

University Library Support to Learning–Research: Resources for the Preparation of the End–of–Degree Project (EDP)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The objective of the work collected in this chapter is to compile and describe support resources for the preparation of the end-of-degree project (EDP) prepared by Spanish university libraries. For this, the websites of 47 public university libraries were analyzed. As a work tool that facilitates the collection and analysis of information, an Excel template was created with six columns: location, access address (URL), type of access, name/format, type of content, content structure. The content of this template also help to understand the characteristics and scope of each resource.

INTRODUCTION

The implementation of the new education system of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) affected all areas of university activity. In the new educational context, students need the help of tutors, librarians, computer scientists, and especially self-training, both to use the tools and to evaluate their usefulness. Now they need to develop an autonomous work, essential in the new pedagogical model oriented to “learn how to learn” in a flexible space-time environment. The EHEA introduced the obligation to carry out an End-of-Degree Project (from now on EDP) aimed at evaluating competencies associated with the degree.

Faced with this situation, university libraries have to combine their traditional services with new ones to respond to the new teaching system and the new needs of users. In such a way that, today, one of the functions of the university library is to support research and learning, an aspect that is increasingly reflected in the services, resources, and spaces that these types of libraries design and offer.

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Within the context described, the objective of this paper is to compile and describe the support resources for the preparation of the EDP produced by Spanish university libraries. For this, the websites of the 47 public-owned university libraries are analyzed.

BACKGROUND

The EDP is introduced as a compulsory training activity in Spanish bachelor degrees with Royal Decree 1393/2007. Article 12.7 establishes that “it will account for between 6 and 30 credits, must be carried out in the final phase of the study plan and be oriented towards the evaluation of competencies associated with the degree”.

The EDP is conceived as the academic culmination of the bachelor degree student’s four-year learning process. It is designed so that in its preparation the students demonstrate the general and transversal competencies acquired in the studies carried out. Its difficulty is that it must be an original work, in which the students demonstrate the application of the knowledge, abilities, skills, and attitudes developed throughout the time in which they have been trained (Fernández, 2021).

The EDP, although considered as one more subject of the bachelor degree program, has some characteristics that differentiate it from the rest, for instance, the autonomous work of the students (with the support of a tutor), its transversal nature, the participation of different professors, the different subject matter for each student, and the greater difficulty of their evaluation with homogeneous criteria (Freire et al., 2015).

As established in the literature on the subject, the ultimate goal in an EDP is to provide enough support to develop self-reliance, recognizing that many students do not feel fully prepared for this form of study (Todd, Bannister, and Clegg, 2004).

Therefore, it is an important challenge for both students and professors who must do the tutoring. All this justifies the development of pedagogical methodologies and instruments to guide the process (González et al., 2013).

In most of the Spanish university centers, the EDP as a curricular subject began to be taught in the 2012-2013 academic year since, in general, the start-up of university degree programs was done progressively, per year or cycles (Vilardell, 2010).

Although the EDP may have common features with other higher degree projects such as master’s degrees or doctoral theses, the truth is that they present many differentiated characteristics that require specific consideration (Anderson, Day, and McLaughlin, 2008).

End-of-studies projects were not frequent in Spanish universities when the EDP was established, so most university faculties had little experience to carry them out, and here lies one of the difficulties that will characterize the beginning of its implementation. The short academic period established for its completion is another of the drawbacks detected by students since its inception (Freire et al., 2015).

Frequently, students who face the EDP have no previous experience in independent work in research projects, therefore in these cases, the learning needs of the students are greater.

In the last stage of the university degree, when students have to complete their EDP, many arrive at their tutor’s office somewhat lost. They do not know what they are facing and therefore they do not know where to begin (Fernández, 2021).

A large part of the degrees programs have manifested this situation and therefore a need for a remedy arises, for instance, with the development of informative and training materials that guide students by

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