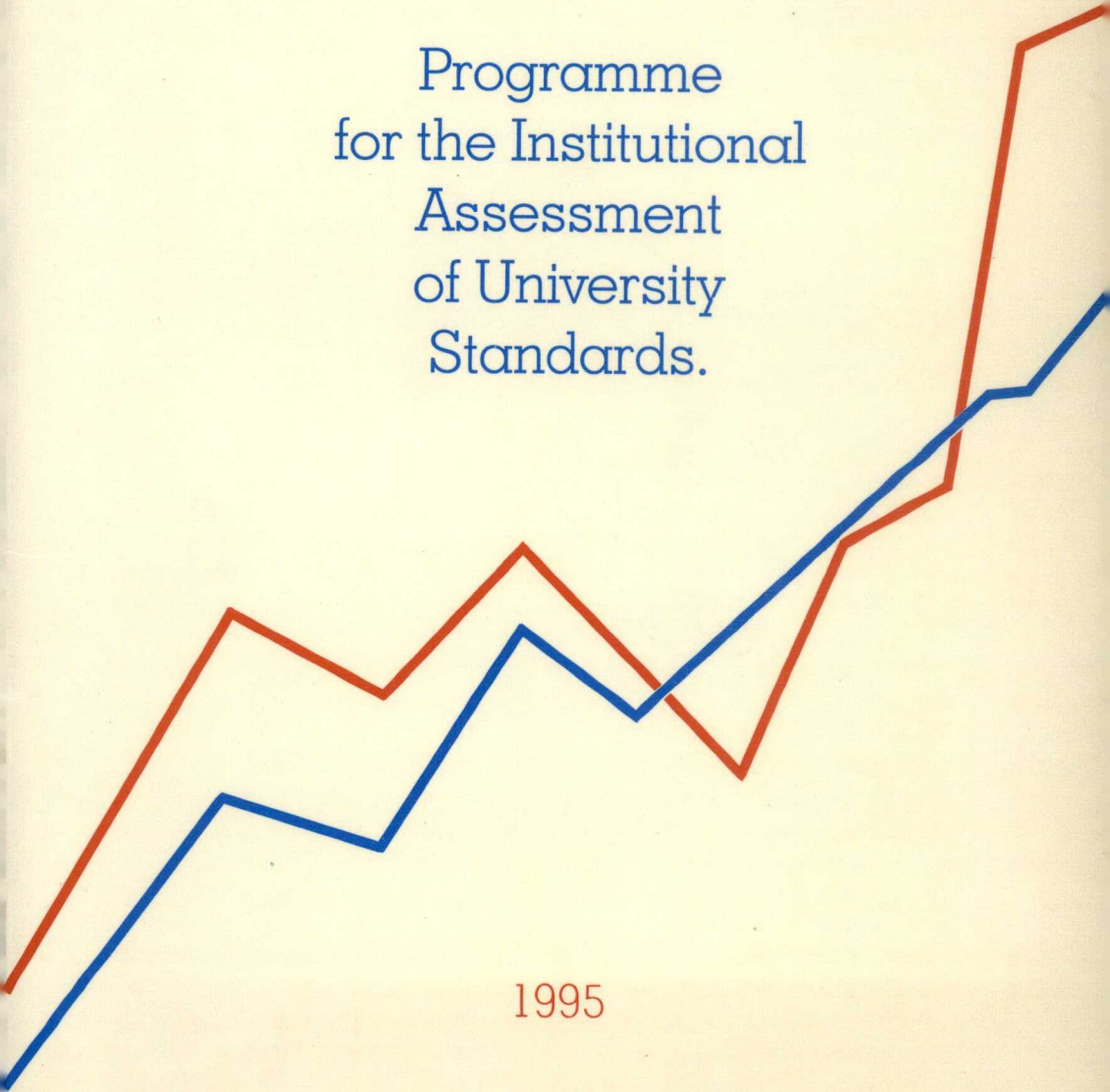




Consejo de Universidades
Secretaría General

Programme
for the Institutional
Assessment
of University
Standards.



1995

C1232/15



Consejo de Universidades
Secretaría General

DONATIVO

Programme
for the Institutional
Assessment
of University
Standards.



BIBLIOMECA



026816



R-108.126



Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia

Consejo de Universidades. Secretaría General

Edita: Centro de Publicaciones. Secretaría General Técnica

N.I.P.O.: 176-95-359-3

Depósito legal: M. 39.011-1995

Imprime: Impresos y Revistas, S. A. (IMPRESA)

Index

I. ASSESSMENT OF UNIVERSITY STANDARDS	7
1. The need to assess university quality	9
2. Basic objectives and methodology of the assessment	11
II. THE EXPERIENCE OF SPAIN IN UNIVERSITY ASSESSMENT	13
1. Model of assessment for the Spanish Experimental programme	16
2. European Pilot Project	18
3. Conclusions of the Spanish experience	19
III. NATIONAL PROGRAMME OF INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT	21
1. Objectives	23
2. Basic criteria	23
3. Organizational structure	24
4. Content of the assessment projects	26
5. Assessment Guide	27
a) Deadlines	27
b) Structure of the reports	28
c) Assessment of the teaching	28
d) Assessment of the research	29
e) Assessment of the management and other services	29
IV. CONSEQUENCES OF PARTICIPATION IN ASSESSMENT PROJECTS	31

A document on Institutional Assessment of University Standards together with a National Programme for the Assessment of University Standards has been approved by the Consejo de Universidades in its Plenary Session held at the University of Almería on 25 September 1995.

In the same session, it has been agreed to submit to the Government this document in order to be adopted and implemented with the necessary rules to make possible its development and execution.

The proposal presented here is based on the Consejo de Universidades own experience and on the results of the Experimental Programme for the Assessment of University Standards and the European Pilot Project for Assessment of Standards of Higher Education.

This publication includes the document approved by the Consejo de Universidades in its Plenary Session and submitted to the Government.

Madrid 30 October 1995

Francisco Michavila Pitarch
The Secretary General
of the Consejo de Universidades

I

**Assessment
of University Standards**

Improvement in both scientific and academic standards and performance is the most important challenge that must be faced by Spanish universities in the next few years. Among the measures recommended in the *Report on Funding of the University System* to improve higher education are the implementation of programmes to assess university standards. The main objective of this document is to define this initiative, and to submit the directives for the National Programme for the Assessment of University Standards to the approval of the Consejo de Universidades plenary session.

The proposal presented here is based on the own experience of the Consejo, and especially on the results of the Experimental Programme for the Assessment of University Standards implemented between 1992 and 1994 and the European Pilot Project for Assessment of Standards of Higher Education, in which four Spanish universities took part, coordinated by the Secretaría General of the Consejo de Universidades and the results of which will be made public before the end of 1995.

1. The need to assess University standards

The vocation of Universities to seek academic and scientific excellence obliges them to continually improve the standards of the services they offer society in the fields of science, research and culture. They are also, to a certain extent, reference points by which the standards of the rest of the education, scientific and cultural systems of the country are evaluated.

In Spain, as in all the other developed countries, higher education, and in particular university education, has experienced an important, quantitative and structural change. Institutions such as the traditional universities, designed to meet the demand of a limited number of students, have had to serve a *mass demand*, with enrolment figures similar to those characteristic of lower levels of education a few decades ago.

On the other hand, scientific, technical and humanistic research, another of the principle roles of universities in the more developed societies, has acquired a strategic position in economic development, which has led to a greater social interest for the output of universities in this field.

This intensification of societies expectations of the universities has been accompanied by a *significant increase in the funds* destined to finance these activities. In Europe this is mainly comprised of public funding, and a demand for more responsible and effective control of these funds, obliging it to be at all times compatible with university autonomy.

In the European, and especially the Spanish context, the current university system can be further defined by other factors. On the one hand, an in depth knowledge of the structure and framework within which the university develops its activity is necessary together with the need to compile and divulge information, especially that produced in the university system with *responsibilities assumed by the Autonomous Communities (Comunidades Autónomas)*.

Also, the increasing *integration of university systems in different European Community countries*, together with the consequences this could have on the training of qualified professionals and their mobility within the Community environment, also necessitate coordination and standardization of the different systems of higher education.

Finally, the increase in the *mobility of students* and inter-university cooperation also generate a need for instruments of assessment that aid recognition of systems of credit used in different universities, giving objective and standardized information.

In this context, the different initiatives for assessment of university standards can be understood as ways in which:

- the university autonomy can respond to *internal demands for improving standards*.
- to provide instruments to *aid decision making process* in university policy.
- a way to *account to society* the academic and scientific outcome of the funds they are investing
- to aid the *mobility, cooperation and emulation* between the different universities both in a national and community context.

In the European Union there are several experimental programmes (France, Great Britain, Holland, Denmark and Sweden) for the assessment of universities that are institutionalized and linked in different ways to the respective university policies. One of the objectives of the pilot projects started by the European Commission is to generalize these experiments and to set up a procedure for assessment of university standards at the Community level.

In Spain, with respect to improvement of standards they have developed and controlled the assessment of teaching (the basic criteria of which were formulated by the Consejo de Universidades) and the assessment of university reform according to the Royal Decree 1497/87 of which the initiative, management, proposal for conclusions and adoption of resolutions are the responsibility of the Consejo de Universidades.

2. Objectives and basic methodology of the assessment

A programme to assess university standards must fulfil a double objective. On the one hand, the university that is assessed should be informed of the standard of its activities, be made aware of its weak points and strong points and define strategic plans of action in order to optimize its performance.

On the other hand, the assessment programme should give to the entities that finance the universities (especially Public Administrations) and to those who use university services (firstly the students and their families but also companies and different institutions interested in higher education and research) *objective and reliable information* about the standard reached by each institution.

The basic premise to which an assessment programme with these objectives responds is that the social responsibility of a university institution does not only involve fulfilment of the laws that govern its operation and define its institutional obligations but also includes, as a counterpart of its high level of institutional autonomy, *the obligation to actively seek academic excellence and aim to provide the highest standards in all the services they offer.*

Under no circumstances should the assessment of standards be interpreted as a procedure by which the syllabuses of the universities of a country can be linearly ordered. Standard is a multidimensional concept that should be considered taking into account the specific circumstances and the social, economic and cultural context of each institution.

From this perspective we can understand the common characteristics of the different systems of assessment that have been used by different European universities. These systems of assessment combine procedures of self-assessment of the university community itself, with elements of external assessment carried out by experts not belonging to the institution. This self-assessment is essential in order to involve the university community in improving the standards of its university. The external assessment is also essential as an element of contrast and objectivity in the process. In all cases, however, although certain features are different, schedules or guides for assessment are followed that ensure the employment of standardized criteria. Finally, the assessment should be recorded in a public report which compiles the most relevant information. This should be used by the appropriate Public Administration to aid in making decisions concerned with funding and programming the university system.

II
Spain's experience
in university assessment



Until now, no institutionalized system for the assessment of Spanish universities has existed. Different assessment procedures, however, have been followed in a number of centres which should be profited from with respect to both the experience acquired and also in order to clearly differentiate the objectives of the new proposed programme.

It is important to clearly distinguish between *the assessment of the university staff and the institutional assessment of university standards*. In the first case, the individual performance of each teacher or research scientist is assessed in the fulfilment of their roles, either with the aim of testing the formal fulfilment of their obligations or with the more ambitious objective of providing a system of professional or economic incentives depending on the results of the assessment. In contrast, the institutional assessment of standards evaluates the performance of the institution (or of certain units within the university institution) with the aim of detecting possible weaknesses and possible improvements that depend more on the structure and operation of the institution, or it assesses certain practises shared by most of the units rather than the specific behaviour of each individual unit.

A system that evaluates university staff, concerned with the performance of research scientists, has been in force in Spain over the last few years. This uses a system of individual financial incentives, formulated by a National Committee set up for this purpose, depending on the results of each research scientist after six years of assessment. There is also a similar system that gives financial incentives to the teaching staff based on the results of their five yearly assessment. This assessment is carried out by the universities themselves. One way of illustrating the different objectives of staff assessment and the assessment of institutional standards is as follows: within an institutional assessment programme one of the indicators of quality could be the procedure that the specific university uses to assess their teaching staff, the rigour with which this is conducted, the results obtained, the consequences resulting from these on the policy of internal promotion etc.

The *Experimental Programme of Institutional Assessment of the Universities*, implemented from 1992-1994, and the recent participation of Spain in the European Pilot Project directly respond to the objectives of assessment of institutional standards. On the other hand there are also specific assessment experiments in a number of universities that have been carried out indepen-

dently or as part of other international projects (OCDE, CRE, etc.) that also respond generically to the objectives and methodology of the institutional assessment of standards.

1. The model of assessment of the Spanish Experimental Programme

The *Experimental programme for the assessment of university standards* came into force as a result of a resolution adopted in the Consejo de Universidades Plenary Session in September 1992. The main objective of the programme was to test a methodology for institutional assessment of standards based on international experiences which had been the foci of previous studies, presided over by The Secretary General of the Consejo with the participation of national and international experts. The programme was developed during the academic year 1993-1994 and the final results were presented in a seminar in September 1994 in the University Menéndez Pelayo in Santander.

Three levels of participation were defined. In level I 17 universities participated: the aim was to create a system of indicators by which the performance of the university as a whole could be assessed. In level II, 6 of the 17 universities participated: in this level specific degrees and areas of knowledge of each university were assessed using more accurate and specific indicators. Three of the 6 universities of level II participated in level III. The design of this was such that the results of the assessment of level II could be further analyzed by external experts together with qualitative analysis of rigorous interviews with people involved with different aspects of the departments assessed, especially students, teachers and university organizers (See adjoining box).

The organizational structure of the Experimental Programme consisted of a Coordination Committee, comprised of Rectors of the 17 participating universities and the Secretary General of the Consejo de Universidades, a Technical Assessment Group, comprised of experts in the assessment of standards under the Secretary General of the Consejo de Universidades and an Assessment Committee established in each of the universities presided over by the Rector of that university and comprised of experts and academic staff.

The Coordination Committee established the outline of the methodology to be followed and the criteria by which the universities and departments should be selected at each level. They held two meetings over this period in order to communicate the development of the programme and a meeting at the end in order to approve the final report drawn up by the Technical Group of the Secretary General.

This technical group was comprised of experts in the field of assessment of education and research and was aided by the collaboration of experts from the National Government Office for Assessment and Future Development and other departments of the Ministry of Science and Education. Their role

EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAMME FOR ASSESSMENT OF THE STANDARDS OF THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

PROTOCOL STRUCTURE

	TEACHING	RESEARCH	ORGANIZATION
LEVEL I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Goals, objectives and university planning. ● Students (indicators of demand and performance). ● Teaching and research staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Scientific yield (quantity and weight). ● Quality (expected impact). ● Productivity (production/teacher). ● Collaboration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Resources (economic and physical). ● Horizontal services (information, library, support services). ● General organization.
LEVEL II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Goals, objectives and planning of degrees. ● Teaching syllabus. ● Development of teaching. ● Teaching staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Scientific resources (human, economic, infrastructure). ● Scientific production. ● Scientific structure (topics of research, mobility, projection). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Analysis of the decision making process.
LEVEL III	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Data collection using qualitative techniques. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Incorporates external qualitative analysis by paired revisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Data collection by qualitative techniques.

was to design and establish the assessment schedules (questionnaires, data collection sheets, subjects to be dealt with in the interviews etc.), to coordinate and attend the assessment meetings of the universities and draw up reports of each participating university and the final report at the end of the programme.

The programme was first designed in order to assess the standards of teaching, research and university management and schedules were elaborated to assess each of these aspects at each level of participation. University management, however, was only assessed at level I of participation, i.e. assessing all the departments of university management as a whole.

With respect to the internal expenses generated in each university these was covered by the funds of each participating university. Coordination costs were covered by the Secretary General of the Consejo de Universidades.

At the end of the programme, 80% of its objectives had been fulfilled. The deficit mainly affected assessment of research and management at level III because of incompleteness of the external assessment phase.

In the seminary concerned with discussing the results of the programme, in which a large number of the Spanish university senior staff, members of the assessment committees and foreign experts responsible for university assessment in France, Great Britain, Holland took part, concluded that the Spanish experimental programme had satisfactorily fulfilled its objectives and, provided that the methodology of the Experimental Programme could be simplified, could be considered as a solid base on which the definitive programme should be built.

2. European Pilot Project

Some of the *drawbacks* of the *Experimental Programme* have been compensated for by Spanish participation in the European Pilot Project. The methodology of this project was almost identical to that of the Experimental Programme although the assessment was based on teaching and only included aspects of research and management when these were directly related with the standard of teaching in the degrees assessed.

The project was carried out over the academic year 1994-1995. The report of the Spanish Committee was drawn up in June 1995 and the final report will be presented at the end of this year.

The general objectives of the project are:

1. To demonstrate and communicate the need for assessment of standards in higher education.
2. To introduce a European dimension in the assessment of standards.
3. To develop and improve existing systems for assessment of standards on a national scale.

4. To increase the current recognition of diplomas and periods of study, promote cooperation between institutions and increasing the mutual understanding of curricula followed in different countries.

In order to implement this Project a community Management Committee has been formed with two regional secretaries responsible for the organization and coordination of the programme.

A National Committee has been set up in each of the 17 participating countries comprised of representatives of national government offices, of the academic community and of professional organizations related with the scientific branches that are assessed.

In Spain, four universities have participated and two degree systems have been assessed in accordance with the guidelines drawn up by the European Management Committee.

The methodology of the project is of a mixed nature (self-assessment and external assessment) and the different systems of university assessment already used in the EU have been incorporated. The standardization of the assessment was guaranteed by following an Assessment Guide which lists the aspects to be assessed and the criteria and procedures to follow in the assessment. Each country uses the guide as a base and modifies it according to the specific characteristics of their university systems.

3. Conclusions of the Spanish experience

Conclusions drawn from studies carried out in recent years should be taken into account in the design of the National Programme.

Firstly, one should note the *widespread welcome that the assessment has received from the university community*.

All the universities participating in the experiments have shown their satisfaction and interest in the assessment of standards. In spite of the mainly experimental nature of these studies, the management of participating universities or faculties have designed plans of action based on the results of these experiments in order to improve the standards of their institution. Therefore, in spite of the initial apprehension that shown by some of the university sectors in the assessment programme, once the university became involved in the process and the objectives of the assessment were clearly defined, these initial feelings were, in most cases, replaced by a constructive participation.

One critical step in the assessment procedure was the *motivation, dedication and technical training of the members of the assessment committees of each university*. The programme worked best in the universities which gave an ideal combination of: a strong involvement with the heads of that university,

full-time dedication of the assessment committee and previous experience in similar tasks. As discussed in the final report of the Experimental Programme, if university assessment is to result in an improvement of university standards it must involve the university community. The assessment committee should be an integral part of the university, formed by expert professionals permanently dedicated to the process of assessment. Moreover, it should be the impulse behind participation of the university community and promote proposals for improving the weaker aspects detected in the assessment process.

Another important consequence in the future is the *availability of data* necessary to carry out the assessment. Nearly all the indicators and quantitative data required in the respective protocols can be obtained directly from the database that the universities use on a routine basis in the administrative management departments. In practice, however, the task of collecting and compiling relevant information has been the most arduous task for the assessment committees. The main reason being that the administrative management and the data bases these use are not designed to satisfy the requirements of the assessment of standards.

There were also difficulties in collecting other information relevant to the assessment of standards that is not used in the day to day management of the university, especially information related to aspects external to the university (employment of the graduates, employment demand of the market, projects of university cooperation, companies etc.).

With respect to the results of the different programmes we can see one very widespread trait. In order to assess standards, the objectives of a particular institution must be compared with the results this institution actually obtains. In most of the universities and departments assessed there was no explicit description of the objectives to be aimed at nor was there an awareness of the advantages to be gained from assessing results in relation to the objectives defined. This situation is probably due to the predominance of a model of university management designed to comply with administrative laws rather than to efficiently manage resources, although in several universities initiatives had been taken (planning offices etc.) in an attempt to change this model.

Finally it is worth remarking on the unanimous appeal of the different committees for these assessment programmes to have practical repercussions on university development and are not just reduced to assessment exercises with no external consequences.

The final reports of the Experimental Programme and European Pilot Project include conclusions concerning specific aspects of the methodology. It is not necessary to repeat these here but they should be taken into account when the National Programme is implemented.

III
**National Programme
of Institutional Assessment**

Starting from the experiments of institutional assessment of university standards that have already been conducted in Spain and in the European Union, the University Board agrees to propose to the Government that a National Programme for the Assessment of University Standards be drawn up which should include the following elements:

1. Objectives

1. Promotion of the *institutional assessment of standards* of Spanish universities with respect to the fields of teaching, research and other services that the university offers to society.
2. To provide universities and educational administration with a *standardized methodology and basic common criteria* for the assessment of standards compatible with that already practised in Europe.
3. Provide society, especially current or future university students with *relevant and objective information on the quality of Spanish universities*, the different curricula, fields of scientific specialization and the kind of services they offer.
4. Provide educational authorities and the Consejo de Universidades with objective information on the standards reached by each university *that can serve as a basis on which decisions can be adopted in the context of the respective areas*.

2. Basic criteria

The Plan will *initially be carried out over five years*, it will be revised annually and will be conducted via annual public offers of projects for institutional assessment of university standards in which both public and private universities will participate.

The institutional assessment projects can be by subject area or global. In both cases these will refer, *in an integrated sense*, to all the relevant activities carried out by the institutions in the contexts of teaching, research and management of university services.

In the *teaching context*, the minimum unit assessed will be the university degree or the curricula of any of the levels of university teaching that lead both to official and personal qualifications.

In the *context of research*, the units to be assessed will be the departments or areas of knowledge most relevant to the corresponding qualification or curriculum assessed.

Units of management or university services most directly related with the units to be assessed in both teaching and research contexts will also be assessed in each project.

Thematic projects refer to a specific degree or a group of degrees that belong to the same scientific-teaching area in one or several universities.

Global projects refer to one or several universities as a whole and concerns all the degrees, departments and services that the university offers.

The annual public summons for assessment projects will be presented by the Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia (MEC) on request of the Consejo de Universidades. In each summons the modality of each project, the requirements to take part in each and the funding of each will be stipulated. The funding will be at the expense of the MEC and should cover a significant part of the expenses resulting from university participation as well as all the costs for coordination of the project.

With the previous report of the Consejo de Universidades specific projects for the universities of one or more of the autonomous communities can be included in the National Programme. The funding of these projects (the call of which will be realized conjunctly by the MEC and the correspondent Autonomous Community) will be shared by the MEC and the respective Autonomous Community.

3. Organizational Structure

The Consejo de Universidades will fulfil the following role with respect to the National Programme for the Assessment of University Standards:

1. To propose to the Government the modality, conditions and requirements of each annual public offer of assessment projects.
2. To propose to the Government any changes that it deems advisable as a result of the development of the Programme.
3. To monitor and follow-up the implementation of the Programme.
4. To pass an annual report on university standards that reflects the overall results of the Assessment Programme.

In order for the Consejo to fulfil this role an Executive Committee will be formed which will draw up the dicta, proposals and resolutions that will be submitted for approval at the meeting.

This Executive Committee, presided over by the Secretary of State for Universities and Research, will be comprised of members elected in the Consejo de Universidades Plenary Session and in all cases, by the Vice-presidents of the Comisión de Coordinación y Planificación and the Comisión Académica and members of the Mesa del Consejo de Universidades elected by the Autonomous Communities and by the Universities, the Director General of the MEC responsible for matters of university education and the Secretary General of the Consejo de Universidades.

The Secretary General of the Consejo de Universidades will be responsible for the management and the coordination of the National Assessment Programme. It will perform this task with the aid of a Technical Committee and an Office for Management of the Assessment.

The Technical Committee will be presided over by the Secretary General of the Consejo de Universidades and will be comprised of experts in assessment of education, research and university management elected by the President of the Consejo. The Director General of the MEC responsible for matters of university education, who will act as Vice-president of the Technical Committee; the Director of the National Office for Assessment and Future Development; and the Vice-secretary of the Consejo de Universidades, on whom the Assessment management office depends, and who will act as Secretary of the Technical Committee, will all be ex officio members of the Technical Committee.

The functions of the Technical Committee will be as follows:

1. to approve the schedules, guides and technical guidelines for the assessment of university standards.
2. To assess the quality and viability of projects presented by the universities.
3. To organize the training and preparation of the university assessors.
4. To select the external assessors who participate in each assessment project.
5. To approve a report on each assessment project.
6. To collaborate with the Secretary General in drawing up an annual report on university standards that will be submitted for the dictum of the watchdog committee and for subsequent approval in the Plenary Session of the Consejo de Universidades.
7. To advise the Secretary General in all matters related with the National Programme of Institutional Assessment.

To aid the Secretary General in all the tasks originating from the coordination and management of the Plan an Office will be set up, in the Secretary General of the Consejo de Universidades, for the management of the assessment of university standards that will be run by staff qualified in assessment presided over by a Vice-secretary of the Consejo.

An Assessment Committee must be created in each university or unit participating in an assessment project, this will be responsible for implementation of the project and will be presided over by the Rector.

4. Contents of the Assessment Projects

The assessment projects of the National Programme will follow a mixed methodology of self-assessment and external assessment.

The phase of self-assessment will be carried out by the Assessment Committee of the respective universities and will give rise to a self-assessment report which will be presented to the Consejo de Universidades. This report should convey the objective situation of the unit assessed as well as the opinion of the university itself of its weaker points, stronger points and possibilities of improving the services it offers. This self-assessment phase has a double objective: on the one hand to compile objective information necessary to assess the standard of the university or the unit. On the other hand it also serves to increase the awareness of the university community in how it can improve its performance or the services it offers the public. Both these aspects must be taken into consideration both in decisions on the composition of the Assessment Committee and also in the way this operates. Specifically, the assessment committee should have at their disposal technical equipment and suitable staff to gain access to and process all the necessary information. It should also have the collaboration of the academic and administrative staff of the units assessed and should encourage participation from the different university sectors.

The external assessment phase will be carried out by a group of experts from institutions other than the one assessed and should be named for each project. This group will draw up a report from the information provided by the Assessment Committee and also the information they collect *in situ* from interviews with the staff in the higher ranks of the institution or unit that is assessed and also from representatives of the different university sectors or institutions involved in university life. In order for it to be functional, this group of experts should be comprised of a reduced number of individuals and its members should be chosen from academics with a broad university experience in the context of the subjects to be assessed, from aspects of both teaching and research. Finally, professionals external to the University, experienced in sectors closely related to the degrees and areas of knowledge or services to be assessed will form part of the group of experts. One of the members of this group will act as President and will be responsible, with the Secretary General of the Consejo de Universidades and the Assessment Committee of the University or unit to be assessed, of coordinating the group's activities.

The report of the Group of Experts, with any observations that the Assessment Committee wish to add, will be submitted to the Technical Committee.

The Technical Committee will produce a final report for each project. The Secretary General of the Consejo de Universidades will give a copy of the final report to the relevant Public Administrations and the Executive Committee. Similarly, with prior consultation of the University assessed and the appropriate Educational Administration, the most relevant results of the project will be divulged more widely.

5. Assessment Guide

The Executive Committee will produce an assessment guide in order to guarantee the quality and comparability of the assessment process in order to facilitate its implementation and utility in the universities.

To draw up the report, the Assessment Committee of each university, and the corresponding groups of external experts should follow an *Assessment Guide* devised by the Executive Committee of the Plan.

The Assessment Guide should contain the following elements:

1. Criteria for the composition and operation of the Assessment Committee and the group of external experts.
2. Definitions of the procedure to follow, both in the phase of self-assessment and the external assessment.
3. A description of the data, questions and facts to be taken into account in the reports.
4. The quantitative indicators that should be used in the reports.
5. A guide to follow to draw up the self-assessment report and the report of the external assessment.

In the creation of this Assessment Guide the Executive Committee should take into account previous experiments carried out on both a national basis and in the European Union, the basic principles described in this document and the General guidelines outlined in the following section.

a) *Dead-lines*

The normal duration of an assessment project will be one calendar year. The Guide should indicate individual dead-lines of each of the tasks to be developed in the project. One possible time schedule for a project is as follows:

1. Self-assessment phase: 5 months.
2. External assessment phase: 3 months
3. Drawing up and approval of the final report: 2 months
4. Diffusion of the results: 2 months

For larger projects of global assessment of a university this would possibly be extended to a two year period divided into two annual phases.

b) *Structure of the reports*

The Assessment Guide should clearly stipulate the structure of the self-assessment and external assessment reports as well as their size. These reports should, at least, include the following contents:

1. A description of the units to be assessed and their institutional and social context.
2. Objective information of the institutional objectives and goals of the unit(s) to be assessed in relation to teaching, research or management.
3. Objective information on the resources, structure, practices and results obtained by the units assessed.
4. Information on the perception of the university community of the standard reached by the units assessed, including the opinion of the Social Committee.
5. Opinion of the committee responsible for drawing up the report on the weak and strong points detected by the assessment and the relationship between the results obtained by the units assessed and the goals and objectives proposed.
6. Proposals for action to improve the standards and solve the problems detected.
7. Annex of information and relevant quantitative indicators.

c) *Assessment of the Teaching*

For assessment of the teaching, the degree or studies program will be considered in the Guide as the unit to be assessed and the guide will contain standard guidelines and formulae for the collection of data and opinions on the following points:

1. Structure of the syllabus (duration, type of subjects, combination of theoretical and practical activities etc.).
2. Development of the teaching and assessment of the students (completion of the teaching syllabus, coordination systems and follow-up of the teaching syllabus, information available to the students, systems and periodicity of student assessment, etc.).
3. Information on matriculated students (the number, entrance requirements, level of satisfaction etc.).
4. Teaching staff: structure and characteristics of the teaching staff, full or part-time, criteria and procedures for their selection, training and pro-

motion of teachers, operation of the systems set up to assess the individual teaching activity of each member of teaching staff etc.

5. Administrative and Support staff: teaching staff, functions that they fulfil, selection and promotion policies etc.
6. Material Resources: Availability of space for theory and practical classes, infrastructure provided (computer laboratories, libraries, reading rooms, laboratories etc.), budget for teaching activities etc.
7. Academic performance: rates of academic achievement, failure and renunciation, level of satisfaction of the graduates with the teaching received, level of satisfaction of employers with the academic level reached etc.

d) *Assessment of research*

The basic units of assessment of research will be the areas of knowledge or departments, the main activity of which is developed in the teaching units assessed. The Guide will contain accurate guidelines and methodology for the collection of relevant information on the following points:

1. Objectives and lines of research of the units assessed.
2. Structure of the research staff: composition of the research teams, rank, research experience, full-time or part-time etc.
3. Infrastructure and human and material resources available for research: laboratories, technical staff, postgraduate students, etc.
4. Indicators of research activity: participation in national and international research programmes, external funding, participation in conferences, presentations of doctoral theses, the obtention of research or university teaching posts for members trained in the department etc.
5. Indicators of productivity in research: publications in scientific journals, books, patents, technical reports etc.
6. Indicators of the standard of research results: the impact factor of journals in which the results are published when these are available, academic awards and distinctions given to the research scientists, results in the individual assessment of the members of the units assessed etc.
7. Information about the repercussions of the research activity on the teaching activity, especially with respect to postgraduate studies.
8. Information on the impact of the research activity on the economic and social aspects of the university.

e) *Assessment of the management units and other services*

In addition to elements directly related with teaching or research, the Guide will contain precise guidelines for the assessment of the other services

offered by the University, such as procedures of administrative management and the adoption of decisions by the university management. This part of the Assessment Guide will, in all cases, be applied in the global projects and partially in the thematic projects, in those in which the units assessed are responsible for offering other services or have management units that affect assessment of the teaching or research but with some degree of autonomy. The Guide should include information on how to collect information on the following points:

1. Efficiency of the economic and administrative management
2. Procedures for the adoption of decisions
3. Cultural and sports services etc.
4. Support services
5. Services directly related to the teaching or research (libraries, laboratories, computer laboratories, language laboratories, journals, university institutes, etc.).

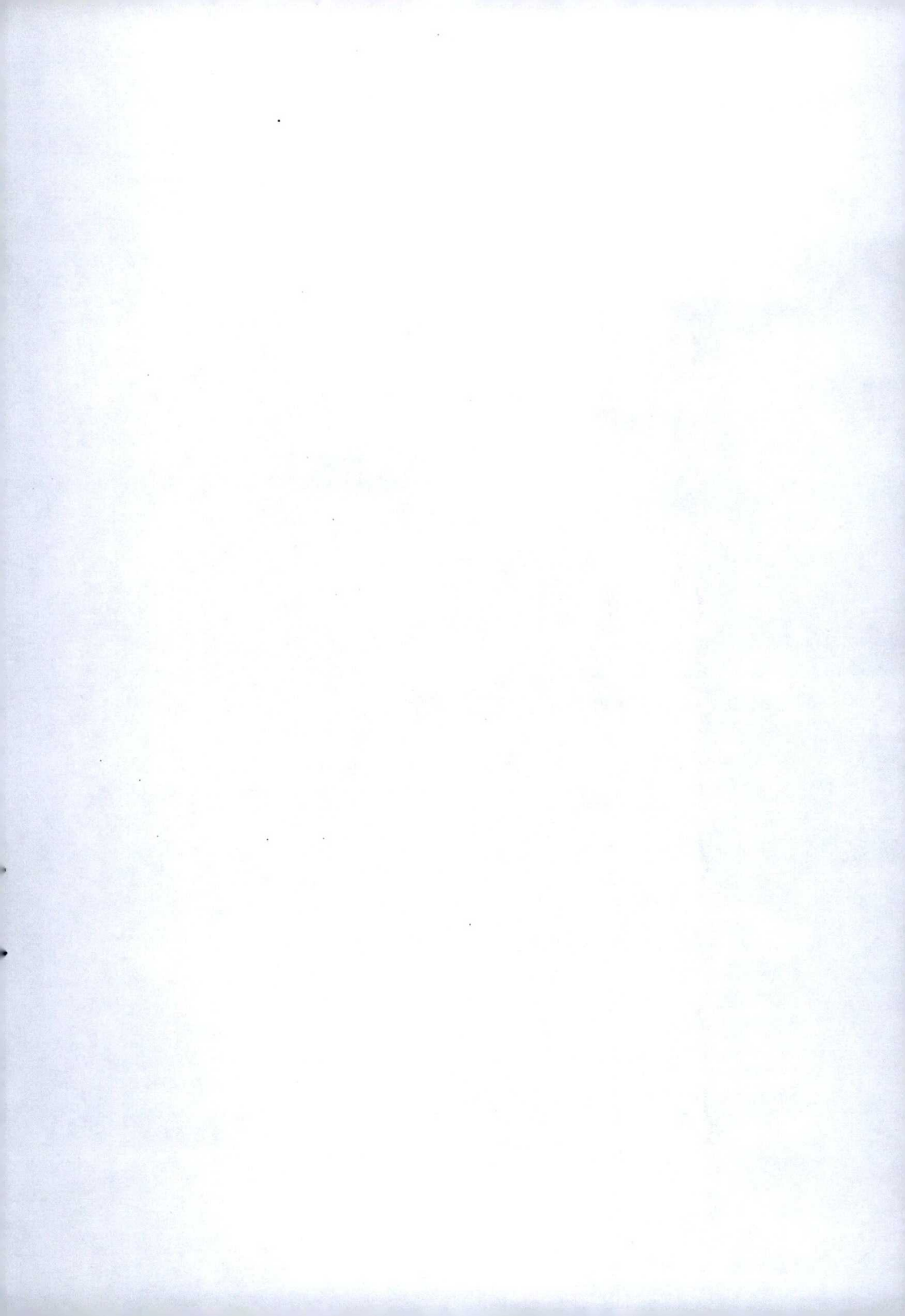
IV
**Consequences of participation
in assessment projects**

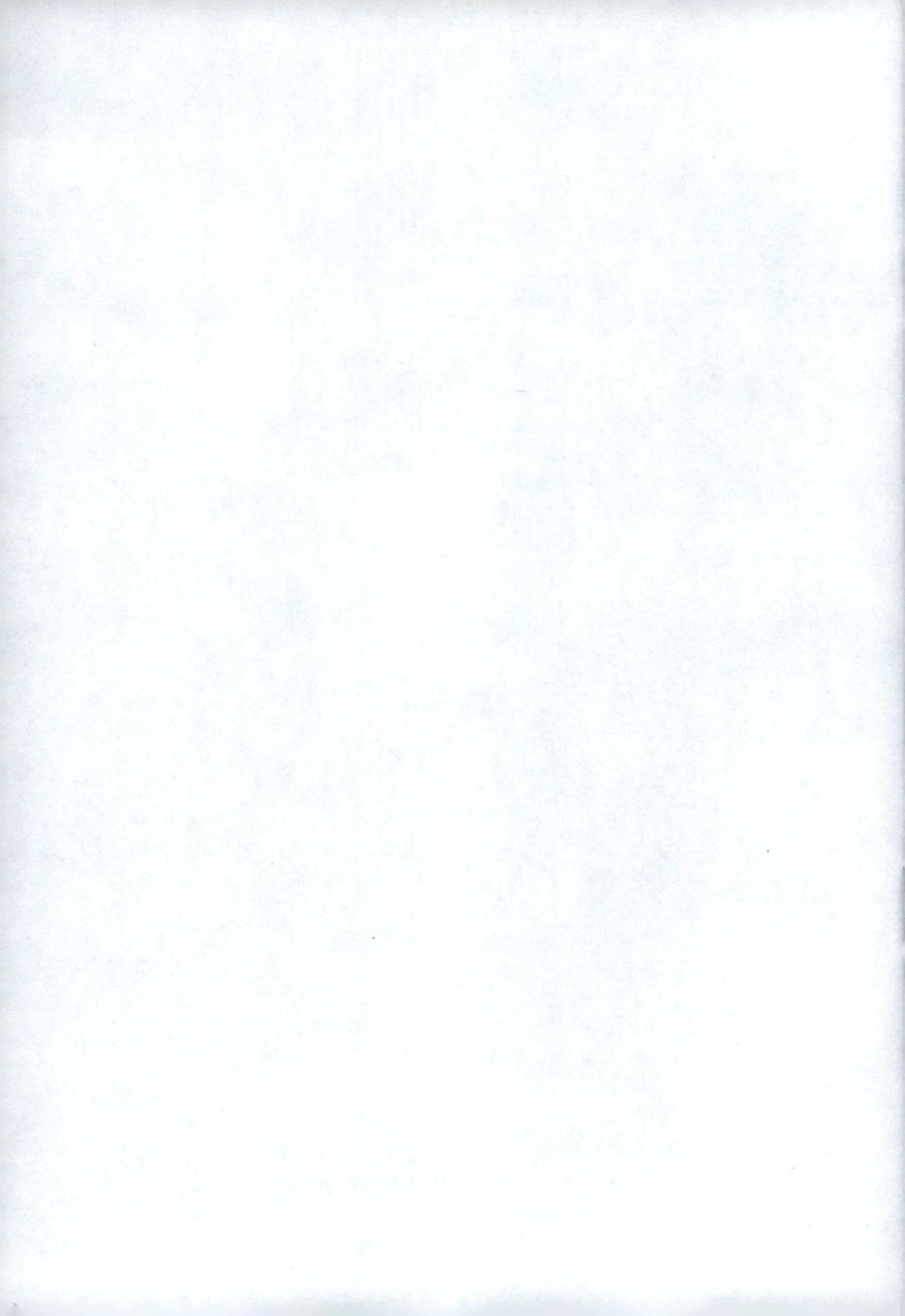
Participation in an assessment project should have *direct consequences for a University*. It should increase awareness in problems and possibilities and aid in the planning of internal activities to improve the standards and prestige of the institution.

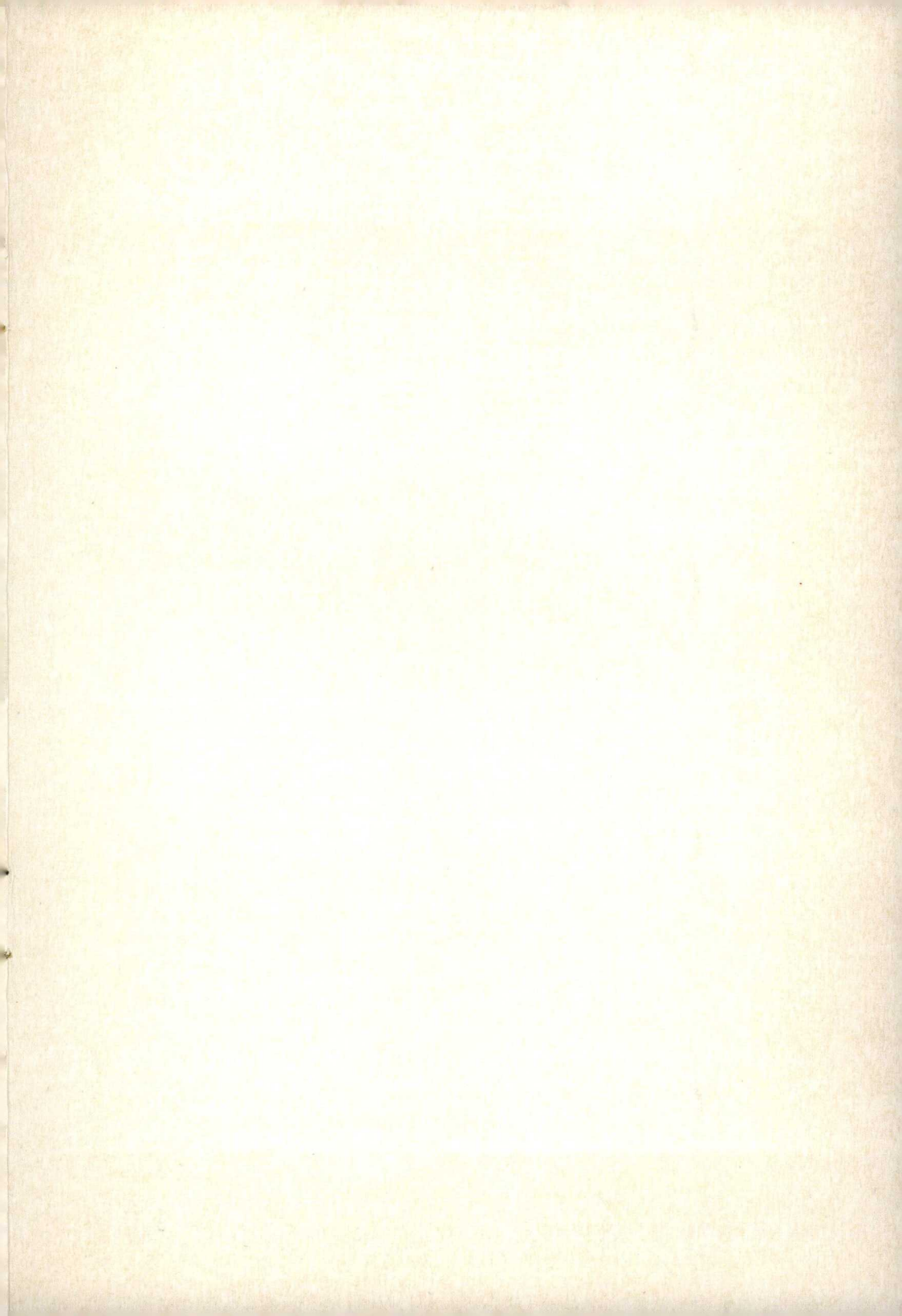
On the other hand, the circulation of the results will *increase society's knowledge of each institution* of the standards reached in each and the efforts invested to improve the services this offers to society. This will all help to increase social support of university institutions.

In the third place, *Public Administrations* involved in University policy can use the results of the projects of assessment of standards to design their plans of action with respect to the development and funding of the Universities:

1. Plans to create new centres and the authorization of new education programmes should take into account the results of the University assessment.
2. Public Administrations can create economic incentives for improving standards based on the results of the University assessment. The *Report on University Funding* proposes two formulae within the Funding Scheme. Firstly, when calculating the basic funding of each University, this amount can be increased by a coefficient calculated in function of the results obtained in the assessment. Secondly, the Educational Administrations can use the results of the assessment as criteria to fund programmes contracted with the University orientated to achieving the improvements in standards recommended in the final reports.
3. If Central Government Offices or the Autonomous Community Government offer competitive programmes of university standards (third year plans, programmes for educative innovations, design of new curricula etc.) it would be recommendable for the award to be conditional on participation of the Universities in the National Plan for the assessment of Standards.









Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia

Consejo de Universidades

Secretaría General
