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**Construcción de capacidades para el desarrollo de CENTROS DE ENSEÑANZA
y APRENDIZAJE para las Universidades de Latinoamérica en el Siglo XXI**



Accreditation and Certification of Teaching and Learning Centres Service (ACCEA)

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1. Introduction

This document presents a first version of the ACCEA – the Accreditation and Certification of Teaching and Learning Centres (TLC) Service. The ACCEA considers levels of development in the installation and operation of TLC, according to the needs and requirements of each higher education institution and the context in which it is immersed.

In this report it is described how the ACCEA was designed based on research and best practices, how it operates and what differentiated services it provides and indicates the necessary steps for a TLC to be accredited by this service.

The ACCEA aims at ensuring quality assurance of Teaching and Learning Centres for the 21st century, based on the best standards and practices.

2. Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Teaching and Learning Centres

2.1. Quality assurance as a critical pillar for digital education recognition

In recent years, higher education institutions (HEI) have been engaging in a complex process of digital transformation in which data is central to how teaching and learning is practiced [1,2]. As a result, all HEI processes are being reengineered to take full advantage of the exciting possibilities of new digital technologies, notably artificial intelligence (AI), adaptive technologies and learning analytics [3,4].

This transition has been massively disseminated and much accelerated by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic [5]. It is also a transversal change movement as it includes online, distance and open education HEI as well, which are facing specific but no fewer challenges of their own [6,1]. For ensuring the success of such an ambitious and far-reaching innovation programme, HEI must strengthen the capabilities and empower their departments or units dedicated to teaching and learning support, which are typically organised in the format of teaching and learning centres (TLC).

TLC are therefore called to play a more decisive and proactive role in this new context. They should broaden their outreach and develop a more comprehensive and strategic set of activities [3,7]. This requires more and better qualified, as well as trained resources. Moreover, it calls for a more sophisticated model of operation. However,

with greater importance, power and visibility, comes greater responsibility and more need for accountability as well. The new upgraded status given to TLC suggest that they should receive now full attention from quality assurance bodies and be subject of specific accreditation. This would ensure public recognition of its readiness to play such a critical and demanding role as the one suggested above.

In recent years, quality assurance agencies worldwide have been setting quality and accreditation standards for digital education provision which share many similar elements [8]. TLC or HEI teaching and learning support services have been one of the mains aspects considered in these standards. However, there were not until now specific standards for TLC. Without standards, it is difficult for an HEI to benchmark its TLC against others which creates ambiguity regarding expectations for quality.

This lack of standards can also create issues with the credibility of TLC. HEI may install departments or units that do not incorporate best practices resulting in a poor teaching experience for faculty and a poor learning environment for students. Without appropriate support and professional development, faculty comfortable teaching in a traditional face-to-face mode may not understand their role in a hybrid, distance, or technology-enhanced learning environment. In addition, faculty may not understand how to best support students in a virtual classroom.

However, given the rapidly changing educational environment, certification programs for quality in TLC cannot be focus so much on achievements, but on areas for improvement. They should be useful to the higher education community. Therefore, they need to be designed in such a way that promotes continuous improvement. Nevertheless, they should respect the self-determination of each TLC and the autonomy of every HEI has. Perceived quality in higher education is above all a judgement on the 'distinctiveness' of a given institution or programme [9]. That is why quality accreditation of TLC must be understood as a cultural process that should engage every of its members and permeate all levels of the HEI.

2.2. An overview of systems and practices

Each country has its own unique higher education system, policies, and cultural context, which influence the development and status of teaching and learning centres (TLC). As such, there are important differences amongst TLC across the world.

Looking from a regional perspective this same diversity can also be seen. In Europe, TLC vary in terms of their structure, focus, and resources. TLC are called to play an increasingly more relevant role due to the positive impact of European policies [10,11]. One of these consequences has been the dissemination of student-centred approaches, competence-based learning and digital education which has led to major transformations in teaching and learning methodologies. Many HEI have established dedicated centres or departments that support faculty development, pedagogical innovation, and the enhancement of teaching and learning practices. These centres often provide training, workshops, and resources for faculty members and offer guidance on curriculum design, assessment methods, and the integration of technology in teaching. However, they may play additional roles.

In the case of Portugal, for instance, recent legislation has been issued by Government regulating distance education provision for higher education [12], including how the quality assurance agency should accredit programmes delivered online. In this scenario, TLC are called not only to support faculty and students in conducting learning innovation, but must also advise the HEI on how to apply the specific regulatory frameworks to their teaching and learning practice.

TLC have a long and very strong tradition in the US. They are spread across US' HEI and play a vital role in supporting faculty members in their teaching endeavours. These centres provide professional development opportunities, workshops, and resources to enhance pedagogical practices. They also assist faculty in adopting innovative teaching methods, leveraging educational technology, and promoting inclusive teaching strategies. Many teaching and learning centres in the US focus on faculty training, curriculum design, assessment techniques, and the scholarship of teaching and learning.

In Canada, many universities have also established reputed centres or units dedicated to faculty development and enhancing teaching effectiveness. These centres offer workshops, seminars, and resources to support faculty members in adopting evidence-based teaching strategies, incorporating technology, and promoting inclusive and learner-centered approaches. They also collaborate with faculty to develop and redesign curriculum, facilitate peer mentoring, and encourage scholarship related to teaching and learning.

TLC are also gaining increased recognition and importance in Latin American HEI. As witnessed and partly supported by the PROF XXI project, many HEI in the region have been establishing centres or units to provide support and professional development opportunities for faculty members. These centres focus on improving pedagogical practices, promoting active learning, and enhancing the quality of teaching. They often offer workshops, training programs, and resources to help faculty members integrate innovative teaching methods, technologies, and assessment strategies. Moreover, regional initiatives and networks, such as the PROF XXI network have been fostering collaboration and sharing best practices regarding TLC activities amongst Latin American HEI.

Even if TLC assume different approaches and implement various practices, they all seem to emphasize faculty development, evidence-based practices, technology integration, assessment strategies, and the creation of supportive communities for teaching professionals. Adapting and adopting such practices can contribute to the accreditation and enhancement of TLC.

2.3. A model for quality assurance of Teaching and Learning Centres

Although designing a quality accreditation system for TLC is a complex process given that good practices can vary depending on each context and access to research output, current good practices suggest considering a number of components and

principles. In our research we have identified thirteen general good practices to take into consideration in this regard. They are presented below:

✓ Vision, mission and goals

The vision, mission and goals of the accreditation system should be clearly defined and emphasize the importance of promoting excellence in teaching and learning. They must be coherent and foster continuous improvement, ensuring adherence to research-based good practices. To ensure that the TLC fully understands the quality enhancement nature of this exercise is of critical importance. The sustainability of the process and the reputation of the system within the HEI and its actors depends on the clarity of its purposes.

✓ Standards and Criteria

A set of rigorous standards and criteria must be developed by the accreditation system. These standards should reflect research-based principles and current good practices in teaching and learning. These should also cover various aspects such as curriculum design, instructional strategies, assessment methods, student support services, faculty qualifications and development, learning outcomes, and educational digital technologies [13].

✓ Self-Assessment

A sound accreditation system should establish a process for TLC to conduct a comprehensive self-assessment based on the defined standards and criteria. This process allows centres to evaluate their own practices and identify areas for improvement. Experience has demonstrated that quality enhancement is most effective when directed at promoting the TLC's own capability to reflect on its practice and autonomously evaluate its own strengths and weaknesses. In order to facilitate this, accreditation systems should provide guidelines and tools to support self-assessment, such as assessment frameworks, templates, and benchmarks. As shown in the case of the e-Xcellence quality label by EADTU, this goal can be achieved not only by delivering in the web reference documents and additional guidance, but also by allowing for self-assessment to be fully conducted online through the use of an application (e-Xcelence quickscan) or by consulting a dedicated manual [14].

✓ Peer Review

The most critical part of an accreditation system operation is the implementation of a peer review mechanism where external experts review the reports and other documentation produced by the TLC and visit it to evaluate their practices. The experts should be recruited amongst experienced senior academics or other specialists in this topic. These experts should assess the TLC's adherence to the accreditation standards and provide feedback, recommendations, and commendations for improvement.

✓ Continuous Improvement

As already mentioned above, the importance of continuous improvement of the accredited TLC is paramount. This should be expressed by the system's requirement for TLC to develop action plans based on the feedback received

from self-assessment and peer review. The accreditation system must therefore encourage TLC to implement these improvement plans and follow up the process by regularly monitoring their progress.

✓ Data Collection and Analysis

The accreditation system should establish a systematic process for data collection, including both qualitative and quantitative measures, to assess the effectiveness of teaching and learning practices. This may involve analysing student outcomes, feedback from students and faculty, graduation rates, retention rates, and other relevant metrics. This data should be used to identify trends, strengths, weaknesses, and areas requiring further attention.

✓ Professional Development

TLC should be encouraged by the accreditation system to provide ongoing professional development opportunities for their faculty and staff. This can include workshops, training programs, conferences, and access to resources that promote the adoption of research-based practices and enhance teaching and learning skills.

✓ Stakeholder Engagement

It is now a common practice amongst quality assurance and accreditation bodies and systems to involve stakeholders such as students, faculty, administrators, and industry representatives in the evaluation process. Accreditation systems should seek their input through surveys, focus groups, and participation in review panels. This practice is fundamental for ensuring that the systems remain responsive to the needs and expectations of all stakeholders.

✓ Accreditation Decision

Based on the self-assessment, external evaluation by external experts, and improvement plans, accreditation systems should take decisions on the recognition status of the TLC. Evidence shows that accreditation systems are more effective if they establish different levels of accreditation (e.g., provisional, full accreditation) to recognize varying levels of achievement. Anyway, accreditation decisions must be communicated to the TLC in due time, along with detailed feedback and recommendations.

✓ Recognition and Rewards

One of the accreditation system's component which has a larger impact is precisely the recognition and rewarding of TLC. Accreditation systems should recognize and award the TLC which consistently demonstrate exemplary practices and achieve high standards. This can be in the form of public recognition and accreditation status. But, in some cases it also involves funding opportunities and/or other incentives that encourage TLC to strive for excellence.

✓ Public Reporting and Recognition

Like quality assurance agencies, accreditation bodies are required to develop effective systems to publicly report the accreditation status of the TLC. This is a most important element of the process. Unfortunately, this is not always properly ensured. However, the HEI reputation depends on how their TLC's quality is accredited and duly communicated to the public. In several countries it is now mandatory for quality assurance and accreditation bodies or systems to release on their webpages the information on the accreditation decisions. Similarly, also the HEI are required to publicise on their web portals the information related to quality assurance and accreditation processes involving the institution as a whole and their units and programmes as well.

✓ Periodic Review

Evidence shows the importance of a sustainable and enduring connection between HEI and quality assurance bodies. The same principle applies to the accreditation of TLC. Follow up of accreditation processes is critical to ensure the sustainability of the recognition. However, this is also true for the accreditation system itself. It is vital to conduct periodic reviews and updates of system to incorporate emerging research findings, evolving best practices, and feedback from stakeholders. This ensures that the system remains relevant, robust, and aligned with the changing landscape of teaching and learning.

✓ Research and Evaluation

Closely connected with the previous component is the importance of applying to the accreditation system the principles of reflective practice and quality by research. Accreditation bodies should continuously gather data and conduct research to evaluate the effectiveness of the system. It is critical to use evidence-based findings to refine and enhance the accreditation process, ensuring it remains relevant and responsive to the transformation of educational culture and processes.

These practices may serve in our view as a foundation for developing a robust and effective accreditation system for TLC. However, it's important to tailor them to the context, goals, and unique characteristics of the TLC being accredited.

3. The Prof-XXI Accreditation and Certification Service for Teaching and Learning Centres (ACCEA)

3.1. Aim and mission

HEI across the world are being challenged to provide more engaging and personalised learning experiences, authentic and flexible enough to accommodate the increasing diversity of learners, their needs, and expectations [1,2]. As digital technologies rapidly

disseminate, HEI are making the best use of them to address this challenge and change their methods and organisational culture. As mentioned in section 1.2, processes are being reengineered to allow for continuous innovation and improvement of teaching and learning.

Teaching and Learning Centres (TLC) should play a pivotal role in promoting, supporting and evaluating the digital transformation of HEI, particularly in what concerns the educational processes. However, are they ready for that? Do they have the needed competences to play such demanding role and help their HEI to fulfil the requirements of the twenty-first century? The best way to ensure TLC readiness is to evaluate its capacities using a benchmark.

As an output of the PROF-XXI project, which focuses on enhancing the capacity of Latin American HEI, a dedicated service was conceived and implemented with the purpose of certifying, accrediting and auditing the quality of the TLC in face of the new challenges emerging. This service is called *Acreditación y Certificación de Centros de Enseñanza y Aprendizaje*, whose acronym is ACCEA. As a base for its benchmarking processes the ACCEA uses the PROF XXI Competence Framework for TLC [15]. The framework was designed based on the best standards and good practices currently available in Europe and considering the specific context of Latin American HEI. The evaluation process conducted recognises the cultural nature of digital transformation and aims at building capacities of the TLC and not only to recognise achievements. Therefore, it uses a developmental and incremental approach to quality assurance, focusing on autonomy, sustainability, and accountability. It intends to promote innovation and reflective practice.

The ACCEA developed by the PROF XXI project and implemented by the PROF XXI network of HEI is a unique service in its kind. Although designed with a particular focus on supporting Latin-American HEI, it is open to every TLC from other regions of the world wishing to obtain accreditation or certification of its competences. The only requirement is that TLC are in conformity with the PROF XXI competence framework.

The services provided include non-formal certification, formal accreditation, and quality audits of TLC. The reviews are conducted by experts in the field with large experience in promoting teaching and learning innovation at institutional scale.

3.2. The Prof XXI Competence Framework and the Terms of Reference for the Accreditation of TLC

The *PROF XXI Framework: Institutional Competences for 21st Century Learning* [15] draws from the *European Framework for Digitally Competent Educational Organisations* (DigCompOrg) [16] and the subsequent *European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators* (DigCompEdu) [17]. However, it's focus is not on the digitally readiness of organisations or on the digital capacities of educators, but on how TLC may be able to spearhead and support innovation of teaching and learning practices with the use of digital technologies. The framework organises a total of 50 competences that are distributed in 5 levels and 5 dimensions that are interrelated, as seen in table 1.

TABLE 1. PROF XXI Framework: Institutional Competences for 21st Century Learning

LEVEL OF COMPETENCE	OBJECTIVE	DIMENSIONS (A-E) AND COMPETENCES (A1-E2)				
		A. Teacher support	B. Student support	C. Leadership, Culture and Transformation	D. Technology for Learning	E. Evidence-based practices
1	Development	<p>A1. Identify innovative good practices with high impact considering the institutional educational project and local, national and international trends and good practices.</p> <p>A2. Design a model and/or actions for teacher training and counselling based on good practices and the characteristics of the disciplines.</p> <p>A3. Initially implement actions designed considering different scenarios and contexts.</p>	<p>B1. Diagnose student characteristics and needs in order to enhance teaching and learning processes.</p> <p>B2. Develop actions to support students considering the diagnosis, the educational project and the characteristics of the disciplines.</p> <p>B3. Implement actions or initiatives, considering emerging situations, and adjustments for continuous improvement.</p>	<p>C1. Identify stakeholders, taking into account characteristics, socio-cultural scenarios, leadership and cultural particularities within the institution.</p> <p>C2. Analyse previous experiences within the institution, linked to organisational cultural changes, identifying strengths, weaknesses and challenges.</p> <p>C3. Conceive a plan for the TLC adapted to the University's strategy, taking into account international reference models and good practices.</p>	<p>D1. Systematise prior learning in digital education and TEL, implemented within the institution.</p> <p>D2. Design a pedagogical model for quality digital education and TEL.</p> <p>D3. Implement digital education and TEL actions, in an initial way, considering the contexts and available resources.</p>	<p>E1. Identify available evidence and good practice in relation to teaching and learning at higher education level and disseminate these findings within the education community.</p> <p>E2. Collect initial results and effects on the actions taken, considering feedback from stakeholders and external non-participating peers.</p>
2	Innovation	<p>A4. Set up benchmarking and innovative experiences.</p> <p>A5. Promote innovation processes among teachers that have an impact on learning.</p> <p>A6. Encourage the coverage of teachers who implement innovations.</p>	<p>B4. Promote meaningful practices and tools for learning among students in the various disciplines.</p> <p>B5. Foster the articulation of teaching innovation with the effective learning experience of students.</p>	<p>C4. Promote groups of innovative teachers and support their transformational dynamics.</p> <p>C5. Generate collaboration and work networks among the various members of the university community.</p>	<p>D4. To train the various actors of the university community for the development of innovative practices with the use of digital technology.</p> <p>D5. To observe new TEL trends at international level.</p>	<p>E3. Use available evidence on teaching and learning.</p> <p>E4. Promote peer exchange related to innovative practices in teaching and learning.</p>
3	Value Generation	<p>A7. Disseminate innovative internal models and experiences of excellence for</p>	<p>B6. Contribute to increasing the quality of learning.</p>	<p>C6. Actively participate in the generation of an institutional culture of</p>	<p>D6. Encourage the increased implementation of TEL in everyday</p>	<p>E5. Generate evidence on results, outcomes and impacts.</p>

		teaching practices. A8. Generate changes in teaching practices and their effects on the student experience.	B7. To bring about positive effects on the student experience	sustainable transformation and quality. C7. Position the unit as relevant within the educational process.	learning. D7. Model TEL best practices among the educational community.	E6. Share the evidence collected among the different levels and actors of the organisation.
4	New Challenges and Opportunities	A9. To visualise new horizons on teaching practice, capable of fostering transformative pedagogical practices.	B8. Visualise new challenges and scenarios in student learning as lifelong practice. B9. Ensure the overall increase of student learning outcomes.	C8. Define metrics and indicators to evaluate the impact of pedagogical innovation. C9. Contribute to the process of transforming the University into a learning and innovative organisation.	D8. Sustainable involvement of the teaching staff in TEL pedagogical practices.	E7. Systematise the new challenges arising from the work, the available evidence and the good practices in actions for the institutional strategy.
5	Public accountability of impacts for continuous improvement	A10. Ensure tools to monitor and report on the quality of innovative teaching practices. A11. Support institutional decision-making based on challenges and good practices.	B10. Implement evaluation surveys on the university and student learning experience. B11. Support institutional decision-making based on the student experience.	C10. Evaluate the transformative impact of innovative teaching practices. C11. Generate spaces for dialogue and meetings that foster co-responsibility for results, effects and impacts among the different actors in the educational community.	D9. Implement public reports that account for the effects of TEL on educational practice.	E8. Communicate scientifically in different formats and external academic communities, the processes implemented within the unit.

Based on this competence framework, we have established a classification to describe the stage of development of TLC, which is expressed in 5 levels, as follows:

- Level 1 - *Development*
- Level 2 - *Innovation*
- Level 3 - *Value creation*
- Level 4 - *New Challenges and Opportunities*
- Level 5 - *Public accountability of impacts for continuous improvement*

For each of these stages of development, a set of standards and quality indicators was designed. These quality criteria are the following:

➤ **Level 1 - Development**

Standard - *The TLC demonstrates the basic competences to start its activities.*

Quality indicators:

- The TLC has a set of specialised human resources, material conditions and adequate technological infrastructure to support the educational community in conducting digital teaching and learning processes with quality.
- The TLC identifies innovative teaching practices and support needs by the different actors within the Higher Education Institution (HEI).
- The TLC aggregates feedback and organises the HEI's reflection and own institutional learning on digital education processes.

➤ **Level 2 - Innovation**

Standard - *The TLC demonstrates to have the necessary competences to be able to generate and promote educational innovation in its HEI.*

Quality indicators:

- The TLC has the capacity to install new educational experiences of reference.
- The TLC promotes the proficient use of digital technologies in the teaching and learning processes.
- The TLC generates spaces for training and exchange of good practices between the different actors.

➤ **Level 3 - Value creation**

Standard - *The TLC demonstrates to have the necessary competences to generate value in its institution, bringing about changes and transformations in its culture.*

Quality indicators:

- The TLC is able to disseminate new models of training and excellence to promote change.
- The TLC's action leads to an increase in the quality of education.
- The specific HEI policies for promoting digital education applied by the TLC contribute effectively to the cultural transformation of the institution.
- The TLC's action promotes the installation of good practices.
- The TLC generates evidence on new practices to support decision-making by the HEI governing bodies.

➤ **Level 4 - New Challenges and Opportunities**

Standard - *The TLC demonstrates to have the necessary competences to identify new institutional challenges related to innovation and teaching quality.*

Quality indicators:

- The TLC is able to identify and visualise new horizons on teaching practice and quality learning scenarios that enhance student learning.
- The TLC defines indicators and metrics to evaluate educational innovations.
- The TLC involves the institution's actors at different levels and systematises the challenges from the information collected into concrete actions for the institutional strategy.

➤ **Level 5 - Public accountability of impacts for continuous improvement**

Standard - *The TLC demonstrates to have the necessary skills to ensure the monitoring and transparency of the actions carried out.*

Quality indicators:

- The TLC assesses the impact of the actions taken for supporting teaching and learning innovation.
- The TLC assures the visibility of the impact of its activities through internal and public reports.
- The TLC conducts research projects to evaluate the impact of innovation activities conducted or to support continuous incremental innovation.

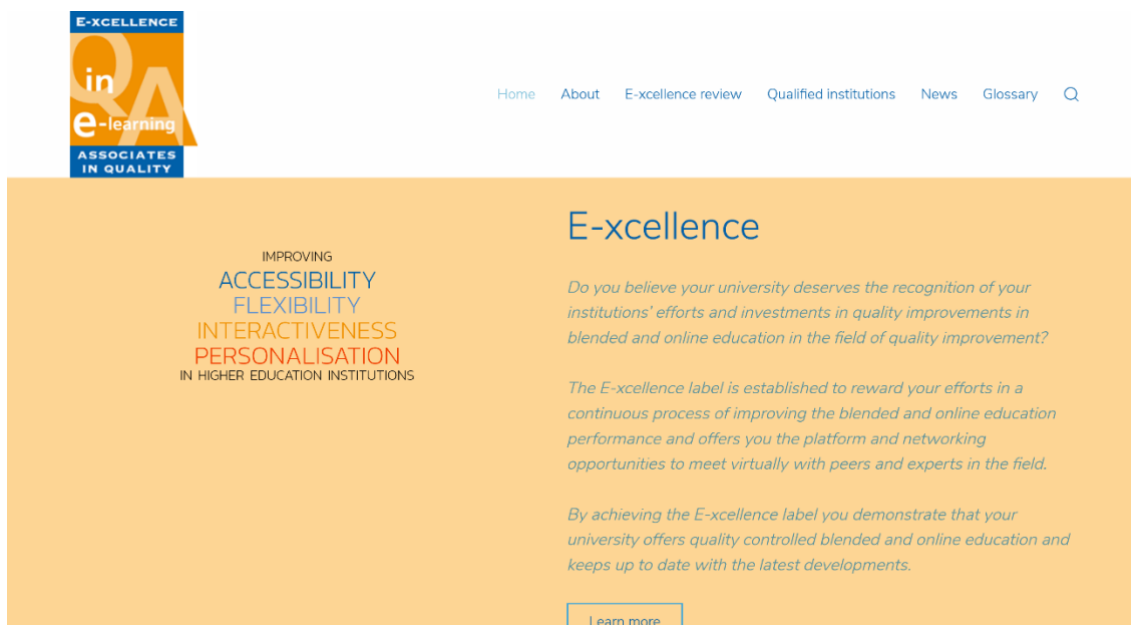
This set of quality criteria serve as reference for the accreditation processes conducted by the ACCEA.

3.3. Types of service provided

As explained in previous sections, the evidence collected from the literature review has shown that the most effective and sustainable way for designing a process of accrediting TLC is to adopt an holistic and developmental perspective. Applying such a vision which promotes quality enhancement and the active collaboration between the accrediting body and the HEI and its respective TLC, implies in our interpretation to provide differentiated services. In this way, the system is able to respond to the diversity of contexts and situations found in the various TLC. This was the basis for the decision to conceive the ACCEA not as a sole accreditation scheme, but as a comprehensive set of quality assurance and recognition services. In the following subsections, we describe three different kinds of services provided by the ACCEA, depicting the various phases of the evaluation processes and indicating what is expected from the HEI and the TLC to take part in them.

3.3.1. Non-Formal certification of TLC

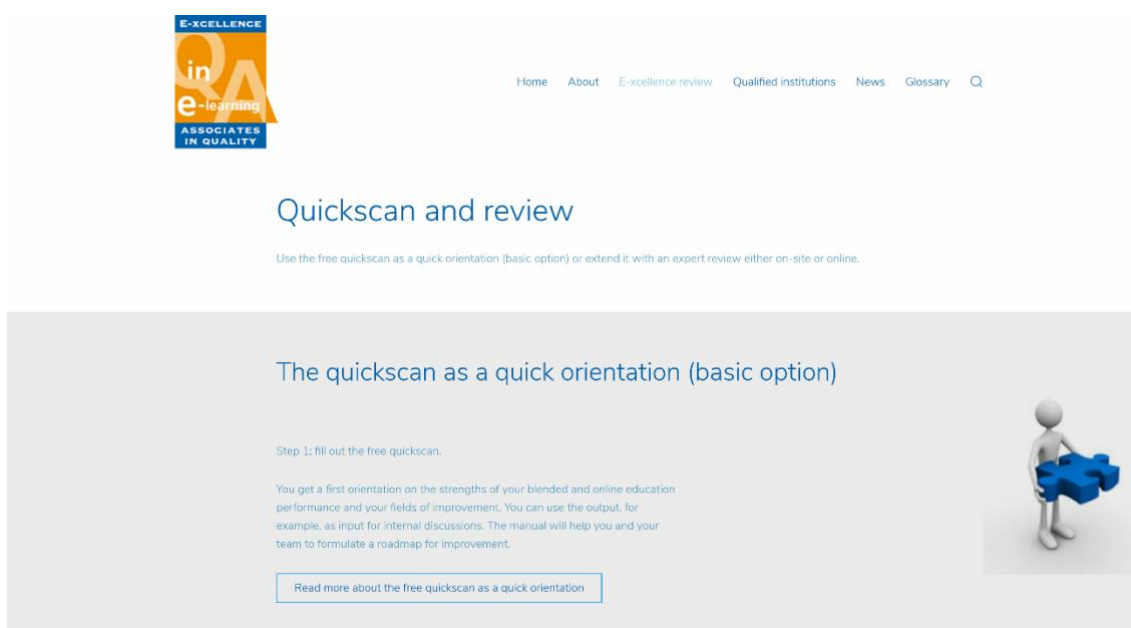
The best way to ensure that a TLC meets good quality standards and is able to effectively promote teaching and learning innovation is to conduct a basic benchmarking exercise. Following international best practices, namely the e-Xcellence quality label, developed by the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities – EADTU, this can be organised in different steps from a non-formal to a more formal process of certification.



Source: European Association of Distance Teaching Universities

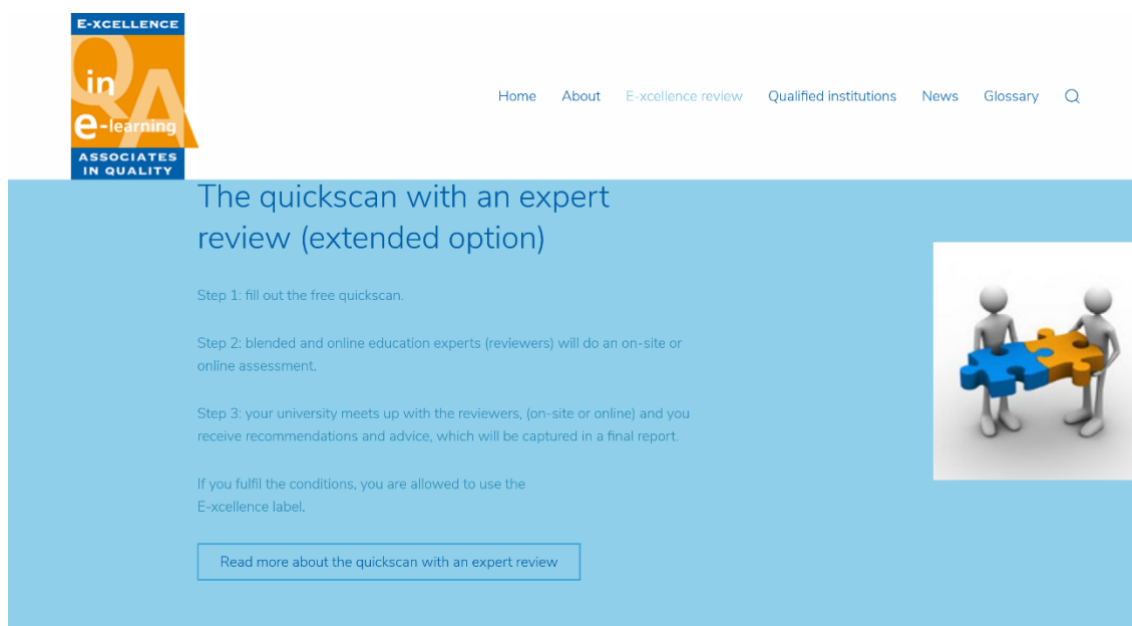
FIGURE 1. Screenshot of the landing page of the e-Xcellence website

In fact, making the best use of open resources, the system may invite the higher education community to conduct a quick self-evaluation as a trial of the benchmarking process. This strategy allows to widen the outreach of the accreditation system and is more engaging to the HEI as it awards more control to its representatives. They are able to play a more active role and decide how and when they want to expose their TLC to a more formal accreditation.



Source: European Association of Distance Teaching Universities

FIGURE 2. Screenshot of the Quickscan tool provided in the e-Xcellence website



Source: European Association of Distance Teaching Universities

FIGURE 3. Screenshot of the Quickscan with expert review variant by e-Xcellence

In the same line of reasoning, the ACCEA service provides the possibility for individual members of an HEI to openly and freely check if the TLC demonstrates the competences needed according to the PROF XXI Framework. This would be typically the case of senior staff with a leadership position at the TLC or members of the governing bodies of the HEI. The exercise aims at providing the HEI or the TLC leadership with general guidance on the strengths and weaknesses of its TLC. It allows them to evaluate the TLC stage of development and identify potential areas for improvement.

To make this option possible the PROF XXI consortium has designed an online institutional diagnostic test based on a set of standard questions with pre-defined answers. The test tool is open and free of charge. Anyone can access it, register a TLC and run the quick check. If the person successfully completes the self-evaluation, a non-formal certificate of compliance will be issued by ACCEA and the PROF XXI network of HEI. The online tool is accessible through the ACCEA webpage on the PROF XXI website.

3.3.2. Accreditation of TLC

The best next step to ensure that a Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) is fully prepared to promote teaching and learning innovation and is aligned with the best quality standards is to have it accredited according to the PROF XXI competence framework. When a HEI applies for the accreditation service, the ACCEA system will appoint an expert to perform an external review. Upon successful completion of the review a formal certification of accreditation will be issued to the TLC reviewed. The review process is organised in two stages, as described below.

The TLC is asked to produce a report describing its aim and mission, mode of organisation and operation, resources, funding, most relevant activities conducted and the evaluation of its impact. In addition, the TLC is expected to carry out a self-diagnosis indicating strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Based on that report, the ACCEA external expert conducts a visit to the HEI and its TLC. The expert is expected to analyse first-hand the services and the activities of the staff involved. In the event of a extraordinary situation which may prevent a physical visit, virtual meetings will be organised.

After the visit, the external expert prepares a report for the institution including the indication of the level of maturity according to the PROF XXI framework and suggesting recommendations for improvement.

Costs are to be covered by the applicant institution that requests the accreditation. They will be calculated according to actual incurred costs including the onsite visit.

3.3.2. Quality audit of TLC

Being as much comprehensive and integrated, the ACCEA system includes a quality audit service. It is designed to advise and support TLC in developing their competences, infrastructure, resources and activities. The inclusion of this more advanced service goes in line with need, as described in section 2.1 of this report, for quality assurance processes to be more focused on continuous improvement.

In such cases as a HEI applies for this service, the ACCEA will appoint a team of two (2) experts to perform an external quality audit. The review process will be organised in two stages. In the first step, the TLC is asked to produce a report in a format like the one described in the previous section about the accreditation process.

Based on that report, the ACCEA team of external experts conducts a visit to the HEI and its TLC. The experts are expected to analyse in depth the services and the activities of the staff involved, as well as to check its organisation, infrastructure, and resources. In a similar way to the accreditation service, in the event of a extraordinary situation which may prevent a physical visit, virtual meetings will be organised.

After the visit, the team of external experts prepares a report for the institution with an identification of domains to be improved and detailed recommendations. A follow-up of the process will be assured by the same team of experts.

As in the case of the accreditation process, costs are to be covered by the applicant institution that requests the audit. They will be also calculated according to actual incurred costs including the onsite visit.

3.4. Operational model and future sustainability

The ACCEA was created as an output of the PROF XXI project. The design of the system and its processes which is described in this deliverable was carried out using the resources of the Prof XXI project and of its consortium. The experimental

installation of the ACCEA involved four (4) Latin American HEI whose TLC were subject to review and were accredited. The external reviewer in charge of conducting the institutional visits was Oscar Jerez (Universidad de Chile, Chile). The 4 TLC accredited in the pilot phase of the ACCEA are the following:

- Centro de Enseñanza Aprendizaje – Innovación Educativa
Universidad del Cauca (Colombia)
[<https://cgcai.unicauca.edu.co/innovacioneducativa/>]
- Centro de innovación en Educación y pedagogía (CEA)
Universidad de San Buenaventura Calí (Colombia)
[<https://cea.usbcali.edu.co/>]
- Centro de Enseñanza Aprendizaje Edumedia
Universidad de San Carlos (Guatemala)
[<https://virtual.usac.edu.gt/dedev/cea/>]
- Centro de Enseñanza Aprendizaje
Universidad Galileo (Guatemala)
[<https://www.galileo.edu/page/cea/>]

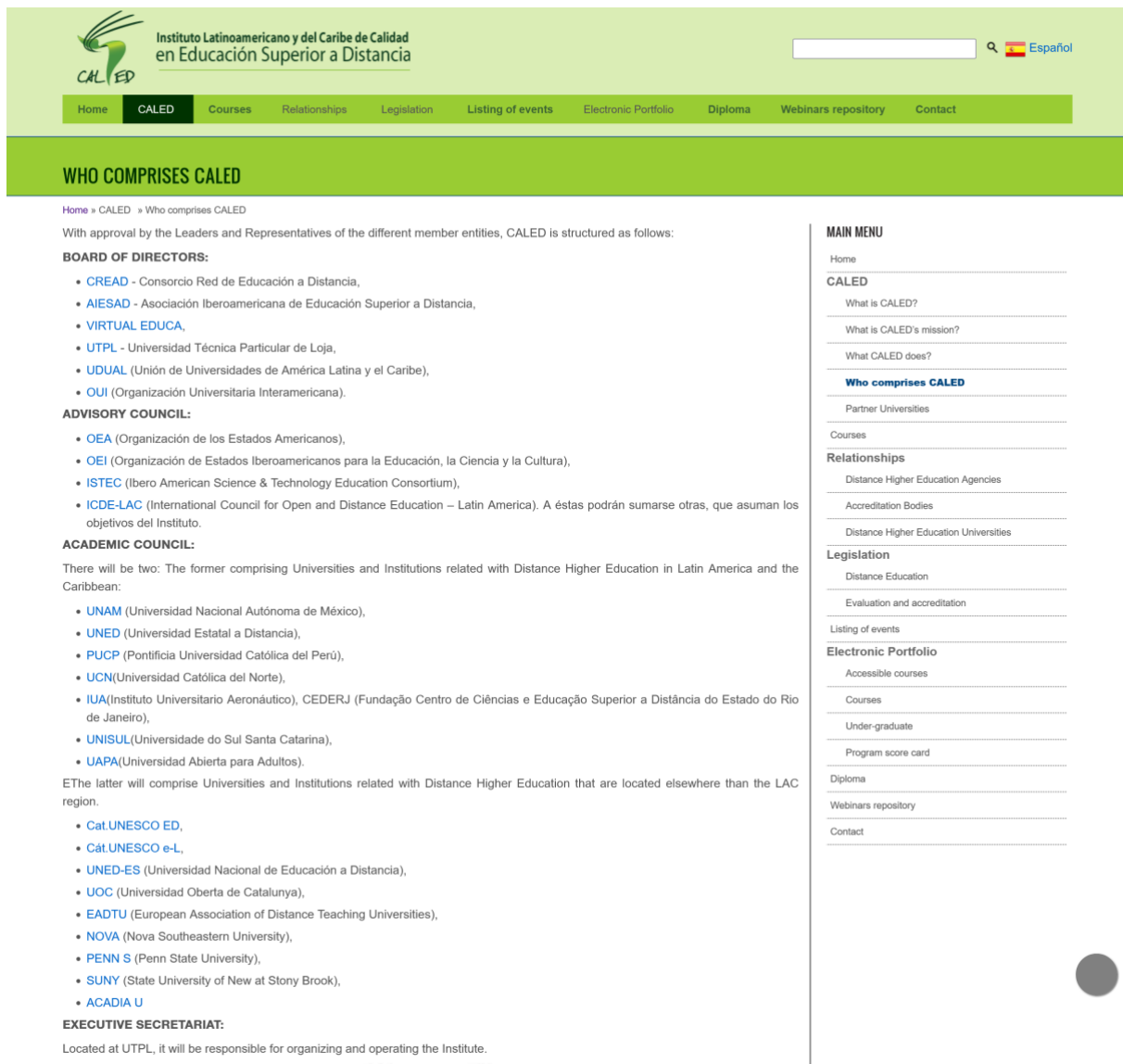
From the end of the project duration onwards the ACCEA is expected to operate in a different context. This transition was actually part of the design thinking process that led to the creation of the system. This new environment will be the Prof XXI network of HEI and TLC. Each founding HEI contributes by sharing human resources, namely the experts who constitute the pool of reviewers. This pool of reviewers from which the external evaluation panels are composed includes the following senior academics:

- Carlos Delgado Kloos (Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, Spain)
- Carlos Alario (Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, Spain)
- António Moreira Teixeira (Universidade Aberta, Portugal)
- Mar Pérez Sanagustín (Université Toulouse 3 – Paul Sabatier, France)
- Oscar Jerez (Universidad de Chile, Chile)
- Rocael Hernández (Universidad Galileo, Guatemala)
- Miguel Morales (Universidad Galileo, Guatemala)
- Héctor Amado Salvatierra (Universidad Galileo, Guatemala)
- Mario Solarte (Universidad de Cauca, Colombia)
- Astrid González (Universidad San Buenaventura Cali, Colombia)

As the ACCEA evolves additional experts external to the consortium will be recruited amongst experienced academics both from Europe and Latin American countries. A central office with a small managing team will be established. It will be hosted by one

of the Latin American HEI members of the PROF XXI network. According to plan, the host institution may vary in time according to the decisions taken by the network members. This central office though is expected to play basically a coordination role. Costs of the maintenance of the technological infrastructure, the managing team salaries and marketing should be minimal and will be covered by the host institution. As for the costs involved in the main operations, namely the accreditation reviews, it will be charged to each applicant HEI. A marginal profit should be applied and used for compensating central office costs.

This scheme is expected to allow for the sustainability of the operation. However, as for the long-term sustainability of the ACCEA, close cooperation and synergies with established and reputed quality assurance bodies, as the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Quality in Distance Higher Education - CALED, and such other relevant Latin American organizations, is planned. CALED provides advisory assistance, mainly in self-evaluation, for programs requiring this process. The Institute has also developed standards for quality assurance in higher education in Latin America and the Caribbean.



INSTITUTO LATINOAMERICANO Y DEL CARIBE DE CALIDAD EN EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR A DISTANCIA

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WHO COMPRISES CALED

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With approval by the Leaders and Representatives of the different member entities, CALED is structured as follows:

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

- **CREAD** - Consorcio Red de Educación a Distancia,
- **AIESAD** - Asociación Iberoamericana de Educación Superior a Distancia,
- **VIRTUAL EDUCA**,
- **UTPL** - Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja,
- **UDUAL** (Unión de Universidades de América Latina y el Caribe),
- **OUI** (Organización Universitaria Interamericana).

ADVISORY COUNCIL:

- **OEA** (Organización de los Estados Americanos),
- **OEI** (Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura),
- **ISTEC** (Ibero American Science & Technology Education Consortium),
- **ICDE-LAC** (International Council for Open and Distance Education – Latin America). A éstas podrán sumarse otras, que asuman los objetivos del Instituto.

ACADEMIC COUNCIL:

There will be two: The former comprising Universities and Institutions related with Distance Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean:

- **UNAM** (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México),
- **UNED** (Universidad Estatal a Distancia),
- **PUCP** (Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú),
- **UCN**(Universidad Católica del Norte),
- **IUA**(Instituto Universitario Aeronáutico), CEDERJ (Fundação Centro de Ciências e Educação Superior a Distância do Estado do Rio de Janeiro),
- **UNISUL**(Universidade do Sul Santa Catarina),
- **UAPA**(Universidad Abierta para Adultos).

EThe latter will comprise Universities and Institutions related with Distance Higher Education that are located elsewhere than the LAC region.

- **Cat.UNESCO ED**,
- **Cát.UNESCO e-L**,
- **UNED-ES** (Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia),
- **UOC** (Universidad Oberta de Catalunya),
- **EADTU** (European Association of Distance Teaching Universities),
- **NOVA** (Nova Southeastern University),
- **PENN S** (Penn State University),
- **SUNY** (State University of New at Stony Brook),
- **ACADIA U**

EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT:

Located at UTPL, it will be responsible for organizing and operating the Institute.

MAIN MENU

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 - What is CALED's mission?
 - What CALED does?
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Source: Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Quality in Distance Higher Education

FIGURE 4. Screenshot of the CALED webpage with the organisations it is comprised of

In this same regard and following international good practices, it is foreseen that the ACCEA will keep close ties with top research centres in digital education. The purpose of which being to maintain its relevance in face of teaching and learning continuous innovation and HEI evolution, as indicated in previous sections of this report.

In addition, to ensure its long-term sustainability and relevance, the ACCEA should itself be subject to periodic review. To carry out this goal, it is planned that the system establishes an independent panel consisting of three (3) reviewers representing major quality assurance bodies in Europe, Latin America and other regions. They are expected to conduct extensive reviews of the ACCEA system structure and activities.

3.5. A web portal of services

Coherently with the vision and mission of the ACCEA but also bearing in mind the need to assure an efficient use of resources, a major importance was given to the web presence of the service. In accordance, the Prof XXI website was redesigned in order to host the ACCEA microsite. This not only provides information on the services provided by ACCEA, but actually delivers some of them.

The concept behind the design of ACCEA's web presence was to build a micro portal of services. As such, in the menu of the PROF XXI website an extra field entitled 'Accreditation of TLC' was introduced, as shown in figure 5 for the English language version of the website.

About PROF XXI	Deliverables	Visibility	Accreditation of TLC
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FIGURE 5. Menu of subpages in the PROF XXI webpage (English language version)

A similar procedure was carried out regarding the Spanish and the Portuguese language versions of the same website, as can be seen in figures 6 and 7.

Acerca de PROF XXI	Red de Cooperación	Entregables	Formación	Visibilidad	Directorio de CEA	Accreditación de CEA
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FIGURE 6. Menu of subpages in the PROF XXI webpage (Spanish language version)

Sobre o PROF XXI	Entregáveis	Visibilidade	Acreditação de CEA
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FIGURE 7. Menu of subpages in the PROF XXI webpage (Portuguese version)

Users clicking in the 'Accreditation of TLC' button have access to the microsite. Information describing the ACCEA system concept and structure is presented in these three (3) languages. The webpage contains links to the subpages describing the services provided (the word 'certify' gives links to the 'Quick certification', the word 'accredit' links to the 'Accreditation' subpage, the word 'audit' links to the 'Quality audit' and the word 'PROF XXI Competencies framework' links to the homonymous subpage.

The ACCEA microsite has six (6) subpages, as shown in figure 8, below.

About	Quick certification	Accreditation	Quality audit	Accredited TLC	PROF XXI Competencies framework
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FIGURE 8. Menu of AACEA microsite (English language version)

Each of these subpages has similar versions in the three (3) languages referred above (English, Spanish and Portuguese). The information provided in the subpages describes in detail the process for obtaining quality certification and accreditation or for seeking support through a quality audit. TLC have access to relevant information on what is expected of them in the case they apply and what these processes will entail.

Moreover, TLC may conduct a self-evaluation exercise by engaging in the 'quick certification' benchmarking exercise. By accessing the respective subpage, users may use the dedicated open access online tool designed for autonomous testing of TLC's matching of PROF XXI competences.

The ACCEA microsite is online and operating from mid-July, 2023. It is foreseen that the PROF XXI network may redesign the microsite as an autonomous installation in the future depending on the increase of the service scale of operation.

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