



WORLD EDUCATION NEWS AND REVIEWS

April 2007

Practical Information

Accreditation in Latin America and the Caribbean:

Guatemala

Universidad San Carlos (USAC)

Consejo de la Enseñanza Privada Superior (CEPS)

BACKGROUND:

The higher education establishment of Guatemala consists of one public and nine private universities that operate with official State recognition. The Guatemalan Constitution grants the Universidad San Carlos (USAC), the nation's one public university, complete legal autonomy and control over the development of State sponsored higher education. USAC, rather than the Ministry of Education, oversees all public research, professional development, the recognition and quality assessment of degrees both national and foreign, and has the right to initiative of law to govern these responsibilities.

Regulation of Guatemala's private higher education sector is the responsibility of the USAC as well as the Council of Private Higher Education (CEPS). CEPS is the closest thing Guatemala has to an accreditation body outside of the USAC, but neither organization facilitates an accreditation or quality assurance process as it is commonly understood in the United States. The council was established in 1987 with the charge of authorizing the creation of private universities, supervising their continuing function and maintaining the academic quality of education at each institution. By and large, CEPS serves as a clearinghouse that authorizes the opening of new private institutions and provides them with a platform to cooperate with one another.

The Council of Private Higher Education is composed of two delegates from the Universidad San Carlos, two delegates from each private university and one delegate from among the presidents of the country's professional licensing boards. Delegates are elected to serve for a period of 18 months. The presidency of the council rotates every six months between delegates from the USAC, private universities, and the licensing boards.

The Council is divided into three branches: the executive secretariat, the treasury and the specific commissions that complete special assignments for the organization and report on these projects. Funding for CEPS is provided by the group's member universities.

DEVELOPMENTS IN ACCREDITATION:

Universities in Guatemala, both public and private, are granted a great deal of autonomy. Beyond the basic authorization to operate, CEPS does not generally intervene in the operations of its member universities except to report a specific case of egregious negligence in terms of the quality of infrastructure, staff or the education being provided.

In Guatemala, as in many countries in Latin America, the lack of a tradition of quality assurance at the university level, the absence of adequate funding, and need for clear governance in higher education has muddled the development of a standard accreditation process or governing body. Despite of this, and in order to comply with their government mandate to oversee private higher education, CEPS has initiated the process of creating the Sistema Nacional de Acreditación de la Educación Superior or National System of Accreditation for Private Higher Education (SINADEPS). SINADEPS will work with the USAC in an effort to accredit all of the institutions of private higher education in Guatemala and eventually to evaluate and recognize individual departments at each university. This process will require a great deal of cooperation between the private and public

sectors, a development many experts hypothesize will be expedited by the future strengthening of regional cooperation amongst accrediting organizations.

For its part, the USAC has begun utilizing a quality assurance system of internal and external evaluation on a departmental basis – a process directed by the Central American regional accreditation agency [SICEVAES](#) (Central American System of Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education).

LINKS TO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

- [CEPS](#) (Spanish)
- [Guatemalan Institutions Recognized by CEPS](#) (Spanish)

© 2007 World Education Services

Bowling Green Station

P.O. Box 5087

New York, NY 10274-5087

USA