The National Commission for University Evaluation and Accreditation (CONEAU) started its activities in August 1996. It carries out institutional evaluations of national, provincial and private universities. CONEAU is also responsible for the accreditation of all graduate studies and state-regulated undergraduate programs. It issues recommendations about institutional projects of new state universities and about provisional functioning authorizations for private universities as well as their eventual recognition. In addition, CONEAU is also empowered to decide on the accreditation of private agencies for university evaluation and accreditation.

CONEAU was created by the Federal Higher Education Law as an autonomous organization affiliated to the Ministry of Education. It is integrated by a 12-member body nominated by the legislature, the executive, the national council of university presidents, and the academy of education. The law has also laid down that evaluations must be carried out with the participation of scholars, which gathered in peer committees or advisory commissions, issue their opinion with regard to degree programs or institutions. Peers may also help CONEAU to design evaluation processes.

The Federal Higher Education Law also outlines the nature of the basic criteria ruling the evaluation and accreditation as follows:

- 'Accreditation of undergraduate and graduate degree programs' is carried out on the basis of standards set up by a council that gathers presidents from both national and private universities and by the Ministry of Education.
- Institutional External evaluation is performed following self-assessments carried out by the universities themselves in the light of the objectives they have autonomously laid down. The main goal of the External Evaluation is to generate a set of recommendations for the institutional improvement.
- Recommendations to the executive regarding projects for the creation of new universities, for the settlement of foreign university branches in Argentine territory, and for the creation of private evaluation agencies, are based on quality criteria developed by CONEAU. This commission also produces reports on academic level of private universities created during the last decade which function under a restricted autonomy regime until their eventual authorization. It also provides the recommendations regarding their eventual recognition as autonomous institutions.

CONEAU is completely funded by the federal treasury and its budget is included in the national budget.

CONEAU makes a “yes or no” decision within the accreditation process of both state-regulated undergraduate and graduate programs. The same occurs when the Commission recommends to the Ministry of Education about the viability of a new project of a higher education institution. Since its academic but not normative scope, the consequences of a negative decision do not directly affect the continuity of either a program or an institution. However, it triggers in the Ministry of Education a mechanism whereby such programs or institutions can lose the national validity of the diplomas they award.
CONEAU does not rank either institutions or programs. The Commission only used to grade graduate programs when the higher education institutions request it.

All external evaluation reports either for institutional or program assessment are strongly oriented to formulate recommendations for improvement.


The standards, which CONEAU applies for state-regulated undergraduate programs, are issued by the councils of deans and approved within the Council of Universities (presidents of public and private universities), whereas the standards for graduate programs are both issued and approved by the Council of Universities. In both cases, the Ministry of Education officially recognizes the standards.

The institutional evaluation process as a whole –self assessment & external evaluation- is conducted without standards elaborated by the Commission or external bodies other than those standards autonomously considered by the own institution.

There are not differences in procedures and policies for public and private HE institutions in either program accreditation or institutional evaluation processes. However, there are differences in the follow up of new institutions. Since public universities are created by law and private ones are created by Ministry of Education’s decision, subject to CONEAU’s report on each institutional project, the new private universities have to send to the Ministry of Education an “Annual Report” with the development of their institutional projects to be academically monitored by CONEAU. This mechanism of state tutelage continues until the private institutions obtain the “definitive recognition”.

CONEAU is co-founder of the Iberoamerican Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (RIACES) whose aim is to promote cooperation and interchange in evaluation and accreditation in higher education among Iberoamerican Quality Assurance Agencies and States.

Also the Commission is engaged in the Experimental Accrediting Mechanism of Programs (MEXA) whereby the MERCOSUR & Associate countries are developing common standards and procedures to accredit undergraduate programs in medical and engineering schools. A selected group of programs in each country have been accredited under this mechanism where experts from the different countries members of MERCOSUR & Associates have integrated the peer review committees.

In addition, CONEAU has different ways of international cooperation with other agencies such as NEASC in US and CNE in France.

Finally, CONEAU has delivered jointly with the Organization of American States (OAS), a seminar to introduce the staff of universities of Latin America in the world of evaluation and accreditation in higher education.
During these ten years, CONEAU has evaluated (out of 95 existing universities all over the country) 42 universities, 1888 graduate degree programs, 24 medicine undergraduate programs, 243 engineering undergraduate programs, 24 agrarian engineering undergraduate programs, 92 projects for the creation of private universities, 2 private accreditation agencies (EPEAUs), and two branches of foreign universities seeking to establish in Argentine territory.