

PROFESSIONAL MASTERS DEGREES: AN ANALYSIS OF PRACTICAL TRAINING

Agency for Quality Assurance in the Galician University System



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INTRODUCTION

In order to promote and facilitate the European convergence process in the Autonomous Region of Galicia, the Agency for Quality Assurance in the Galician University System (ACSUG) has initiated several programmes to support the integration of the Galician University System (SUG) universities into the EHEA.

It has particularly affected the appraisal of officially recognised graduate, masters and PhD qualifications within the Galician University System (SUG), which comprises three state universities: University of A Coruña, University of Santiago de Compostela, and University of Vigo.

ACSUG: MISSION AND VISION

The fundamental mission of ACSUG is to contribute to improving the quality of the Galician University System (SUG). To do so, it takes actions in the area of drafting reports, evaluation, certification and accreditation for the activities conducted by Galician universities, especially related to teaching, research, knowledge transfer and management.

The ACSUG provides constant support to gathering and channelling information among the Galician universities, other institutions and social agents, contributing to help the SUG remain up-to-date and in line with ever-changing social needs at all times.

The ACSUG aims to be a point of reference in guaranteeing the quality of the SUG Higher Education institutions, recognised in Galicia, Spain and internationally for its independence, transparency and credibility.

Key words: Professional Masters Degrees; Practical Training; Graduates; Access; University; ECTS.

CONCEPT

Since 2008 ACSUG has evaluated a total of 171 masters degrees, of which 42.11% have a professional component in order to cover advanced training requirements and to equip the students with professional competencies, which they begin to acquire through practical training in the organisations with which the university has collaboration agreements.

In this poster we analyse the masters courses taught in the SUG which offer compulsory practical training ECTS in companies, an aspect frequently used to attract students to the university. This includes an analysis of the different variables, such as the number of practical training credits offered, type of organisations in which the practical training takes place, etc.

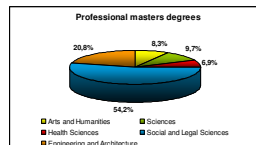
	PROFESIONAL	ACADÉMICO-INVESTIGADORA	TOTAL
Arts and Humanities	6	18	24
Sciences	7	19	26
Health Sciences	5	10	15
Social and Legal Sciences	39	26	65
Engineering and Architecture	15	26	41
SUG	72	99	171

Table 1: Masters course focus by subject field and for the SUG as a whole

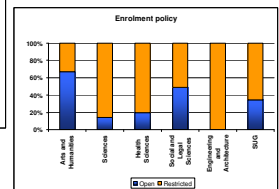
GOALS	RESULTS/CONCLUSIONS
To show how the professional masters courses are distributed amongst the five subject fields	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ 54.2% belong to the Social and Legal Sciences ➢ 6.9% belong to the Health Sciences
To compare the access procedures/enrolment policies for each masters course by subject field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Access in Engineering and Architecture is highly restricted ➢ In Arts and Humanities have open access
To determine the number of ECTS offered by the professional masters courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ 70.8% have a programme that awards 60 ECTS, with a greater representation of the courses offering 6 ECTS for practical training
To establish the number of ECTS awarded for practical training by the professional masters courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ 60.56% of the educational programmes including practical training require attendance by the student ➢ 39.44% contain distance learning activities (tutorials and students' own work)
To analyse the type of organisations with whom the universities sign collaboration agreements for the practical training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Most of the practical training in the Engineering and Architecture fields is performed in private companies ➢ In Health Sciences is primarily carried out in public bodies (Health Centres and Hospitals)

Table 2: Goals and results/conclusions

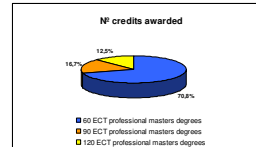
GRAPHICS



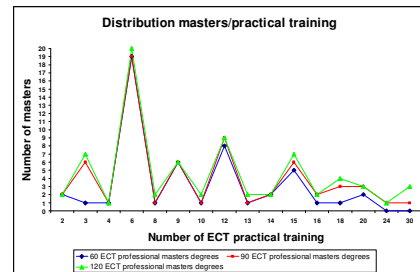
Graph 1: Professional masters degrees by subject field



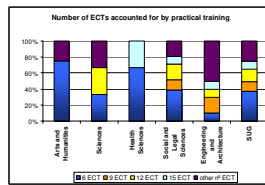
Graph 2: Enrolment policy by subject field and for the SUG as a whole
Open: when access is permitted with any qualification.
Restricted: access only permitted with a qualification in a related subject field



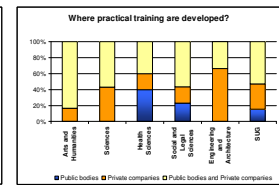
Graph 3: Number of credits awarded by the professional masters degrees



Graph 4: Distribution pattern of the masters degrees according to ECTS awarded for practical training



Graph 5: Number of ECT awarded for practical training in 60 ECT professional masters courses



Graph 6: Practical training are developed in private companies and public bodies

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FINAL STATEMENT:

In Spain officially recognised masters courses are not required by law to offer ECTS for practical training, but we have observed a marked increase in the number of masters allowing students to gain first-hand experience in the world of work. This trend may be interpreted from two perspectives: on the one hand, the interest of the student in continuing in the workplace following the practical training, and on the other, the course director's interest in attracting as many students as possible to the course.

At the same time, we have noted that the 120 and 90 ECT masters are tending to disappear, and are being converted into two or more 60 ECT masters degrees, a trend that accounts for the large increase in the number of masters courses. This reduction in the number of credits increases demand by students for this type of course, it cuts the time spent at university and speeds up labour market insertion and compatibility with the rest of Europe; there is now a predominance in Spain of the 4 + 1 structure (4-year graduate courses and 1-year masters).