



WORLD EDUCATION NEWS AND REVIEWS

April 2007

Practical Information

Accreditation in Latin America and the Caribbean:

Honduras

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras (UNAH)

Sistema Nacional de Acreditación de la Educación Superior de Honduras (SINAESH)

BACKGROUND:

Article 160 of the Honduran Constitution designates the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras (UNAH) as a decentralized body autonomous from the State with the responsibility to authorize, organize, direct and develop the nation's professional and higher education. In 1989, this policy was augmented by the higher education law establishing the Council of Higher Education, the current administrator of public and private centers of higher education in Honduras apart from UNAH. The Ministry of Education does not participate in the regulation of university education.

The Council of Higher Education is presided over by the president of UNAH and staffed by six appointed UNAH education professionals, six top administrators from other national universities public or private, and the head of the Council's Executive Directorship. The Council's responsibilities include setting and enforcing higher education policy and approving the creation of public and private universities. To accomplish these goals the council employs two separate bodies. The first is the Council of Technical Consultants made up of education professionals from around the country that reports to the Council on matters pertaining to the improvement of higher education around the nation. The second is an Executive Directorship that performs functions such as authorizing the creation of new university departments or setting academic benchmarks required to earn particular degrees.

DEVELOPMENTS IN ACCREDITATION:

Through the UNAH, the Council of Higher Education dictates formalized academic standards for higher education with the aim of regulating the development of university education in the country. New universities and branch campuses are required to follow these standards, and institutions are to establish internal evaluation systems and report periodically to regional administrative centers overseen by the Council of Higher Education and UNAH. The extent to which these practices are observed or policed is unclear. What is clear, however, is that the only legally recognized tertiary degrees offered in Honduras are those awarded through UNAH (and subsequently the Council of Higher Education) or other institutions recognized by UNAH.

In recent years, the institutions of Honduras have begun to explore the prospect of accreditation as it has become a more prominent issue throughout the Central American higher education community. Up to this point, accreditation in Honduras has been a task taken on by the relatively new regional accreditation organizations like the Central American System of the Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education (SICEVAES), the Association of Private Universities of Central America (AUPRICA), and the Central American System of Research and Postgraduate Study (SICAR). Individual institutions of higher education have taken it upon themselves to submit to the accreditation process in varying degrees (typically on an institutional basis at private universities and on a departmental level at public) from these various regional accreditation organizations.

The Council of Higher Education has put into motion plans to create the National System of Accreditation of Higher Education in Honduras (SINAESH), an autonomous organization that will be responsible for guaranteeing and certifying the quality of both

public and private Honduran tertiary institutions. Universities appear to support this measure and some institutions are preparing for this development by employing internal evaluation officials such as the Director of Evaluation and Accreditation at the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional Francisco Morazán, the Director of Teaching at UNAH, and the Executive Director of Quality at the Universidad Católica de Honduras. Taking all of this into account, it is apparent that the basic ideas and mechanisms are in place to develop a tradition of quality assurance at Honduran institutions of higher education in the near future and that the universities of Honduras have demonstrated a willingness to participate in the accreditation process.

ACCREDITED INSTITUTIONS AND DEPARTMENTS (2005):

| Institution | Accredited Department of Institution | Accrediting Body | Date | Type of University | Other Notes |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------|--------------------|------------------|
| UNAH | Masters in Social Work | SICAR | 1996 | Public | |
| UNAH | Neurology | International Society of Neurology | | Public | Visited Annually |
| UNAH | Neuroscience | International Society of Neuroscience | | Public | Visited Annually |
| UNAH | Masters Economics and Development | SICAR | 1996 | Public | |
| UNITEC | Masters in Accounting | ICAC | | Private | |
| UNITEC | Institutional | AUPRICA | 1997/1998 | Private | |
| UJCV | Institutional | AUPRICA | 1997/1998 | Private | |
| USPS | Institutional | AUPRICA | 1997/1998 | Private | |
| EAP | Institutional | AUPRICA | 1997/1998 | Private | |
| UNICAH | Institutional | ICOTEC | 2000 | Private | |
| UTH | Institutional | AUPRICA | 2005 | Private | |

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