



WORLD EDUCATION NEWS AND REVIEWS

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Practical Information

Accreditation in Latin America and the Caribbean

This edition of *World Education News and Reviews* continues our review of the development of accreditation procedures in higher education throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. In this issue the focus is on two Caribbean nations: The Dominican Republic and Cuba.

These two countries should be considered on the forefront of incorporating quality assurance, evaluation and accreditation as valuable assets to their higher education sectors. While many countries in the region are just now beginning to examine accreditation as a means to improving competition and quality at their tertiary institutions, The Dominican Republic and Cuba have, relatively speaking, long-standing accreditation practices. In Cuba, the government has long used the practices of internal and external evaluation as a means to monitor the success of higher education. In recent years, however, this exercise is being refined within an international framework and given more weight as a necessary step towards ensuring all students a worthwhile post-secondary education. The Dominican Republic also utilizes a system of accreditation that in part incorporates the resources of the government as well as emphasizing international participation.

Cuba

[Junta Nacional de Acreditación \(JAN\)](#)

BACKGROUND:

In 1976, the Cuban government opened 26 new institutions of higher education and created the [Ministry of Higher Education](#), an administrative body charged with overseeing all of the nation's tertiary institutions. The development of Cuban higher education had traditionally been governed by multiple national ministries. Of the country's 64 institutions of higher education, 17 are affiliated with the Ministry of Higher Education, 16 with the [Ministry of Education](#), 14 with the [Ministry of Public Health](#), and 17 other tertiary institutions are in part governed by the ministry related with their specialized degree programs. The creation of the Ministry of Higher education signified a period of growth for Cuban higher education as well as an assertion by the government of more centralized control over the future development and quality of education at national universities and colleges.

The Ministry of Higher Education has, since its inception, implemented policies designed to evaluate and maintain the quality of Cuban higher education at each administrative level. A 1978 ministerial resolution established an internal evaluation process for all Cuban tertiary institutions. Institutions completed individualized internal evaluations based on a national criteria set out by the ministry and then submitted the results for review. That program is now in its fourth incarnation and evaluation and quality assurance mechanisms have continued to evolve in response to new developments in the country's education sector.

Today, accreditation in Cuba is managed by the Junta Nacional de Acreditación (JAN) or National Accreditation Council. JAN is a semi-autonomous group of specialists created in 2000 that works with the Ministry of Higher Education to direct the policies and processes of evaluation and accreditation for undergraduate, masters, and doctoral education programs. The JAN is made up of thirty experts from Cuban universities organized into an Executive Secretariat and several Technical Evaluation Committees. The JAN and the accreditation functions it performs are financed by the Ministry of Education and the nation's institutions of higher education. The JAN is a recognized member of [RIACES](#), the Ibero-American Network for Quality and Accreditation in Higher Education and the [International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education](#) (INQAAHE).

Cuba has highly developed accreditation processes for all of its diverse higher education offerings and is at the forefront of a group of countries building a culture of educational quality assurance in the Caribbean and Latin America.

THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS:

Accreditation procedures in Cuban higher education are multifaceted. Programs of study at universities can achieve accreditation, so can entire institutions as well as specialized degree programs. JAN accreditation is a voluntary process, though it can be government mandated if the Ministry of Higher Education determines it to be necessary.

The Cuban system of university evaluation leading to accreditation is an ongoing process executed on a few different levels. The various steps of the process are organized into three subsystems:

- **Subsystem of State Control:** This includes state mandated inspections, finance audits, work visits, and evaluation of compliance with a strategic plan of objectives for each academic course. The Ministry of Education completes a general evaluation of each university and upon review submits a record of deficiencies and recommended improvements to that institution. Universities are required to review their general evaluation and to create and report a plan of action to the ministry based on its findings.
- **Subsystem of Institutional Evaluation:** internal evaluation and external evaluation procedures. Each individual institution has implemented its own system for internal evaluation. This process takes place every two years.

An external evaluation is completed by pairs of outside experts overseen by the JAN. Evaluators review all available information provided by the Ministry of Education before visiting the school in question to observe and evaluate. Interviews with students, professors, faculty, administrators, and other employees are a large part of the process. The factors considered most closely by the JAN during an external evaluation include faculty resources, research capacity, infrastructure, finances, student performance and administration. Upon completion of the evaluation visit, the experts that conducted the process write a final report including perceived deficiencies and submit it to the university. The university then has the opportunity to assess the report and create plan of action to address all JAN recommendations.

- **Subsystem of Accreditation - Sistema Universitario de Programas de Acreditación (SUPRA):** This is the process that includes the evaluation and accreditation of undergraduate degree programs, masters' degrees and doctoral degrees as overseen by the JAN. It encompasses all of the processes above and results in an accreditation decision.

The JAN has established three levels of accreditation for university programs: *Carrera Autorizada* (Authorized Course), *Carrera Certificada* (Certified Course) and *Carrera de Excelencia* (Course of Excellence).

Carrera Autorizada is the first and most important level of recognition. This designation authorizes a program to operate and ensure that it is functioning within the established guidelines of the Ministry of Education as well as the ministry affiliated with the university's degree offerings. This title is only valid for a period of four years during which a constant process of internal evaluation is required. After the end of this temporary authorization, programs must submit to a full external evaluation from the JAN to achieve further accreditation.

Carrera Certificada and *Carrera de Excelencia* are levels of accreditation for institutions that have graduated at least five generations of students and have obtained satisfactory results on all completed evaluations. Institutions garnering the designation of *Excelencia* have received exemplary reports from the JAN's external evaluation teams.

LINKS TO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

- [Junta Nacional de Acreditación](#) (Spanish)
- [IESALC Report on Accreditation in Latin America and the Caribbean](#) (Spanish)
- [Ibero-American Network for Quality and Accreditation in Higher Education: Cuba page](#) (Spanish)

Dominican Republic

[La Asociación Dominicana Para el Autoestudio y la Acreditación \(ADAAC\)](#)

[La Secretaria de Estado de Educación Superior, Ciencia, y Tecnología \(SEECYT\)](#)

BACKGROUND:

The Dominican Republic's institutions of higher education are accredited by the Dominican Association for Self-Evaluation and Accreditation (ADAAC). Established by national law and founded in 1987, the ADAAC is a private, not-for-profit organization with the stated mission of integrating the nation's universities that are dedicated to pursuing institutional progress and betterment through accreditation. The objectives of the ADAAC are as follows:

- Define and approve the criteria and appropriate procedures that govern the institutional evaluation and accreditation process
- Evaluate and accredit legally recognized institutions of higher education
- Promote social responsibility at institutions of higher education
- Promote public interest in the quality of Dominican higher education
- Facilitate cooperation between similar organizations on a national and international level

While the ADAAC is responsible for accrediting Dominican institutions of higher education, the State Secretariat for Higher Education, Science, and Technology (Secretaria de Estado de Educacion Superior, Ciencia, y Tecnologia - SEECYT) is responsible for regulating the opening of new universities and the continued function of those institutions within an established framework of minimum standards. SEECYT evaluates all Dominican tertiary institutions every five years to confirm their compliance with national law. The SEECYT evaluation process is nationally mandated, while ADAAC accreditation is a voluntary undertaking. The ADAAC, as a complement to the SEECYT, sets criteria for quality higher education, promotes internal and external evaluation processes, conducts external evaluations, and accredits institutions based on the quality of their programs.

At its inception, the ADAAC received technical and financial support from U.S.-based accreditor the [Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools \(MSA\)](#), the U.S. [Agency for International Development \(USAID\)](#), the [Inter-American Development Bank \(IDB\)](#), the [International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean \(IESALC\)](#), and the Dominican government. These organizations helped shape the development of ADAAC through participating in and helping fund educational workshops and academic exchanges designed to build capacity and expertise in the field of accreditation.

The ADAAC also maintains working relationships with the [Colombian National Council of Accreditation \(CNA\)](#), the Middle States Commission on Higher Education in the United States (Puerto Rico), and the [Chilean National Commission on Accreditation \(CNAP\)](#). The ADAAC collaborates with these organizations to engage in a regional network of shared expertise in the field of accreditation and to guarantee the transparency of the procedure through the inclusion of foreign evaluation professionals and consultants.

Accreditation as a standard procedure for institutions of higher education in the Dominican Republic, as in much of Latin America and the Caribbean, is a relatively new development. Due to factors such as increased student enrollment and the emergence of numerous private providers of education, there is increased recognition among stakeholders in higher education that effective quality assurance procedures are essential and integral to progress in the region's universities and colleges. The higher education sector of the Dominican Republic has taken steps to address the quality of their academic institutions and could be considered a positive example in Latin America and the Caribbean of the accreditation beginning to improve education standards nationwide.

ADAAC ACCREDITATION PROCESS:

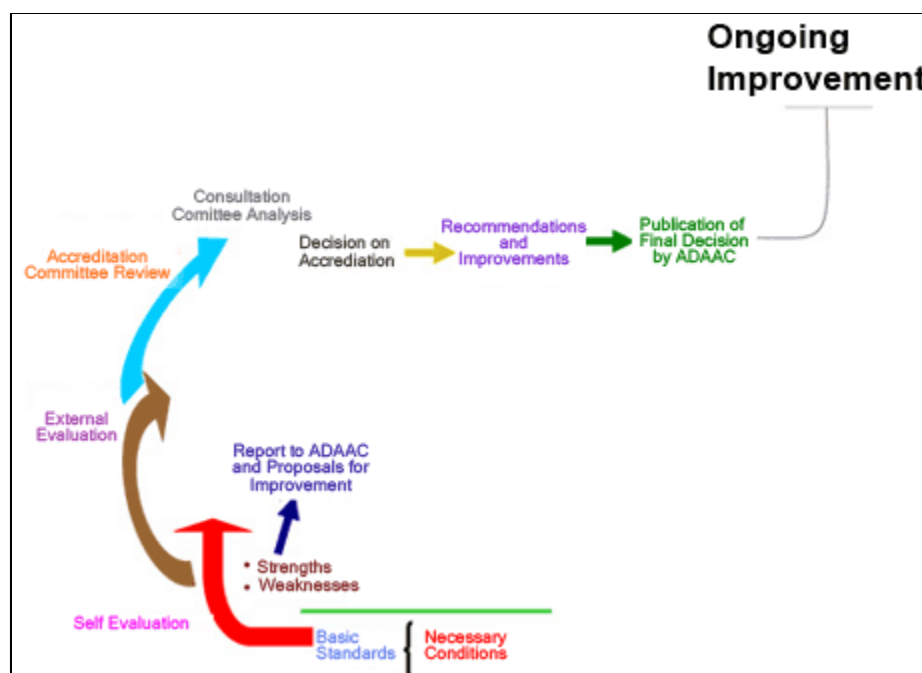
Dominican institutions of higher education seeking accreditation must formally solicit the ADAAC to undergo the process of evaluation. Universities and colleges must provide the ADAAC with documentation of their official authorization to operate, evidence of their successful state evaluation (performed by SEECYT), evidence of at least one graduated student, and the institution must have proof of five years of uninterrupted operation.

The evaluation process consists of seven steps as follows:

1. **Internal Evaluation:** The institution seeking accreditation organizes and completes an internal evaluation according to

official ADAAC guidelines.

2. **Submission of Internal Evaluation:** The institution in question submits an initial report on the results of the internal evaluation process and formally requests an external analysis.
3. **External Evaluation:** The ADAAC conducts an external evaluation of the institution, utilizing academic peers with expertise in the accreditation process. The ADAAC informs the institution of their findings and a set period of time is established for the institution to provide an official response either in agreement or disagreement with the findings of the external evaluation.
4. **Revision and Analysis:** The completed internal and external evaluations are reviewed by the ADAAC Accreditation Committee and the committee in turn makes its recommendation to the ADAAC Council of Directors.
5. **Further Consultation:** The ADAAC Consultation Committee reviews the recommendations of the Accreditation Committee
6. **Decision on Accreditation:** The Council of Directors scrutinizes the recommendations of both the Accreditation Committee and the Consultative Committee and reaches one of two conclusions:
 - a. The institution is granted accreditation
 - b. The institution receives a proposal for a plan of improvement that must be undertaken as a prior step to accreditation
7. **Publication of the Final Decision:** The ADAAC informs the institution and the public of their decision.



Source: [ADAAC](#)

ADAAC accreditation is not a permanent designation and is only valid for a period of five years, at which time an institution must again participate in the evaluation process. Universities and colleges can lose their accredited status voluntarily, for violating the organization's standards, and for the loss of official state authorization to operate.

LINKS TO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

- [ADAAC](#) (Spanish)
- [ADAAC Member Institutions](#) (Spanish)
- [ADAAC Accredited Institutions](#) (Spanish)
- [ADAAC Institutions in the Process of Accreditation](#) (Spanish)
- [SEECYT](#) (Spanish)