

Planning and Evaluation of the Study Course Final Degree Project (TFG) for Social Legal Titles

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Abstract: The current university model in Spain, in agreement with the European Area for Higher Education, features a new course of study for both students and teachers: Final Degree Project (TFG). The teacher must assess the mastery by the student of all the general and specific competences of his/her degree. This document presents the results of a Teaching Innovation Project aimed at providing teaching and research staffs, the necessary tools and guidance to undertake the course Final Project.

Key words: final project, skills, educational innovation

1. Introduction

The implementation of the new curriculum for Degrees in Spanish Universities involves important changes in the system to all known. One of them, probably the most significant, but also the least known, is the Final Degree Project (TFG).

The present document addresses this issue with an approach on what work really is in the field of legal and social science and presents the results of a Teaching Innovation Project aimed at providing all those involved on its preparation and assessment, students, teachers, tribunals or other assessment bodies, centres, etc., with a guide to address the execution and evaluation of this new course.

But in order to achieve an adequate level of comprehension and understanding, it is necessary to previously describe what the Final Degree Project is and also what are its contents, stating the competencies that should be assessed, the elaboration phases for development and the assessment of this new course of study.

One of the key aspects is to clearly describe the competencies that should be evaluated and the evaluation criteria.

The concepts of competency, the indicators, etc., have been so far indifferent to the nomenclature of the professoriate in Social Sciences and Law, so it is necessary to start by defining these concepts for a compression adequacy in order to develop reliable and effective guidelines for assessment.

1.1 The Demands of the New Labour Market

Today's organizations operate in a highly flexible political, economic and social context and in constant change, of high global competitiveness, with a technological advance that multiplies their possibilities day by day.

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This fact implies the need for professionals capable to lead and manage this reality with the expected success; therefore, from the beginning of their career, they must count with the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities, contrary to those of previous generations. Skills, for instance, analytical, organizational, and interpersonal, which may identify and solve problems in complex contexts and simultaneously, address multidisciplinary problems.

Full responsibility of higher education institutions for the integral education of the individual involves the commitment of the constant evolution of its programs, careers, teachers and methodologies.

Facing a different society, universities must constantly adapt their academic offers, by enhancing their studies and programs, training teachers, and innovating methodologies to meet the needs of new organizations and society itself, without losing their intrinsic academic goals and excellence.

The process of adaptation to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the adoption of ECTS represent a fundamental change: the student is the protagonist, which implies the need to evaluate the traditional and common learning processes and teaching methods for employees. In addition, the Bologna Declaration states that today's society must provide its citizens with the necessary competences to face the new challenges, indicating that the university is responsible for higher education level. Contrary to the model of the last century of learning a profession and getting a job for life, the current knowledgeable society and the organizational contexts are characterized by uncertainty, flexibility, network cooperation, decentralization, customer focus, initiative, entrepreneurship involvement and commitment...

Traditionally, universities have been capable of teaching knowledge, but they have not been too successful in training, in teaching the know-how, i.e., in the acquisition and development of skills for the actual demands of the labour market. This involves the promotion of a change in an education focused on the professor's activity to another aimed at the student's preparation (Miguel, 2006).

2. Concept of Competence

The framework document for the Spanish university system at the EHEA incorporates the concept of competence indicating that instruction should harmoniously incorporate generic competences, transversal competences related to the integral education of individuals and specific competences.

The foundation of the competencies approach lies in the work of McClelland (1973) that through his studies proclaim that the knowledge and academic record as well as IQ, are not good predictors of success or failure in the performance of work.

Among the wide variety of definitions of competence we can highlight the following: that posed by Boyatzis (1982) which defines competence as an underlying characteristic of a person, which is causally related to a good or excellent performance in a particular job and in a specific organization. The one formulated by Delors (1996), for which a person is competent when "is capable of knowing, of knowing-how to do it and knowing to be, through a set of (cognitive, psychomotor and affective) behaviours that allow you to effectively pursue an activity generally considered as complex".

To Bunk (1994) "possesses professional competence: one who has the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to practice a profession, one who can solve professional problems in an independent and flexible manner and is capable to assist in his/her professional environment and work organization".

Lasnier (2000) states that competence is a complex know-how, derived from the effective use of skills, abilities and knowledge. Skills are a simple know-how derived from declarative knowledge and the moderately

complex know-how capabilities derived from of conditional and procedural knowledge.

The European Parliament (2006) defines competence as “combination of knowledge, skills and adequate attitudes for the context. Key competences are those which all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, such as active citizenship, social inclusion and employment”. The Tunning project (2009) indicates that competencies represent a combination of attributes (knowledge, skills, abilities and responsibilities) that describe the capability level or degree of a person.

From these and other existing definitions one could highlight the following characteristics in common: **What is it:** capacity that is evidenced by observable behaviours.

For what purpose: perform tasks or deal with different situations.

By which means: knowledge (know), skills (know how), attitudes (know to be) and motivation (want to do), all developed through skills and acquired through learning.

Where: in a specific context

In which way: effectively

How: at the same time and in an interrelated way in different practical situations (flexibility).

Therefore, a practical and concrete definition could be:

“The ability to perform tasks or to deal with various situations in an efficient manner, in a given context. For this, it is necessary to mobilize attitudes, skills and knowledge at the same time and in an interrelated manner.” This capability is facilitated or hindered by more stable and difficult to modify characteristics such as traits (personality), motivation and self-concept, which represent the least visible, deeper and central components of the personality.

Knowledge and skills are easier to develop if founded on education and training. Motivation is more complex to determine and define, because, on one hand, it has more to do with intrinsic characteristics (cerebral cortex). The purpose and the behavioural intention characterizes and defines this kind of motivation, but, it is not possible to understand some motivated behaviours without the accomplishment of certain incentives (external motivation). The problem with this is that all the aforementioned statements are true (in part) but motivation itself, is not exclusively neither neuronal activity, nor purpose, external incentive or internal cause. In any case, the motivation is critical for learning and developing skills.

One of the main characteristics that best define the skills, and which has been previously mentioned, is that skills are implemented in a given context, in an effective and interrelated manner and in different practical situations (flexibility), therefore, they are not something static, on the contrary, skills are defined as dynamic and require continuous training and at different levels of intensity.

As pointed out by de Miguel (2006): “The growth of a student in a given competence is a process of *continuous nature* caused by the demands introduced by the context that changes and requires new answers. In that sense, one can say that the competencies of the student ‘are not forever’; actions that were appropriate sometime ago ceased to be operational yesterday and today are obsolete.”

2.1 Classification of Competencies

Such as with the concept definition, there are also multiple classifications, some of the consulted are as follows:

Bunk (1994) considers four major types.

- Technical skills (knowledge) mastering tasks and contents in the scope of work as well as mastering knowledge

and skills necessary to perform it.

- Methodological skills (know how to be): apply the appropriate action to assigned tasks and to irregularities presented, finding solutions and properly transferring learned lessons to other problems.
- Social skills (know to be): collaboration with others in a communicative and constructive manner, showing a group-oriented behaviour.
- Participatory skills (poise): participation in business organization and in job position, capable of organizing and making decisions, willing to accept responsibilities.

Guerrero (1999) considers the following types of skills:

- Basic skills common to all occupations, are essential to enter the labor market. They are the competencies provided in the process of basic education and initial training.
- Technical and professional skills: specific to a profession, are facilitated by specific training. These can be technical, methodological, social and/or participatory.
- Transversal skills: a common set of professions or occupations.
- Key Skills: in new forms of work organization, these allow to apply knowledge and skills.

The Tuning Project distinguishes between specific skills (associated with specific areas of expertise in every profession) and generic or transversal and within them:

- Instrumental, e.g.: capacity for analysis and synthesis, organization and planning, oral and written communication in more than one language, computer management, time management, decision making...
- Interpersonal, e.g.: ability to work within interdisciplinary teams, criticism and self-criticism, ethics and appreciation of multicultural diversity...
- Systemic, e.g.: ability to learn, to adapt, to lead, to work independently and entrepreneurship...

The classification established by the Tuning Project among different types of skills should be understood as an attempt to structure their development in the student, as from the training offer that supposes a plan of studies. The real growth of the student occurs with the integration of various actions that affect both the specific as well as the generic. It should be clear that although we talk about generic competence, it does not “mean the same” in all professional contexts. It is the situation and context the one which requires the development of certain skills and not at the contrary.

3. Final Degree Project

The guidelines for the design of graduate degrees are listed in Article 12 of Royal Decree 1393/2007, which states that the curriculum will be developed by the Universities and verified in accordance with the rule itself. The curricula start as of 240 credits that will include all the theoretical and practical training that the student must acquire, including the basics of the knowledge branch, the fundamental and the optional courses, seminars, external practices, guided work, etc. The studies leading to the attainment of Bachelor's degree (Article 12.3), will conclude with the preparation and defence of the Final Degree Project (TFG), although it is not defined what shall be understood by this; only Article 12.7 makes reference to three general issues related to the TFG: credits (between 6 and 30); It should be carried out within the final phase of the curriculum; and will be aimed at assessing the skills associated to the title.

Therefore, the first conclusion reached is that the regulation does not reveal anything in relation to what the TFG is. It only makes reference to its duration, temporal location and purpose. From the theoretical perspective,

the TFG should be a project oriented to the development of a research, an intervention or an innovation in the professional field project.

Since the TGF is developed during the final phase of the curriculum, a key element of its content is the orientation towards the professional ambit. Thus the knowledge and skills acquired during the Degree will be integrated and implemented with a professional judgment, while new ones specifically related to the purpose of the work will be added.

3.1 Elaboration Procedure of the Final Degree Project Guidelines

The design procedure of the Evaluation Guidelines that we have carried out in this study includes several steps:

3.1.1 Phase A: Definition of Competencies and Indicators for Evaluation

It is very important to determine the scope and number of competencies to be evaluated in the TFG, therefore, it is necessary to consider different factors: The first to consider derives from Article 12.7 RD 1393/2007, which states that the TFG “must be aimed at the evaluation of skills associated with the title”, that is, assess both specific and generic competencies associated with the degree, but taking into account that it is impossible to evaluate all of them. Most of the specific competencies should be acquired during the studies.

Another factor is the number of competencies to be assess. It is important make emphasis here since considering additional competencies does not always equate to a good assessment. The evaluation process becomes diluted as of a number of competencies and the assessment of what is to be evaluated becomes incorrect (Seco-Granados, Vilanova, Moreno, Rullán & Valderrama, 2009). The results in this case could be an estrangement from the final goal of the TFG: assessing learning that must be reached.

A third factor is the professional approach that skills must propose. There should be a relationship between the skills acquired through the TFG and the practical reality of the business environment to which the student must be integrated. In the legal social field the issue becomes difficult because the range of job options for a graduate in Law or in Business Administration is wide and varied. Therefore, at the moment of determining the competencies to be evaluated one should opt for those with common notes and unifiers of that professional reality (Allen, Ramaekers, & Van der Velden, 2003). Consequently, based on the general skills usually linked to the TFG in the curricula for these degrees, the present study identifies four generic skills to be assessed: G1) Ability to transmit information, problems and solutions; G2) Ability to search, collect and select information. Continuous and autonomous learning; G3) Ability to produce oral communications and write reports, and ability to defend arguments; G4) Ability to solve problems. Four objective and measurable indicators (Valderrama et al., 2010; Villa & Poblete, 2007) have been identified for each of these transversal competencies to allow analyzing the degree of development in mastering the competencies, each indicator is rated on a scale from 1 to 10.

These are Generic competences that according to the classification of Villa and Poblete (2007) would have association with the following (Table 1).

Instrumental generic competencies are those that have a function means or tool for a particular purpose. According to these authors, among these competences is possible to distinguished, in turn, different types of competencies, Cognitive: Analytical, Systemic, Critical, Reflective, Logic, Analogue, Practical, Collegiate, Creative and deliberative Thinking; Methodology: Time Management, Problem solving, Decision Making, Learning Orientation; Technology: Using ICTs, use of Databases; Language: Verbal Communication, Written Communication, Management Language.

Table 1 Selected Competencies and Connection/Relationship with the Classification of Villa and Poblete (2009)

Competencies of our study	Competencies classified according to Villa and Poblete (2007)
G1: Ability to transfer information, problems and solutions	Systemic Thinking Competence Planning competence
G2: Ability to search, collect and select information. Continuous and autonomous Learning	Analytical Thinking Competence Learning Orientation Competence Use of ICT competence Management of Databases Competence
G3: Skills for oral and written communication to prepare reports and defend arguments	Verbal and Written communication Competence
G4: Ability to solve problems	Problem Solving Competence

In developing our guide and given that a correct and practical evaluation does not require a large number of skills, only a few were chosen and which reflect, in large degree, the necessary and important competencies to consider when evaluating the TFG.

Such competences are briefly defined as follows as described by Villa and Poblete (2009).

Systemic Thinking Competence: Mental behaviour to organize and integrate interrelated components to form a whole. Understanding and addressing global reality through patterns. Mastering this competition is closely related to: Ability to transfer knowledge to various specific situations, Mainstreaming. Compression of the significance in certain problems, Decision Making, Entrepreneurship, etc.

Planning Competence: To effectively determine the objectives, priorities, methods and controls to perform tasks by means of organizing the activities with time and resources. Mastering this competition is closely related to: analytical and critical thinking, decision making, Time Management, Project Management.

Analytical Thinking Competence: The mental behaviour that can distinguish and separate the parts of a whole to get to know its principles or elements. It is the consideration of detail, precision, enumeration and difference. Mastering this competition is closely related to: reflection, Logics, observation capacity, Overview capacity, conceptualization capacity, planning, troubleshooting, oral and written communication, etc.

Orientation towards Learning Competence: To use learning in a strategic and flexible way according to pursued goal, upon recognition of the learning system itself and of the learning awareness thereof. Mastering this competition is closely related to: Maturity and self-confidence, Capacity for Self-criticism, frustration tolerance, flexibility, involves curiosity values, control, order, personal growth, etc.

Competence for the Use of ICT: Use Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a tool for expression and communication, to access information sources, as a means for registration of data and documents, for presentation tasks, for learning, and for research and for cooperative work. Mastering this competition is closely related to Planning and organization, reflective thinking, Innovation, Adaptation to the environment, etc.

Management of database Competence: Organize effectively (organizee, collect, process and obtain results) information in a situation or phenomenon, and to effectively exploit the potential of information systems to manage databases. Mastering this competition is closely related to: Using ICT, Analytical Thinking, and Systematic Thinking.

Verbal Communication Competence: Express ideas, knowledge and feelings clearly and timely through words, adapting to the characteristics of the situation and the audience to ensure their understanding and acceptance. Mastering this competition is closely related to: Reflective thinking, deliberative thinking, group thinking, Motivation, Interpersonal Communication, Management of other languages, Teamwork, negotiation, leadership, self-esteem, etc.

Written Communication Competence: Relate effectively with others through the clear expression of what one thinks and/or feels through writing and graphics support. Mastering this competition is closely related to: Self-Esteem, Interpersonal Communication, Quality Orientation, etc.

Problem Solving Competence: identify, analyze and define the significant elements of a problem to solve it judiciously and effectively. Mastering this competition is closely related to: Vision and Perspective of the future, questioning one's own paradigms, achievement orientation, Rationality, Research, and Discernment.

For each of the specific competencies of the work four measurable indicators and objectives have been identified (Valderrama et al., 2010; Villa & Poblete, 2007).

Tables that collected indicators and their assessment were developed, and example of this is the following table that presents the assessment of competence G2: Ability to search, collect and select information. Continuous and autonomous learning (Table 2).

Table 2 Indicators of Competence G2 Ability to Search, Collect and Select Information: Continuous and Autonomous Learning

Indicators	Insufficient (0–4.9)	Minimum Level: Good (5–6.9)	Intermediate level: Good (7 to 8.9)	Upper level: Excellent (9–10)
Correct access to databases. Finds information on the Internet	Does not utilize Databases	Only uses internet search engines	Uses scientific databases	Extensive use of scientific databases and various disciplines
Distinguishes between relevant and irrelevant information	Does not distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information	Uses classic relevant information	Uses old and updated relevant information	Selects old and updated relevant information orderly and extensively
Elaborates summary of the contents clearly, adjusting to the object of the work	does not synthesize or concrete, only describes	Retrieves information without interpreter	Analyzes only the main topic of the study/theme	Analyzes information topic in detail in relation to the object of work
Relates with foundation with other disciplines and other transversal themes	Limits exclusively to the title of the project	Relates with the rest of the program	Relates with the rest of the program of the scope of work	Poses hypotheses and comparative perspective with other disciplines and fields

3.1.2 Phase B: Assessment Timing and Evaluators

As proposed by Valderrama et al. (2010), three crucial moments for assessing were determined: Beginning, middle and end. Every moment brings assessment actions. The assessment is conducted during the first few weeks, once the student has chosen the theme, has a work plan, has made a previous approach to state of the art and has designed a work plan with deadlines and targets. During the development phase all advances and evolution of work, opinions, and corrections are evaluated. The final phase corresponds to the defence of the work before the Tribunal.

3.1.3 Phase C

Assignment of objective indicators to each of the actions to be assessed. Not all indicators of the competencies are to be assessed at all times. The student must achieve specific competencies, but not all should be acquired at the same time and at all stages of their learning. Therefore, along with the actions of each assessment time, the skills that should be assessed in every action were established (Table 3).

Table 3 Assessment Points, Actions and Skills

Moments	Actions	Competencies
Beginning	Project TFG Work plan	G2 G1
Development	Development of TFG	G4
End	Final Project/Defence	G3, G4

4. Discussion and Conclusions

This work is a proposal for the evaluation of the TFG in the social legal field. Four competitions to evaluate have been established: Capacity to transmit information, problems and solutions, Capacity to search, obtain and select information. Continuous and autonomous learning, capacity for oral and written communication to develop reports and to defend arguments, and the ability to solve problems. They are the not only the ones that can be evaluated through the TFG and in fact, in each centre, the approved curriculum may require other equally valid. However, proposed skills herein proposed are considered basic and necessary for any student in the field of legal and social sciences, to apply to a particular subject or course. An accurate and complete assessment also requires specific skills. Indicators assigned the competencies should be broad in order to allow different levels of assessment and, in turn, necessary to achieve rigor and objectivity.

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