tests in general terms should preferably tend to follow a

The pattern of non-presence, although, if deemed appropriate, evaluative tests of a presential nature may be incorporated.

On the other hand, the teaching materials established and controlled by the universities as support for the teaching, and intended for the preparation of the different evaluation tests, must be in accordance with the virtual teaching pedagogical model, with the formative objective of facilitating the learning process of the students and the achievement of the learning outcomes established in the verification report. The universities must establish the mechanisms for assuring the quality of these materials and their revision, as well as the functional responsibility for them.

In official face-to-face Bachelor's or Master's degrees that incorporate a virtual itinerary -or a virtual group-, or those that are articulated in a hybrid teaching model, a coherent evaluation system must be configured that takes into account and makes explicit the strategies and mechanisms for evaluating student learning in both the face-to-face and virtual aspects of the degree in question. Therefore, the main characteristics of the evaluation systems proposed in both cases must be detailed.

#### 4.5.4 Tutoring and guidance system.

The mechanisms and procedures for tutoring and monitoring the work of the students enrolled will be detailed, appropriate to the virtual or hybrid teaching modality, indicating the functions of the teaching staff and/or tutors, the procedure to be followed and the criteria applied that will make it possible to follow, within the organizational possibilities, the traceability of the participation and interaction of each student in the subjects, the subjects, the discussion forums and the proposed tasks.

The periodicity with which tutorial contact will be established with the student body must be defined and, in particular, in which cases contact tools will be activated, when the student stops completing academic activities or the regular follow-up of the subject.

If it is foreseen to have foreign students from countries with time zones different from Spanish, the technical and organizational measures adopted to guarantee the tutoring and follow-up services, assuring the labor rights of the teaching staff, will be stated.

On the other hand, the university may include in the training program simulation activities that allow a better acquisition of certain competencies, without being considered as curricular academic practices.

These approaches will be applied to the virtual part in the case of official face-to-face Bachelor's or Master's degrees that incorporate a virtual itinerary, or in those developed under a hybrid teaching model.

#### 4.5.5 Mobility.

The proposed verification report must clearly specify whether the degree allows national and international mobility and the conditions and timeframe in which it will be carried out. Mobility may be offered to carry out part of the studies, taking subjects or subjects in virtual mode degrees and, if applicable, in hybrid mode, which are offered in other national or foreign university institutions with which there is a correspondence of competencies and an academic collaboration agreement -or through the participation of the student in official national or international mobility programs-.

Likewise, in those degrees that incorporate a virtual itinerary and in those in hybrid teaching modality, the mechanisms of mobility in its different modalities will be detailed and their main characteristics and implications will be explained.

academic. This information will be included in the academic proposal of the report of the respective official Bachelor's or Master's degree.

In any case, the universities must establish mechanisms to provide information on the mobility modalities of these degrees, so that students may be aware of them prior to enrollment.

#### 4.6 Academic Staff.

The universities will specify and detail the teaching and research staff resources that will participate in the training development of the official Bachelor's or Master's degree in virtual mode, in the same way as it is protocolized for the set of reports that are evaluated in the verification procedure, and implemented by the quality assurance agencies. The figures of teaching staff established by the Organic Law 6/2001, of December 21, 2001, on Universities will be taken into account, both in the case of public universities, as well as in the case of private affiliated centers and private universities.

Likewise, the teaching staff of the official degrees included in the respective reports must comply with the provisions established by Royal Decree 420/2015, of May 29, on the creation, recognition, authorization and accreditation of universities and university centers, in its article 7, or rule that replaces them.

However, given the particularities of the virtual university teaching modality, and the plurality of existing pedagogical and methodological models and strategies, in this section the universities proposing the degree report for the verification process will incorporate the competencies of the teaching staff in the use of digital information and communication technologies necessary for the development of virtual teaching.

The specificity of this type of studies entails a diversity of faculty typologies coherent with its academic nature and its organization and the development of the curriculum, which must be made clear in the degree report.

In this regard, the universities proposing the report shall define the structure of their teaching staff, in accordance with the categories and figures established in current university legislation, collective bargaining agreements, contracts and agreements applicable to them as public or private university institutions. To this end, the number of teaching staff, their typology and categories, and their dedication in terms of teaching to the degree in question shall be detailed.

The teaching dedication of the teaching staff to the official degree will be consistent with the above and for its evaluation the universities will present non-nominal information with a level of disaggregation that allows the total teaching load to be assessed, detailed by courses and the teaching staff involved in the same, with details of its typology, professional category, field of academic, professional or research specialization, full-time or part-time dedication. In this sense, the dedication for full-time teaching staff will be, in general, computed on the credits taught in the subjects or subjects in which they participate, including the final projects of Bachelor's or Master's degrees, and this form of computation will also be applied to those with part-time dedication -which in any case will be in accordance with what is established in their contract or agreement with the university and with the specific nature of the teaching activity to be carried out-.

Universities must include in their teacher training plans or programs, among other issues, aspects related to innovations in digital technologies for virtual teaching and renewals of the pedagogical model.

In the event that the verification process includes a degree report with a virtual itinerary or group or in a hybrid teaching model, in the part of the syllabus planning in relation to the structure and availability of teaching staff with responsibility for virtual teaching, the indications and guidelines established in section 4.6 of these Recommendations shall also be followed.

The quality assurance agencies will establish, by consensus, that the protocols for verification, monitoring and renewal of accreditation of official virtual degrees incorporate the proportion of full-time permanent faculty that must be included in the reports of these degrees in the verification process, as well as that which must be made explicit in the process of renewal of accreditation, in accordance with current legislation, to guarantee the overall quality of the academic project and its sustainability.

For information purposes, the distance learning universities, taking into account their academic nature, in addition to and without distinction from the legally established faculty figures that will be detailed in the report of the respective official degrees, will distinguish in said reports three types of faculty according to their specific function with respect to teaching -a distinction, therefore, only and exclusively of a functional nature-: the responsible faculty, the co-worker or collaborator, and the occasional collaborator. These denominations may be adapted by name by the universities, provided that their functions coincide in essence, these being understood to be the following:

- Faculty responsible: the functions they perform are those of coordination, design and dynamization of the training programs and the evaluation framework of the subject or subject for which they are academically responsible. This teaching staff must comply with the provisions established by Royal Decree 420/2015, of May 29, in its article 7 or rule that replaces it.
- Collaborating or collaborating teaching staff: their function is to collaborate in the development of the teaching activities implemented by the teaching staff responsible for each subject or course. This collaboration may include various academic tasks, such as teaching, tutoring and participation in the evaluation processes of students taking a given subject or course, as well as tutoring internships.
- Specific collaborations: if the degree is promoted by more than one university, the report proposal may establish specific teaching contributions in their training programs by personnel external to the university institution, understanding as such the contributions, for example, made by the authors of certain didactic materials used in the different subjects of the degree, or those made by experts in the different fields of knowledge, or those developed by persons noted for their dedication and professional experience.

#### 4.7 Material resources and mechanisms to ensure the security and reliability of the academic activity.

Virtual learning environments, understood as the teaching system or platform, the technological tools related to it and the software used, are an element of special attention for courses taught in virtual or hybrid mode. The quality assurance agencies will ensure that the proposal of the degree report specifies and details this learning environment on which the teaching system and the interaction between faculty and students will be based, as well as its main technical and teaching characteristics.

The universities proposing the degree, in this regard, shall provide specific information, at a minimum, on:

- Specification of the technological platform that supports the virtual teaching campus, detailing its main characteristics.
- Description of the technological mechanisms that will facilitate student access to library and documentation services.

- The guarantee of the reliability and security of the system, as well as its availability. To this end, indicators will be defined to ensure these aspects.
- Human resources for support and maintenance of the virtual teaching systems and platforms, their functions and indication of whether there is attention in a time slot (to be expressly stated) appropriate to the needs of the student population to which the degree program is addressed.
- Support services for students before and during the learning period adapted to the virtual environment, covering their needs in relation to the pedagogical model, technological and administrative support mechanisms and tools.
- The tools to be used to guarantee the authorship and identity of the evaluation work and tests carried out by students, as well as the control of the environment in which they are carried out. In this sense, the evaluation agencies will include specific indications in this regard in their guidelines.
- The service agreements or contracts signed between the universities and external entities or companies in the event that the e-learning system or platform is outsourced.
- Electronic security measures -user, encryption, backup systems- to ensure the validity and integrity of the information.
- Procedures for securing authorization or ownership for the use of teaching materials.
- The code of good practices related to the electronic security measures that the proposing university must have, in relation to the use of the personal information of the students of the degree in virtual mode, as well as the definition of its misuse and the consequences that this would have for the students, faculty and administration and services staff.
- Mechanisms for testing and promoting teachers' mastery of the use of these platforms and educational technological resources.
- Teacher training programs promoted by the university in the use of virtual teaching platforms and reinforcing their digital competence, as well as in the use of methodological strategies consistent with the virtual or, where appropriate, hybrid teaching model.

#### 4.8 Expected academic results in the different teaching modalities.

The degree proposal must specify the indicators established to corroborate the academic results of the student body as a whole in each of the teaching modalities in which the degree is to be implemented, including a justification of these indicators. In addition, where appropriate, it must regulate the specific procedure for assessing the progress and learning outcomes of the student body throughout the course of the degree, in its different modalities.

Likewise, the participation of part-time students, who combine their studies with a work-related occupation, must be taken into account when establishing these indicators and setting the expected results in training programs with a virtual or hybrid modality.

#### 4.9 Internal Quality Assurance System.

The report of the official bachelor's or master's degree in virtual or hybrid mode will specify the Internal Quality Assurance System that ensures the control, revision and permanent improvement of the degree based on the experience provided by its implementation during successive academic years.

This system, which can be of the degree itself, of the center or of the university, will ensure the correct development of the curriculum and the initial implementation of the degree, and must take into account -and be shown in the report- how it adapts its general monitoring and evaluation protocols to the specificity of virtual teaching.

The mechanisms for the transmission of information to those responsible for the degree program and the center and the significant academic results of the teaching-learning process of the students enrolled in each subject/subject and in the degree program as a whole, in order to guarantee the transparency of the educational process, shall be recorded.

In the case of an official undergraduate or master's degree in classroom mode that is to be verified by incorporating a virtual itinerary, the report of the degree to be verified must include the procedures and establish the mechanisms by which the Internal Quality Assurance System will ensure the adequate adaptation of the planning of the study to the virtual academic nature of said itinerary. Likewise, this must be done in the case that the official degree incorporates the hybrid modality.

#### 4.10 Implementation Schedule.

The report proposal will specify the process of implementation of the official bachelor's or master's degree in virtual or hybrid mode, which must have a timetable and a clear and transparent mechanism to accommodate students coming from a previously existing official degree.

It shall be stated whether the gradual or global implementation of the degree is promoted, once it has been verified, and the mechanisms that will be used to respect the rights of the students of the curriculum that is being terminated and their change of academic program to the new degree shall be detailed.

### 5. *Generic characteristics of the evaluation criteria for the renewal of the accreditation of official virtual university degrees*

The procedure for the renewal of the accreditation of an official Bachelor's or Master's degree in the virtual or hybrid modalities will be carried out in accordance with current regulations and in accordance with the generic criteria established in these Recommendations and the specific criteria established for this purpose by the quality assurance agencies in their respective protocols for the evaluation of the quality of the university teaching offer as a whole.

In the specific case of degrees in virtual or hybrid teaching mode, throughout the accreditation renewal procedure and following the guidelines set by the quality assurance agencies, it must be verified whether the degree is being carried out in accordance with the objectives established in its initial project for which it obtained the status of official degree. Likewise, it must be verified whether its academic results are adequate and contribute to the training of the students and, therefore, to the achievement of the expected objectives, specifically bearing in mind the training, methodological, organizational and technological implications that a virtual teaching model implies.

In the case of official Bachelor's and Master's degrees in classroom mode, but which include a virtual itinerary -or virtual group-, and those in hybrid mode, the same criteria set forth in this section will be followed, specifically evaluating the overall coherence of the academic project that is the degree, in relation to the combination of classroom and virtual teaching modalities.