



BULLETIN



SINAES
Sistema Nacional de Acreditación
de la Educación Superior

in action

Issue 2 - January 2021

Progress summary for
2020

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SINAES did not stop during the COVID-19 pandemic; it rose to the challenge and continued on with its mission

COVID-19 affected everyone. The situation was no different for the National Higher Education Accreditation System (SINAES, for its acronym in Spanish), as it drove the institution to adapt to the demands of the “new normal” through the implementation of a series of actions aimed at continuing to offer its accreditation, innovation, and research and development services, and thus continue contributing to the improvement of the quality of Costa Rican higher education.

Among the main actions carried out by SINAES, the adoption of the presidential directive no. 073-S-MTSS stood out, where public sector institutions are requested to adopt teleworking, which led the institution to operate 100% remotely.

SINAES implemented the accreditation processes virtually in coordination with both the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and the national and international evaluators. By the end of 2020, 23 “virtual” external evaluation visits and 23 “virtual” reviews of Improvement Commitment Compliance Progress had been completed. Additionally, four Special Improvement Project Results Report (ILPEM, for its acronym in Spanish) visits were conducted under the “virtual” modality, and there are three ongoing reviews that will be completed in 2021 under the same modality.

Likewise, the National Accreditation Council (NAC) held a total of 92 sessions in 2020, of which 77 were virtual.

Additionally, in order to support HEIs during this public health emergency and economic crisis that the country is facing, the NAC agreed to reduce the fees for accreditation processes by 80%.

Also in 2020, SINAES developed 19 virtual academic events addressing topics of interest for higher education. On average, 200 people participated in these activities, most of them educators, researchers, or decision-making positions in charge of the quality assurance offices in the HEIs.

In October, the 2020 edition of the Keynote Conference SINAES was held, the theme of which was: “Critical discourse of accreditation: Where are accreditation processes leading us to?”. This conference was led by international expert Dr. Susanna Karakhanyan, President of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), and Dr. Josep Antón Planell, Rector of Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (Open University of Catalonia, if translated), Spain. A total of 629 people attended the event; the largest number ever recorded to date.

In addition, in the 2020 edition was present on three continents (America, Asia, and Europe).



To date, **SINAES** has officially accredited **203** degrees and programs

In 2020, three undergraduate and one graduate program were accredited for the first time, receiving the right to use the SINAES seal of quality.

In addition, 12 undergraduate programs, five graduate programs, and 2 associate degree programs revalidated their accreditation status, i.e., they were “re-accredited”.

Of the 12 university degrees that were re-accredited, three were re-accredited for the second time, and seven for the first time. There was also one program that re-accredited the site that had been awarded the seal of quality and, in addition, extended its accreditation to other sites. In addition, a program that re-accredits its

bachelor's degree expanded its accreditation to cover the licentiate's degree of the program.

Currently, the SINAES records a total of 203 officially accredited undergraduate and graduate programs. The information can be found on the official SINAES website: <https://www.sinaes.ac.cr>.



In 2020, a total of **27** external assessment visits were conducted

The National System for Higher Education Accreditation (SINAES) completed 27 external evaluation visits in 2020, most of which were conducted virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In total, the National Accreditation Council reviewed the profiles of 414 external peer reviewer candidates, from which it finally appointed 76 experts. Thirty percent (30%) of the experts had the possibility of being included in one or more of the candidate lists.

The peer reviewers appointed in 2020 came from countries such as Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Spain, the United States, Guatemala, Mexico, and Puerto Rico, and also included the national peers from Costa Rica.



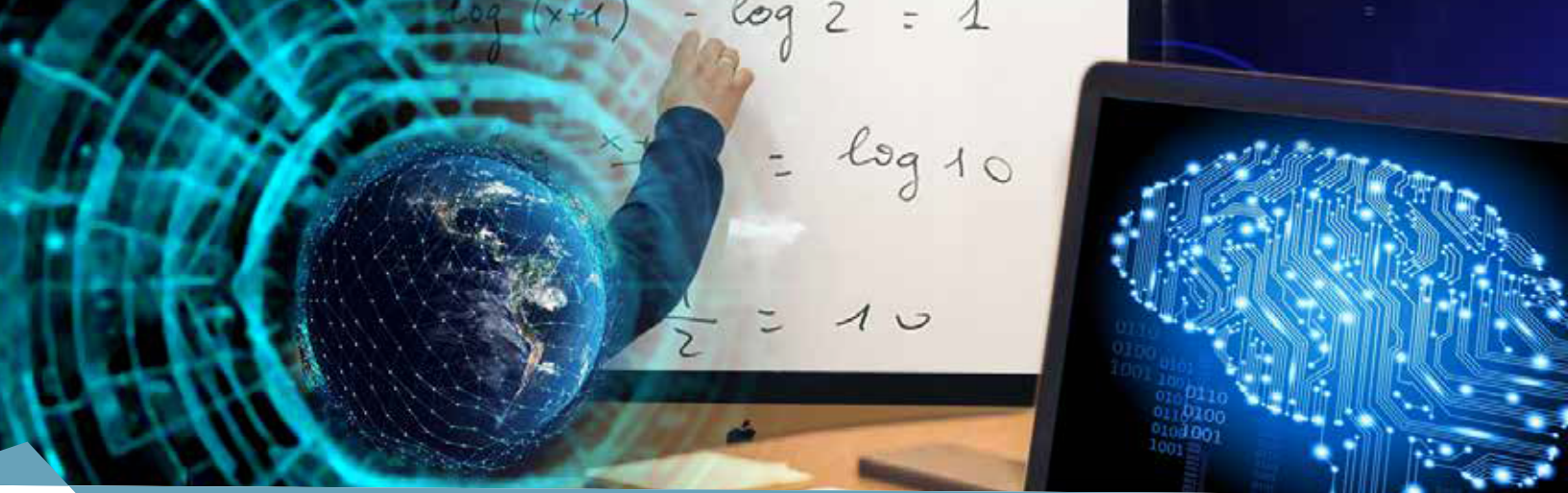
SINAES awarded more than fifty accreditation certificates to accredited undergraduate and graduate programs of **12** affiliated higher education institutions

Due to the health emergency, only three traditional accreditation ceremonies were held. Most of the certificates were awarded in “private ceremonies”, a modality that SINAES and the affiliated universities and community colleges agreed upon to continue with the awarding process and comply with the guidelines established by the Ministry of Health.

Eight private events were organized without public and with only one member of the National Accreditation Council attending, in most cases, its President. In addition, four higher education institutions opted to receive their certificates in the mail.

The following Higher Education Institutions were the recipients of these certificates:





INDEIN's achievements in 2020 contribute to the improvement of the quality of Costa Rican higher education

The Division of Research, Development, and Innovation (INDEIN, for its acronym in Spanish) made significant progress in 2020, contributing to the improvement of the quality of higher education.

One of its most significant achievements includes the design and proposal of Research, Development, and Innovation Regulations that establish the general provisions for the preparation, management, and evaluation of research, development, and innovation actions and projects promoted by SINAES.

Another important achievement was the completion of five virtual modules of the STEM CR 2.0 Program, developed with the support of LASPAU, an organization affiliated with Harvard University. This program involved 190 educators from 29 affiliated higher education institutions (HEIs), including three community colleges and the Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala [San Carlos of Guatemala University, if translated].

A second training program called "Foundations for Research" was also created alongside LASPAU.

This program aims to contribute to SINAES-affiliated HEIs in developing knowledge and research skills in teachers of accredited degrees. The three virtual modules of this project ended in November 2020. Sixty-two teachers from 19 HEIs affiliated with SINAES participated in the modules.

Moreover, the Division also began diagnosing development needs related to a Competency-Based Curriculum for graduate programs accredited by SINAES. The results of this process will be beneficial for planning and conducting targeted actions to strengthen this area of work in the programs and, thus, contribute to their continuous improvement.

Likewise, in 2020, the INDEIN successfully concluded the Learning Replications stage of the "Methodologies for Active Learning in Social Sciences and Humanities program in Costa Rican Universities (2019)". Twenty-three universities affiliated with SINAES (85% of the total affiliates) and 134 educators participated in this program, which benefitted from the collaboration of LASPAU in 2019.

The documentation of procedures, guidelines, instructions, forms, and guides allows **SINAES** to improve its work

Its Quality Management process promotes the documentation of procedures and documentation related to the internal quality assurance system.

In turn, this strengthens the institutional internal control system, standardizing the way of doing things and carrying out preventive work. It also serves as the basis for training and onboarding new employees and for evaluating and improving processes.

The System currently has 237 documents (procedures, guidelines, instructions, forms, and guides). Of 124 documents, 69 are already approved, and 55 have been submitted for approval by the Executive Directorate of SINAES.



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