

**Methodologies, practices and challenges of institutional evaluation in distance education: the experience of unigranrio self evaluation committee**

**Metodologias, práticas e desafios da avaliação institucional na educação a distância: a experiência da comissão própria de avaliação (CPA) da unigranrio**

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**ABSTRACT**

The Self Evaluation Committee (SEC) is responsible for conducting the institution's internal evaluation processes, systematizing and providing the information requested by Ministry of Education (MEC). It was created in 2004 and has been dedicated to identifying potentials and weaknesses, as well as proposing viable alternatives for the continuous improvement of institutions. The SEC is committed to offering indicators for understanding the institutional reality, by establishing diagnostic processes and supporting decision-making. It is also committed to the participation of the various segments so that the institution realizes the aspects that need to be treated with special

attention. The results of the SEC evaluation process have been a relevant factor for the university's development process.

**Keywords:** Institutional Evaluation; Self Evaluation Committee; Methodologies; Distance Education.

## RESUMO

A Comissão Própria de Avaliação (CPA) é responsável pela condução dos processos de avaliação interna da instituição, de sistematização e de prestação das informações solicitadas pelo MEC. Foi criada em 2004 e tem se dedicado em identificar as potencialidades e fragilidades, bem como propor alternativas viáveis para a melhoria contínua das instituições. A CPA empenha-se em oferecer indicadores para a compreensão da realidade institucional, ao instaurar processos de diagnóstico e subsídio às tomadas de decisão. Também compromete-se com a participação dos vários segmentos para que a instituição perceba os aspectos que precisam ser tratados com especial atenção. Os resultados decorrentes do processo avaliativo da CPA têm sido fator relevante para o processo de desenvolvimento da universidade.

**Palavras-chave:** Avaliação Institucional; Comissão Própria de Avaliação; Metodologias; Educação a Distância.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The main headquarters of UNIGRANRIO is located in the municipality of Duque de Caxias, in the Baixada Fluminense area, which comprises 13 of the 92 municipalities in the State of Rio de Janeiro. With a strong community presence, UNIGRANRIO seeks to permanently reaffirm its mission and carries out teaching, research and extension activities in an entrepreneurial vision of education, which takes it, through the motto “go beyond the classroom”, in all its dimensions, to the theory-practice integration of educational actions. Currently, the Institution offers 47 undergraduate courses in the presential modality in accordance with current legislation.

UNIGRANRIO's SEC began operating in 2004, aiming to comply with the legal requirement established by the National Higher Education Assessment System (NHEAS) Law (BRAZIL, 2004), established with autonomous action in relation to the institution's collegiate bodies, and directly linked to the Rectory, but without the character of subordination to it. The Commission has members representing the segments of the corporate body that have a one-year term. They are appointed by the community and invited from among those who are interested and willing to act in the university's self-assessment actions. According to current training, there are 31 members. In full training, the SEC normally meets twice a year to approve the results of the assessment, approve

reports and deal with regulatory issues; and, extraordinarily, when summoned by the presidency, whenever necessary. The SEC's operability is guaranteed by a Multidisciplinary Executive Nucleus derived from the Full Commission. It consists of ten specialist members responsible for the operational routine of the assessment, preparation and validation of instruments, quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data, and preparation of the reports. The members of the Multidisciplinary Executive Nucleus meet monthly, and act as the main institutional references in the internal evaluation processes.

### SEC methodologies and strategies in distance education mode

The DE self-assessment process at UNIGRANRIO is based on a methodology that encompasses four principles: 1. Participation: from all segments of the academic community; 2. Transparency: guarantee, in all its activities, that the publicity of all procedures will be ensured. 3. Globality: results in order to express an overview of the Institution and 4. Graduality: process in which the incorporation of the different dimensions will take place from a greater or lesser complexity.

The evaluation cycle carried out by the SEC applies throughout the school year. Periodicity, assessment instruments and respective subjects are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 - Periodicity, assessment instruments and subjects.

| PERIOD    | ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS   | SUBJECTS   |
|-----------|--|--|
| YEARLY    | Institutional self-assessment instrument (Online - Unigranrio Portal)  | Teachers<br>Technical-Administrative Staff                     |
| YEARLY    | Institutional self-assessment instrument (Online - Community on the Blackboard Platform)   | Students   |
| SEMESTRAL | Evaluation with application of the Small Groups Technique -Dimensions Curriculum / Didactic-pedagogical activities and physical infrastructure | Students on courses at campuses outside headquarters and units |
| SEMESTRAL | Teacher evaluation by the student (Online - Community on the Blackboard Platform)  | Students   |
|           | NSPE Evaluation (Online - Unigranrio Portal)   | Students   |

NSPE - National Student Performance Exam  
Source: SEC of UNIGRANRIO (2017)

The UNIGRANRIO Self-Assessment Project adopts a dialectical methodology, as it aims to identify the points of contradiction to overcome any obstacles and build the necessary unity for the improvement of the institutional trajectory.

This methodological option is justified by seeking to unveil and understand what happens in the Institution and why it happens, from the perspective of the acting subjects, giving a voice and listening to them. The emphasis of the process is qualitative, but there is a combination of quantitative techniques, through the use of measurable data about the University and its members.

The dialectical methodology, taking Minayo (1998) and Demo (1995) as a reference, will allow us to understand the conflicts that take place inside the Institution, perceiving some as solvable in the short term and, others, demanding deeper changes, which is based on the understanding that “all social formation is sufficiently contradictory to be historically surpassable” (DEMO, 1999).

The dimensions of analysis in the instruments developed in institutional research for the applied distance learning method involve: profile of respondents; interpersonal (socio-affective) relationship; didactic-pedagogical organization; virtual learning environment; pedagogical mediation; interactivity; courseware; evaluation; student service and infrastructure.

### **SEC Planning**

SEC's strategic planning is an integral part of UNIGRANRIO's Institutional Development Plan (IDP) because the institution wants self-assessment to be a systematic, regular and permanent process, which will have an effect on improving institutional quality by integrating the results obtained in the process with the various spheres performance and management decision-making processes at the university. In this way, the SEC can effectively contribute to the improvement of academic, administrative and, especially, planning for institutional management.

According to Lima, Tahim and Marinho (apud Dias Sobrinho, 91, 2017), institutional assessment has as main objective “to know and understand to improve; provide elements - data from reality and reflections - to support proactive actions”.

In this regard, the Rectory has been using strategic planning methodologies since 2003 to plan, monitor and evaluate UNIGRANRIO's management. The community has participation through its representatives in the different collegiate bodies, with SEC being assigned to the Strategic Forum. He is responsible for monitoring the execution of the goals established in the Strategic Planning and brings together the main managers. Its deliberations are subject to attention and decision making between the Rector and the sponsoring entity.

The SEC acts in the forum providing data, punctuating evaluation results, safeguarding the interests of the community expressed in the surveys and monitoring the execution of the IDP, in its policies and goals.

Within the scope of UNIGRANRIO's SEC, specifically, planning is carried out seeking to reconcile the autonomy of the Commission and the demands arising from macro institutional policies in the areas of teaching, research and extension, as well as in the improvement of university management. An important factor for the exercise of autonomy and operational efficiency is the own budget. UNIGRANRIO's SEC has a budget that is planned in the previous year and approved (or revised) for execution at the beginning of each year. The SEC budget includes staff expenses, travel for representation and participation in scientific events.

SEC's planning seeks to align itself with the Institution's self-assessment standards and strategic planning schedules, organizing itself in short and medium term actions, and those that are of a permanent nature. Short-term actions include supporting the demands of higher education regulation, such as supporting external evaluations. The medium-term actions include research and studies related to the organization's development. Permanent actions are fundamentally those related to the ten evaluation dimensions established by NHEAS.

The actions related to the assessment of the dimensions are inserted in annual schedules approved by the SEC collective, disclosed to the community and periodically reviewed, according to the results and the desired impacts on the Institution.

### **SEC Returns**

Evaluation is the highlighting element of the educational project. It is characterized as a dialogical, participative and democratic process, constituting a bridge between the existing and the intended, allowing the Institution to have elements for the improvement of its Institutional Pedagogical Project.

The results of the institutional/course self-assessment, in the form of quantitative and qualitative reports, are presented to the Administration Bodies of the campus, of the Institution, with each body within its competences, the necessary guidelines for improving the institutional and academic reality of the institution. Institution, in a competent and creative way, as well as the corresponding feedback of the results and measures for the teaching, student and technical-administrative bodies and external evaluators.

The results of internal and external evaluations, including the official verifications carried out by the MEC, when recognizing the course, verifications of the offer / teaching conditions, as well as the participation of students in the National Student Performance Exam (NSPE), form the matrix of reflection that support several actions in order to optimize the structure and elements that make up Academic and Institutional Policies. With the data from the evaluations, the Superior Councils, Rectory, Pro-Rectories and Directorates involved will forward the issues at the strategic, tactical and operational management levels, with a view to carrying out the necessary actions, and in order to overcome identified deficiencies.

SEC's participation in planning meetings and strategic forums (monthly meetings to align the IDP and strategic goals) ensures that the identified demands reach the sectors involved with greater speed and obtain the appropriate treatment. The communication channels of the results are intensified with the use of digital media (website, blog, Electronic Portal, e-mails and ARCO - Relationship and Internal Communication Environment) combined with the physical media (reports, posters and banners).

As a strategy to publicize the actions resulting from the evaluation process, SEC adopts in Distance Education:

- Open community about SEC on Blackboard with reports, feedback, calls and access to research links.
- The “reply letter” signed by the Rector and the President of the SEC, sent via the Student Portal.
- Return video: presented by one of the members of the SEC, disclosing the results of the research carried out by the students and the actions resulting from them.
- Focus groups: meetings with students and course coordinators held in the second semester to disseminate the results.

### **Actions resulting from institutional assessment in Distance Education**

The inclusion of UNIGRANRIO in Distance Education (DE) strengthens the fulfillment of its mission, since this modality is perceived as a way of preparing students to meet the demands of the world of work, providing opportunities for updating through continuing education, and develop their autonomy, in order to deepen their knowledge, with a view to developing the competencies, skills and attitudes required for professional practice and citizenship. Likewise, the development of the intellectual and professional autonomy of academics, as a consequence of the distance between the teacher and the

student, and the encouragement of the formation of relationship networks and learning communities, give distance education a social character of knowledge construction (PDI, 2011; ALBINO, et al. 2020).

In this context, UNIGRANRIO sought to integrate the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) with teaching processes since 2005, when a group of studies formed by professionals from different areas - such as the Information Technology Division (ITD) and Academic Coordination of the Institution - started the discussion about the possibilities of using these technologies in classroom teaching.

The initiatives of this embryonic group developed independently. Thanks to its growth and results, the group decided to send the proposal to institutionalize distance activities at UNIGRANRIO to the Rectory. Thus, a management unit called the Distance Education Nucleus (DEN) was created, through Resolution N° 51/2007, of the Teaching, Research and Extension Council, as a body linked to the Rectory, with competence to implement policies guidelines for Distance Education (DE) established within the institution.

In 2010, with the consolidation of experience, with the integration of ICTs in classroom courses and with studies carried out in the area, Unigranrio decided to invest even more in its distance education program: it trained managers, teachers, technical staff-administrative and students, and hired and trained tutors and content teachers. These actions aimed to: give more plasticity, dialogicity and attractiveness to semi-presential subjects; have a Virtual Learning Environment that allows students to build knowledge in a collaborative way; and develop study habits, with autonomy and commitment to their training process.

In its 2010-2014 IDP, considering the evolution of society, education as an economic segment that propels social changes and the Institution itself in the context of these changes, UNIGRANRIO set up its strategy with the aim of positioning itself in the offer of undergraduate courses to distance.

The Distance Education Project of UNIGRANRIO initially foresaw the implementation of the Administration Course, because it is a course already successfully offered in person and because it presents a strong demand due to the economic growth of the state of Rio de Janeiro, as demonstrated in the studies carried out to analyze the educational context and feasibility of the offer. Currently, it has twelve undergraduate courses in this modality.

The actions resulting from the institutional evaluation process demonstrate an improvement in DE at Unigranrio. In particular, the following stand out: Reinforcement of interaction activities between students, coordination and tutoring (workshop, technical visits and laboratory training); Improvement of Unirelation facilities; Pedagogical refresher courses for teachers and tutors; Training of students, through the library, in databases and virtual book platform; Expansion of tutors' rooms to serve students; Acquisition of a new tool for the virtual learning environment (Blackboard); Improved accessibility to DEN and Acquisition of new studios for recording video lessons.

## **2 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Self-assessment is understood as a collective, democratic, and transparent process of reflection on the Institution: its practice, its commitments to society, its activities, in the permanent and systematic search for overcoming its weaknesses and optimizing the academic process in the teaching dimensions, research and extension and the technical-administrative process, ensuring the necessary articulation between the internal and external communities. It is a continuous, specific, integrated and permanently critical process.

It is through self-assessment that the Institution and the course know who they are, who they want to be, what they actually do, how they organize themselves and how they manage their actions. It is the moment when the Institution itself and the course turns to the survey of its reality, using methodologies and instruments that enable a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of its institutional structure and the quality of the course. The institutionalization of the evaluation process is one of the ways to make teacher development and the improvement of institutional quality management feasible.

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