

Working Group Discussion on Regional Cooperation initiatives

The Central American Quality Assurance System (CSUCA, CCA, ACAA, ACAP)

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The Central American Quality Assurance System is a two layers multinational and multisectorial system. It includes the participation of stake holders and universities from 7 countries: Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama. It also include the direct participation of public universities, private universities, ministries of education and professional bodies (university graduates) from the whole region.

At different levels of the system it also includes the participation of the National Organisms for Science and Technology, the Academy of Sciences and in a much less extend the participation of representatives of the bussiness sector. It also might extend its geographical scope to include another country: The Dominican Republic, since the main university of that country have become member of CSUCA.

It is a two layer system since in one layer it includes a Central American Accreditation Council (CCA) in charge of setting good practice principles for accreditation and standards for the accreditation organisms which operate in the region. A Council in charge of carrying out the metaevaluation of the accreditation agencies and its procedures, and awarding regional reckognition or accreditation to the accreditation agencies. In the other layer the system includes the accreditation bodies themselves, in charge of accrediting the universities and or their study programs.

In the accreditation of the study program or universities level, there are two main kind of accreditation organisms or agencies: On one hand, the Regional (Central American) level usually specialized accreditation agencies, such as ACAA (accrediting engineering and architecture programs, 2006), ACESAR (accrediting agriculture, food and natural resources management programs, 2005), ACAP (accrediting postgraduate study programs, PhD, MSc, MA, and professional speciality programs, 2006), AUPRICA (accrediting only private universities at institutional level only, 1990). On the other hand, the National level usually non specialized accreditation agencies, such as SINAES (in Costa Rica, 1998), CdA (in El Salvador, 1998), CONEAUPA (in Panama, 2006) and more recently CNEA (in Nicaragua, 2007).

This is a very young Regional Quality Asurance System. The main organism, the CCA was formally established at the end of 2003, and the majority of the accreditation bodies have been established after that.

SEE ATTACHED DIAGRAM

CENTRAL AMERICAN QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

