



## Access to the university in Argentina: devices and regulations for admission to the universities of the Buenos Aires suburbs

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### ABSTRACT

**Introduction/Objective:** This article focuses on the devices and regulations that organize the admission to public universities in Argentina, with a special focus on national universities located in the Greater Buenos Aires. Starting from the sociodemographic context in which the Universities of Greater Buenos Aires operate, some specificities are presented about their creation and institutional/academic organization. Given that the focus of the article is on the devices and regulations for admission, a characterization of the new entrants to the aforementioned universities is presented, in terms of the recent evolution of annual enrollment and from their labor insertion and the educational trajectory of their families. **Methodology:** From this contextualization, the fundamental characteristics of the entrance regulatory devices built in each university are presented and, from a comparative perspective, their modes of organization are analyzed with regard to their institutionalization, duration, course modality, composition of the curricular spaces that each device includes and the envisaged approval modalities. **Results/Conclusion:** To end the article, some reflections on the link between these devices and regulations for admission and the challenges facing the contemporary public university are set out for discussion.

### KEYWORDS

Higher education. Comparative education. Access to education. Democratization of education.

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## El acceso a la universidad en Argentina: dispositivos y regulaciones de ingreso en las universidades del conurbano bonaerense

### RESUMEN

**Introducción/Objetivo:** El presente artículo pone su foco de análisis en los dispositivos y regulaciones que organizan el ingreso a la universidad pública en Argentina, con un especial foco en las universidades nacionales ubicadas en el Conurbano bonaerense. A partir de considerar el contexto sociodemográfico en el que funcionan las Universidades del Conurbano bonaerense, se presentan algunas especificidades sobre su creación y organización institucional/académica. Dado que el foco del artículo se encuentra en los dispositivos y regulaciones para el ingreso, se presenta una caracterización de los nuevos ingresantes a las mencionadas universidades, en términos de la evolución reciente de matriculación anual y a partir de su inserción laboral y la trayectoria educativa de sus familias. **Metodología:** A partir de esta contextualización, se presentan las características fundamentales de los dispositivos reguladores del ingreso construidos en cada universidad y se analiza, desde una perspectiva comparada, sus modos de organización en lo que respecta a su institucionalización, duración, modalidad de cursada, composición de los espacios curriculares que cada dispositivo incluye y las modalidades de aprobación previstas. **Resultados/Conclusión:** Para finalizar el artículo se enuncian para la discusión algunas reflexiones en torno a la vinculación entre estos dispositivos y regulaciones para el ingreso y los desafíos que enfrenta la universidad pública contemporánea.

### PALABRAS CLAVE

Enseñanza superior. Educación comparada. Acceso a la educación. Democratización de la educación.

## Acesso à universidade da Argentina: dispositivos e regulamentos para admissão nas universidades da conurbação de Buenos Aires

### RESUMO

**Introdução/Objetivo:** Este artigo trata dos dispositivos e regulamentos que organizam o ingresso nas universidades públicas na Argentina, com foco especial nas universidades nacionais localizadas na Grande Buenos Aires. A partir da consideração do contexto sociodemográfico em que atuam as Universidades da Grande Buenos Aires, apresentam-se algumas especificidades sobre sua criação e organização institucional/acadêmica. Dado que o foco do artigo está nos dispositivos e regulamentos de admissão, apresenta-se uma caracterização dos novos ingressantes nas referidas universidades, em termos da evolução recente das matrículas anuais e de sua inserção laboral e a trajetória educacional de suas famílias. **Metodologia:** A partir dessa contextualização, são apresentadas as características fundamentais dos dispositivos reguladores de ingresso construídos em cada universidade e, numa perspectiva comparada, são analisados seus modos de organização no que diz respeito à sua institucionalização, duração, modalidade de curso, composição dos espaços curriculares que cada dispositivo inclui e as modalidades de aprovação previstas. **Resultados/Conclusão:** Para finalizar o artigo, são colocadas em discussão algumas reflexões sobre a articulação entre esses dispositivos e regulamentos de admissão e os desafios da universidade pública contemporânea.

### PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Ensino superior. Educação comparada. Acesso à educação. Democratização da educação.

### CRedit

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## Objective

The Third World Conference on Higher Education, recently held in Barcelona, reaffirmed that equity in access and success in higher education cannot be a luxury or a second-order consideration and advocated the promotion of greater inclusion and pluralism in higher education as an imperative of social justice (WCHE, 2022). In Latin America in general, and in Argentina in particular, societies marked by social and educational inequality persist with exclusion nuclei that particularly affect the impoverished sectors (GARCÍA, 2019) and in particular, in the recent development of the university in Argentina coexist important levels of dropout and courses of much longer duration than formally established. Many young people do not even have the opportunity to access. Others, those who gain access, have interruptions, re-entries, and dropouts, making it difficult to interpret the degree of real use that different social groups made of the possibility of accessing higher education (FERNÁNDEZ LAMARRA et al., 2016).

Although one of the characteristic features of Argentina's university history could be found in the free admission of public universities, the democratization of this level is a permanent and unfinished construction, which demands constant efforts. Recently, a reform of the Higher Education Law (LES) No. 24,521 was conducted to ensure unrestricted admission to public university institutions. This change, known as the "Puiggrós Law" -since its main promoter was the pedagogue Adriana Puiggrós-, established the "non-delegable and primary" responsibility of the State for higher education, considering it a "public good" and a "human right", terms that did not appear in the previous text of the law. The reformed law makes explicit that no citizen may be deprived of access to university for personal or social reasons and makes the State responsible for guaranteeing this right. The bis introduced in Article 2 establishes, among other things, the prohibition of any kind of direct or indirect levy, fee, tax, tariff, or rate, consolidating the Argentine tradition of free public Higher Education in the face of possible mercantilist tendencies. In relation to access to university institutions, the paragraph of Article 50 which enabled the academic units of the "large" universities to establish the admission regime was eliminated and Article 7 indicated that "all persons who pass secondary education may freely and unrestrictedly enter undergraduate education at the higher education level (...) This admission must be complementary to that of the "large" universities"..) This admission must be complemented by means of the processes of leveling and professional and vocational orientation that each institution of higher education must constitute, but which in no case must have an excluding or discriminatory selective character" (Law 27.204). It was also established that university institutions must develop mechanisms to ensure equal opportunities for the pursuit of careers, through strategies for the leveling of knowledge and guidance for the choice of higher education, but in no case may they prevent access to these studies.

This article is framed within the discussions mentioned in the preceding paragraphs and aims to analyze the devices designed by a group of Argentine national universities to regulate

the admission of students to higher education. The focus is on the so-called "universities of the Metropolitan Area of Buenos Aires", a group of public universities with different institutional trajectories located in the territory surrounding the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, many of them recently created, which were particularly created with the aim of bringing public higher education closer to new social sectors. Considering these issues, this article seeks to answer the following questions: What are the characteristics of the mechanisms designed by the universities of the Buenos Aires suburbs to regulate/organize admission to higher education? To what extent do these admission mechanisms dialogue with the characteristics of the students attending these universities? What trends can be established regarding the regulation of admission in the recently created universities in the Buenos Aires suburbs?

### Some conceptual aspects

Various research in higher education has shown that socio-economic status is the fundamental factor related to levels of inequality in admission and permanence, associated with other factors such as geographic, ethnic-racial, and physical factors (FERNANDEZ LAMARRA, COSTA DE PAULA, 2011). However, at the same time, it is possible to affirm that institutions develop explicit and implicit selection mechanisms that intervene in the entry and permanence of young people in the university system (BRACCHI, 2005).

Numerous studies point out that the effective democratization of the higher level depends, to a large extent, on policies and strategies capable of improving the entry and retention rates of students, particularly those from low-income and/or ethnic minority households, and, in some contexts, women (ALTBACH, REISBERG, RUMBLEY, 2009; APONTE HERNÁNDEZ et al; 2008, CAMBOURS DE DONINI, GOROSTIAGA, 2019).

The search for greater equity in access to university poses a singular complexity since it is a level with a strong selective tradition. Even when barriers such as exams and quotas are removed, several authors draw attention to the unsustainable nature of such admission and the existence of implicit selection mechanisms for students who access without the cultural capital demanded by university experience (GARCÍA GUADILLA, 1996; JUARROS, 2006, GARCÍA DE FANELLI, 2014; TINTO and ENGSTROM, 2008) and this situation allows raising the metaphor of the "revolving door" (those who enter, leave early) for which the hypothesis of an "exclusionary inclusion" is risked (EZCURRA, 2011). Pedro Krotsch (2001) argues that, in Argentina, in the mid-twentieth century, there was a shift from the elite university to the mass university, motivated by a growing demand for students at this level: up to that time, universities received a limited number of young people with a relative homogeneity that was broken with the incorporation of new social sectors at the university level. However, Chiroleu (1998) argues that these new incorporations, heterogeneous due to their social origin, were not duly attended in the universities, which did not produce the changes in accordance

with the characteristics of the new public, nor were the structural and budgetary reforms conducted to deal with this expansion (GONZÁLEZ, CLAVERIE, 2007). Within this tradition of studies, this particular article aims to analyze the way in which national universities located in the Buenos Aires metropolitan area regulate the admission of students in order to prevent this revolving door that implies a massive admission but little retention, thus avoiding early dropouts.

A central aspect for the elaboration of this work was the positioning within the framework of political sociology for the study of university admission policies. Recovering the ideas of Stephen Ball (1997), the starting point of this work is the consideration of policies as the product of a winding and unforeseen path driven by the different political arenas of each context, through fights, compromise, interpretations, and reinterpretations of decision-makers who bring different meanings elaborating adjustments linked to their context. The organization of an admission policy in each university can be thought of as a product of the struggles of multiple actors, traditions, concrete possibilities, mediations, and conflicts that materialize in a specific proposal that reinterprets the idea of "public higher education without restriction of admission" formally established by the legislation. The analytical approach of this paper considers policies in their practical context, that is, when they are implemented in specific institutions, with academic, technical-administrative, budgetary, building, and human resources limitations, and unleash real and practical concerns and interests among the intervening actors (BALL, 1997). At the same time, this text is positioned within the framework of neo-institutionalism, which, as opposed to the old (functionalist) institutionalism and rationalist approaches ("public choice", for example), emphasizes the importance of historical and sociological aspects in understanding the functioning of institutions. Neo-institutionalism conceives the state as a complex of institutions with different purposes and attributes, which does not have a monolithic character, but within its "black box" there is a complex series of initiatives. From this perspective, the power and strength of state institutions (in this case, universities) are related to their internal characteristics.

In order to advance in the analysis of the institutional logics of university functioning, another concept that is important to raise is that of "dispositif". The devices are a web of relationships established between different components of the institutions and which bring into play a variety of resources (bureaucratic, human, economic) and strategies (teaching, administrative support, etc.) through which they articulate and generate dialogues and relationships between the different institutional instances and actors (CAPELARI, 2009). This text analyzes the regulatory instances of admission as devices to promote equity and guarantee the right to education.

## Method

This study uses a comparative perspective, and the work is descriptive, comprehensive, and inductive in nature. It is descriptive in that it aims to provide a general characterization of the income regulatory devices and comprehensive and inductive in that it seeks to capture the specificity of each device together with the proposal of some general trends that make it possible to account for the object of study. At the same time, the work is positioned in a comparative perspective, which implies developing analogies, contrasting sources, events, systems, among others, identifying encounters and disagreements (RAVENTÓS, PRATS, 2012). For the development of the comparative methodology, the proposals of two classics of the field, Hilker (1964) and Bereday (1968), which establish a sequencing of stages for the analytical work (description, interpretation, juxtaposition, and comparison), are recovered for the development of the comparative methodology.

It was considered that the objects of comparison (in this case, the devices designed to regulate admission) are located in a broader institution (universities) and serve specific audiences. Therefore, by way of introduction, a synthetic comparative description of the universities in which the devices are framed and then of the profiles of new entrants is developed. For the description of the universities, the following dimensions were considered for comparison:

- Year of creation
- Total number of students
- Percentage of students with respect to the total number of national universities.
- Academic organization model
- Number of undergraduate and graduate degree programs

The selection of these dimensions to present the institutions is linked to some starting assumptions: a) the different moments of creation of the universities are linked to certain forms of institutional organization that may have an impact on the admission system b) the number of students attending the university has an impact on the system chosen to regulate admission in that the larger the enrollment, the greater the demand for resources to regulate admission c) the academic organization of the university and the diversity or lack thereof of courses it has may be linked to some curricular decisions for the selection of content in the admission system.

In addition, a synthetic presentation of the profile of students entering the selected universities was made. Some categories were selected to present in a general way the profile of new entrants to the universities under study:

- Number of new entrants per university
- Percentage of new entrants

- Percentage of new entrants with respect to the total number of new entrants in national universities.
- New entrants under 19 years of age
- Percentage of new entrants working (and percentage working more than 20 hours per week)
- Percentage of new entrants working (and percentage working more than 20 hours per week)
- Percentage of new entrants who are first-generation college students
- Percentage of new entrants who are first generation high school students

This selection of these categories was also associated with some previous assumptions (which are linked to ideas of the theoretical framework presented) a) the limited time available for study for working students limits the type of devices designed for admission and b) the presence in the admission of first-generation students from the higher or middle level demands a particular scaffolding on the part of the receiving university to guarantee their permanence. In addition, an evolution of the number of entrants to each institution chosen is presented in order to contextualize the demand for admission to each institution. All the data used to establish the inter-institutional comparisons cited are taken from official and public information. Following the tradition of inter-institutional comparative studies, this work is among others that seek to present personalized portraits of the institutions, paying special attention to the impact of local differences, specific to each actor (BRAY, THOMAS, 1995).

Specifically for the comparison of the devices designed to regulate admission, new dimensions were designed. These dimensions attempt to capture the main features of each entry device in organizational and pedagogical terms based on the information available. They are explained below:

- Organizational model for the admission system
- Duration of the time allocated to the admission system
- Established modality for the entry mechanism
- Composition of the curricular spaces of the entry mechanism
- Modality of evaluation foreseen (if any).

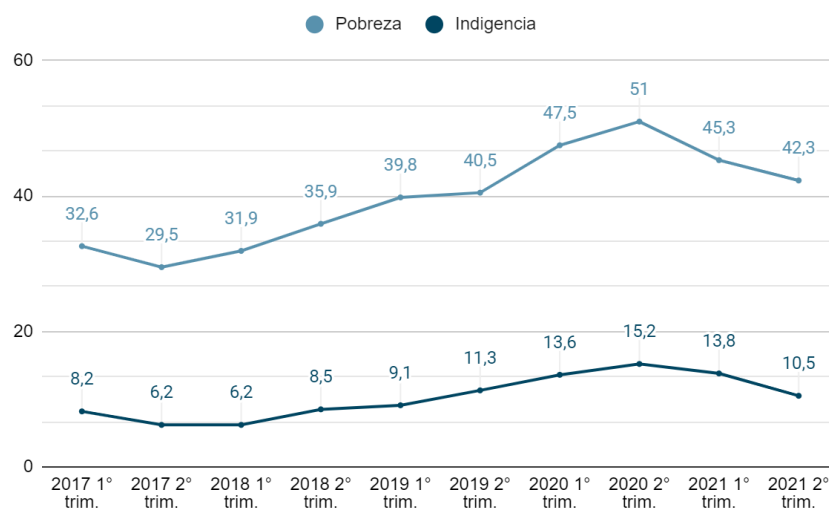
Based on this construction of dimensions, the next step was the descriptive stage, in which various sources were reviewed to account for each experience, which were a selected group of institutional regulations: rector's resolutions, resolutions of the Superior Council, regulations, ordinances, institutional dissemination information, information published on the websites of the selected institutions, among others. At the end of this stage, the data were organized in tables according to the pre-established dimensions of analysis. Subsequently, we continued with the interpretative stage, which required an analysis of the status of the

information provided by the selected secondary sources. With juxtaposition as the comparison stage, the aim was to contrast the criteria or points of comparison in parallel in order to generalize. A matrix was used as an instrument in which, on the one hand, the selected universities and, on the other, the variables to be compared (mentioned above) were placed. In this way, the similarities and differences found were identified in order to extract some trends that are presented in the discussion section.

## Contextual aspects for understanding the complexity of universities in the Buenos Aires metropolitan area

The Province of Buenos Aires is the most populated district in the country, with more than 17 million inhabitants, which represents 38.6% of Argentina's total population. In particular, the districts that make up the Conurbano bonaerense (the territory surrounding the west, north and south of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires) are the most densely populated. In addition to the high population density, another particularity of the conurbano bonaerense is the concentration of population living in the context of poverty and indigence. According to the latest official data available, the inhabitants living in poverty in the conurbation amount to 42% of the total, while 10.5% of them are indigent (INDEC, 2022).

**Figure 1.** Poverty and indigence in districts of Greater Buenos Aires in the period 2017-2021.



Source: INDEC. Permanent Household Survey

The preceding graph shows the recent evolution of poverty and indigence indexes over the last five years, as measured every six months by the Permanent Household Survey in Greater Buenos Aires. It shows that, beyond the worsening of living conditions that occurred during the years 2020-2021 due to the impact of COVID-19, the current indicators correspond to the historical problems of the area. In particular, it is important to highlight that there are



internal inequality gaps between the districts that make up the territory of the Conurbano bonaerense: the districts close to the northern zone of the CABA show lower percentages of Unsatisfied Basic Needs (UBN<sup>1</sup>) than those farther away from it and those located in the southern zone (according to data from the last available Census, Florencio Varela, Ezeiza, Moreno and Malvinas Argentinas are the districts with the highest UBN rates, while San Isidro, Tres de Febrero and Vicente López are the ones with the most favorable rates).

Throughout the recent history of Argentina, attempts have been made to seek the economic development of the area and as part of this strategy, the need for the creation of new national universities inserted in its territory appears. Fifteen national universities have been created in the territory of the Conurbano bonaerense, most of them being created in the last thirty years when the university system expanded notoriously. The study of the national universities in the Conurbano bonaerense is essential to analyze the way in which the higher education system approaches the most vulnerable sectors of the territory of Buenos Aires, their needs, and their local context.

## The National Universities in the Buenos Aires Conurbation

The creation of national universities in the Conurbano bonaerense has been (and for many colleagues continues to be) a topic of discussion in terms of educational policy because the different moments of "waves of creation" of universities seem to respond to different (and for some questionable) criteria. The reasons for the creation of new universities link different arguments according to the political-ideological orientations of those who lead the projects. The first university to be created in the area of the Conurbano bonaerense is the National University of Lomas de Zamora (UNLZ), created - together with others located in the interior of the country - in 1972, within the framework of the so-called "Taquini Plan", which had the intention of deconcentrating the overcrowding of the few existing national universities (ROVELLI, 2009). Subsequently, in the 1990s and from 2007 onwards, two new waves of creation of new national universities took place in different parts of the country, with a special focus on the territory of the Conurbano bonaerense. Although with different political justifications, in these processes the objective continued to be the decentralization of the most populated universities, the reorientation of enrollment towards non-traditional careers, the increase in the permanence and graduation rates, and the improvement of the organization and academic offer (MENDONÇA, 2020).

<sup>1</sup> Households with UBN (Unsatisfied Basic Needs) are those households that present at least one deficit in their housing conditions, sanitary conditions, overcrowding or subsistence capacity. In Argentina these data are measured with the Population Census that is carried out every 10 years (the latest available data is from the 2010 CENSUS).

The creation of universities in the Conurbano in the 1990s (1989-1999) meant the beginning of a new direction in the relationship between the university, state, market, and society. The new universities evoked their territorial belonging evidencing greater closeness to the social and municipal space (OTERO, CORICA, MERBILHAÁ, 2018). Thus, the Universidad Nacional Quilmes (UNQ) and the Universidad Nacional de La Matanza (UNLAM) were created in 1989, the Universidad Nacional de San Martín (UNSM) and the Universidad Nacional de General Sarmiento (UNGS) in 1992 and the Universidad Nacional de Lanús (UNLa) and the Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero (UNTREF) in 1995. Under the inspiration of neoliberal policies, driven by the recommendations of multilateral credit agencies, a diversification of university institutions was sought, so as to be able to more efficiently meet a demand considered growing but differentiated (MARQUINA, CHIROLEU, 2015). In the same line of search for efficiency, the deconcentration of macro-universities, the debureaucratization of organizational structures and innovation in career proposals, addressing areas of vacancy, are proposed (ARIAS, MIHAL, LASTRA, GOROSTIAGA, 2015).

However, even considering the most critical views, it is possible to affirm that these new universities were born with an inclusive mandate: to generate conditions of access and permanence in the university for groups traditionally excluded from it, for various reasons (socioeconomic, geographic, etc.). Their location, in contexts where the educational offer did not reach and which are particularly populated by vulnerable populations, allows us to realize this mission.

From 2009 onwards, there was a new moment of expansion in which 15 new universities were created, several of them also located in the Greater Buenos Aires area. Within this framework, we can recognize two cycles of creation with a special impact on the territory of the Conurbano bonaerense. The first occurs in 2009, when five new national universities were founded in the aforementioned territory: the National University of Moreno (UNM), the National University of the West (UNO), the Arturo Jauretche National University (UNAJ), the National University of José C. Paz (UNPAZ) and the National University of Avellaneda (UNDAV). The second cycle is presented in 2014 the National University of Hurlingham (UNAHUR) is created, and in 2015, the Scalabrini Ortiz National University (UNSO) and the Almirante Brown National University (UNAB). With the creation of these new universities, there is an expansion of the higher education offer in the territory of the Conurbano.

Many are the voices raised against this proliferation of institutions with close proximity among them. Despite the fact that the discourse of the period defends the interventionism of the state in the coordination of higher education, behind this wave of incorporation of new national universities there has not been a national policy of planning the regional distribution of the educational offer according to criteria of relevance, quality, and equity, but their creation is usually associated to the pressure of local politicians (GARCÍA DE FANELLI, 2014). An important aspect to highlight is that those universities that were part of the first cycle of creations had projects endorsed by the CIN (as required by the Higher Education Law) with

subsequent intervention of the National Commission for University Evaluation and Accreditation (CONEAU), while the institutions created in 2014 had a negative opinion from the CIN (MARQUINA, CHIROLEU, 2015). Beyond these objectionable issues, the analysis of the projects of creation of the new universities of the conurbation expresses their explicit will to meet with an innovative institutional model conducive to the unprecedented demands of new students arriving at the university.

**Table 1.** Characterization of National Universities located in the Conurbano bonaerense by 2022.

University	Year of creation	Total number of students in the 2019 academic year	Percentage of students with respect to the total in UN	Academic organization model	Number of undergraduate and graduate programs as of March 2022
UNLZ	1972	38.663	2,2	Faculties	27 undergraduate courses - 9 complementary curricular courses - 30 undergraduate courses - 1 professorship.
UNLAM	1989	41.042	2,3	Departments	21 undergraduate careers - 3 undergraduate careers
UNQ	1989	26.998	1,5	Departments	20 undergraduate programs - 10 undergraduate programs and a wide range of postgraduate programs. In virtual mode, 7 undergraduate courses - 4 undergraduate courses.
UNGS	1992	15.575	0,9	Institutes	15 undergraduate courses - 4 undergraduate courses - 7 professorships.
UNSAM	1992	17.578	1	Schools	61 undergraduate courses - 3 professorships
UNLA	1995	14.710	0,8	Departments	20 undergraduate and 29 graduate programs
UNTREF	1995	16.848	1	Departments	24 undergraduate courses - 2 professorships - 21 undergraduate courses - 9 complementary curricular courses. In virtual mode: 5 undergraduate courses - 7 complementary curricular cycles - 17 undergraduate courses.
UNAJ	2009	24.900	1,4	Institutes	18 undergraduate degree programs - 5 undergraduate degree programs
UNDAV	2009	17.019	1	Departments	15 undergraduate courses - 6 complementary curricular cycles - 9 undergraduate courses. In the virtual modality: 1 undergraduate course, 5 undergraduate courses and 1 cycle of curricular complementation.
UNPAZ	2009	14.997	0,9	Departments	8 undergraduate careers - 6 professorships - 1 undergraduate career
UNM	2009	9.722	0,6	Departments	10 undergraduate degree courses - 2 complementary curricular cycles - 4 undergraduate degree courses
UNO	2009	6.556	0,4	Schools	8 undergraduate courses - 3 curricular complementation cycles
UNAHUR	2014	12.406	0,7	Institutes	8 undergraduate programs - 5 professorships - 15 undergraduate programs
UNSO	2015	440	0	Departments	9 undergraduate degree programs - 1 professorship - 11 undergraduate degree programs

University	Year of creation	Total number of students in the 2019 academic year	Percentage of students with respect to the total in UN	Academic organization model	Number of undergraduate and graduate programs as of March 2022
UNGB	2015	267	0	No mention of	4 undergraduate degree courses - 1 complementary curricular cycle - 9 undergraduate degree courses

Source: Prepared by the authors based on information from SPU/university portals.

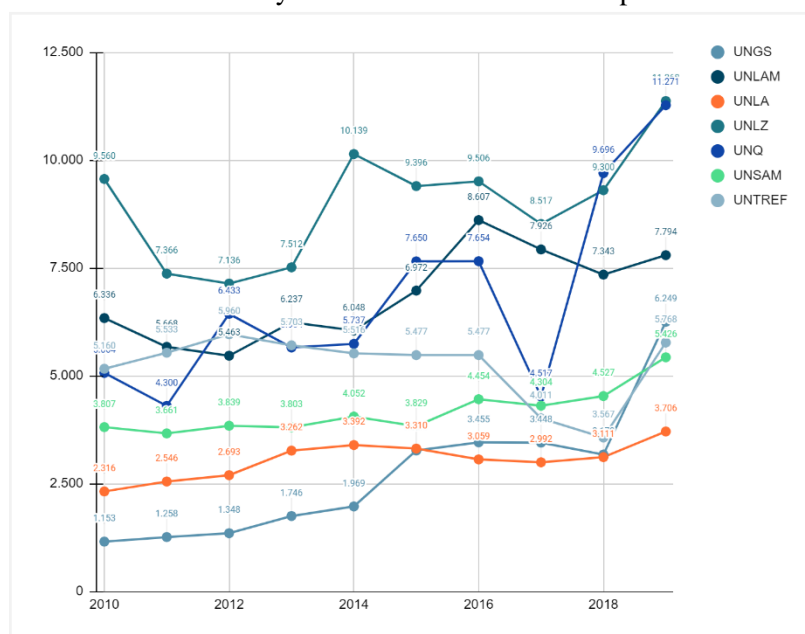
The above table shows the great expansion of the university map that has taken place in the Buenos Aires metropolitan area in the last 30 years. It could be stated that most of them share similarities in their founding projects, particularly in the idea of addressing the social and economic needs of the region in which they are located through academic proposals and thematic areas with a strong commitment to the "local" (ACCINELLI, LOSIO, MACRI, 2016). The recent creation of many of them is evidenced by the low number of students that make up their enrollment and the low proportion they represent of the total number of students in national universities. However, it is at least striking that some of the universities created in 2009 equal or exceed in enrollment to others created in the late nineties (for example, UNGS, UNSAM, UNLA or UNTREF have a similar enrollment to UNPAZ or UNAV and much lower to UNAJ, all of them created in 2009). On the other hand, it is important to note that the year of creation of universities is not necessarily the year of their start-up, which is evident for example in UNSO or UNGB which are created in 2015 but enroll students for the first time in 2019.

Another aspect that is obvious but worth highlighting has to do with the option they propose to the traditional model of organization by faculties. Here lies an innovative aspect of its configuration, which attempts to find an alternative model to the typical UUNN model. Except for the UNLZ created in the 1970s, all the other institutions acquire - at least formally - alternative academic organization formats: departments, institutes, or schools. The new national universities of the Buenos Aires metropolitan area are presented from the beginning as innovative in comparison with the traditional university model. The design of the academic organization, the disciplinary offer, the articulation between teaching and research and governance constitutes the four main axes of change. Much has been written about the innovation (or not) involved in the adoption of the departmental structure in universities, starting with the work of Obeide (1998), Toribio (1999) and Durand (2002), among many others. These reflections are of interest in order to consider that the adoption of an organizational model is not in itself valuable, but that the results obtained from working within this organizational framework should be considered. The following are some reflections on admission and graduation that introduce us to the challenges facing the academic management of the university.

## The new entrants to the universities of the suburbs

One of the most important challenges faced by national universities in the Buenos Aires metropolitan area is related to the entry of new students at the higher education level. Their founding mandate requires them to become an alternative to the traditional university with a more flexible model, with innovative academic offerings aimed at both capturing new demand for higher education and absorbing part of the demand hitherto captured by the system's mega-university -the University of Buenos Aires- (MARQUINA, 2011). The latest enrollment data available correspond to the year 2019. As indicated in the table presented in the previous section, UNLZ and UNLAM each account for a little more than 2% of the total enrollment at the university level, with around forty thousand students enrolled. They are followed by UNJA / UNQ / UNSAM / UNTREF with 1% of the total enrollment, with around twenty thousand students, and then the other universities, many of which were created more recently, with a student population of less than 10 thousand students. The cases of UNSO and UNGB are notorious, with less than 500 students each. Now, how has admission to the universities of the conurbation evolved in the last few years?

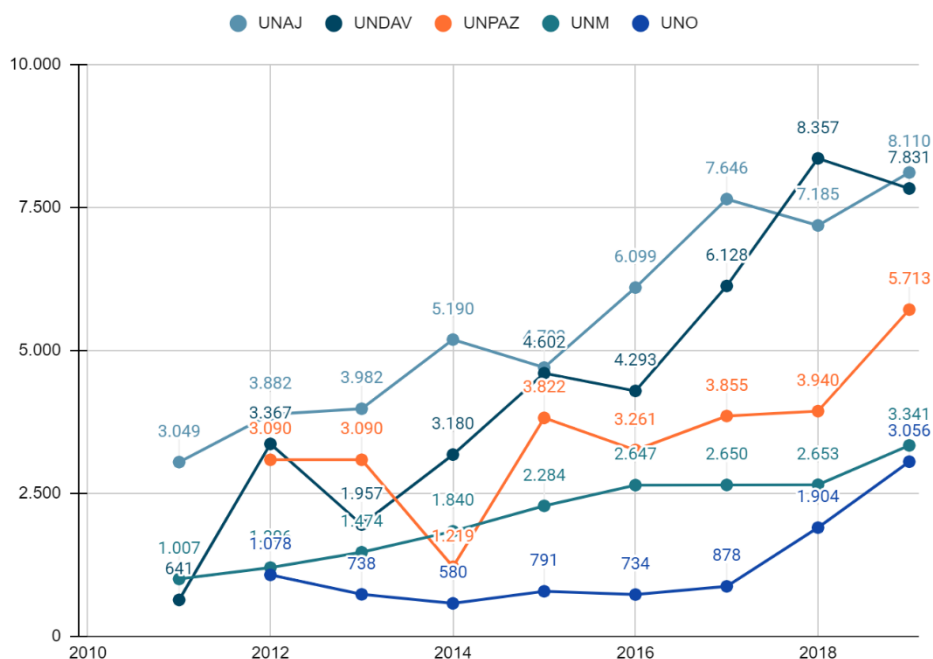
**Figure 2.** Evolution of university selection admissions in the period 2010-2019.



Source: Own elaboration based on data published in Anuario Estadístico SPU (ME).

The graph above shows some trends in terms of admission to the selected universities. In the first place, the difficulties of the flow of students entering the UNQ is incredibly significant. The same could be said with respect to the situation at UNLZ and UNLAM. On the other hand, the stability of UNLA and UNSAM is significant.

**Figure 3.** Evolution of the number of students admitted to selected universities in the period 2010-2019.



Source: Own elaboration based on data published in Anuario Estadístico SPU (ME).

This last graph shows the almost constant enrollment growth of UNO, UNM and UNPAZ, while in the case of UNAJ, UNDAV has had difficulties and has managed to stabilize in recent years. References to UNSO and UNAG are omitted here since they have opened their enrollments in 2019 so it is not possible to evaluate the growth or not of their enrollment.

If the last 5 years with available data are considered, the percentage of enrollment growth of some institutions stands out above the rest (in the case of UNAJ, for example, there is a growth of 286%, followed by UNGS with 91% and UNDAV and UNAJ with around 70%. Far behind, in the range of 40% to 50% are UNPAZ; UNM, UNQ and UNSAM and then in the range of 10% to 20% growth are UNLAM, UNLA and UNLZ. With the lowest growth of all is UNTREF (with 5% enrollment growth in 5 years)<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> In this section, UNAHUR, UNSO and UNGB are not considered due to their recent creation that do not allow analyzing their evolution in the period 2015-2019.

## Characterization of university admissions in the Greater Buenos Aires area.

The remarkable growth of enrollment in public universities that has taken place in recent decades has placed the issue of admission to these institutions of higher education at the center of the debate and, therefore, in recent times the research agenda in the field of higher education has given a privileged place to the study of who are those who enter universities, under what conditions they do so and what are the real possibilities of graduation they have (PIERELLA, 2014). Studies are also multiplying on the significant number of dropouts among new entrants to the higher level, particularly among those who are recognized as traditionally excluded groups at the level (GARCÍA DE FANELLI, 2014).

Recovering the ideas of Tinto's (1993) interactional approach, it is interesting to recover the study of the profile of new entrants in order to know some specificities of their characterization. The educational level of the family group, the performance of economic activities simultaneously with higher education and age are just some of the possible features to think about "external factors" to the university institution, which condition the experience of students and on which the institution can - however - act actively avoiding exclusionary practices and building alternatives that promote inclusion.

Next, we present some particularities of the new entrants (NI) to the universities of the Conurbano bonaerense in terms of: the proportion they represent with respect to the total number of entrants to national universities, the percentage of NI under 19 years of age (i.e., those who enter at the expected theoretical age) and the percentage of NI who work in addition to studying (and who particularly work more than 20 hours per week). Finally, two other data of interest are presented: how many NI who are "first generation university students" and who are "first generation high school students" (i.e., those entrants whose parents had not even entered high school, much less high education).

**Table 2.** Characterization of the New Entrants (NI) to the universities of the Greater Buenos Aires area for the year 2019.

University	Number of New Entrants (NI)	% NI with respect to total NI of public institutions	NI under 19 years of age	% NI working	% NI working more than 20 hours per week	% NI first generation of high school students	% NI first generation high school students
<b>Total National Universities</b>	<b>451.269</b>	<b>95,6</b>	<b>35,3</b>	<b>26,7</b>	<b>45,6</b>	<b>62,3</b>	<b>23</b>
UNAJ	8.110	1,7	20,5	34,9	53	86,4	43,9
UNDAV	7.831	1,7	14,4	40,6	63,1	78	34,8
UNGS	6.249	1,3	25,0	s/d	s/d	s/d	s/d
UNGB	267	0,1	3,0	33,7	75,5	s/d	s/d

University	Number of New Entrants (NI)	% NI with respect to total NI of public institutions	NI under 19 years of age	% NI working	% NI working more than 20 hours per week	% NI first generation of high school students	% NI first generation high school students
UNAHUR	6.756	1,4	16,8	45,5	54,9	82,1	39,9
UNPAZ	5.713	1,2	20,3	36,2	52,1	88,5	48,5
UNLAM	7.794	1,7	35,3	s/d	s/d	s/d	s/d
UNLA	3.706	0,8	23,1	45,0	84	74,4	28,6
UNLZ	11.368	2,4	21,8	s/d	s/d	s/d	s/d
UNM	3.341	0,7	27,3	41,0	53,3	83,6	37,8
UNO	3.056	0,6	19,9	43,0	52	86,6	45,9
UNQ	11.271	2,4	16,1	50,8	69,1	74,4	28,7
UNSAM	5.426	1,1	18,0	57,2	65,2	60,2	18,8
UNSO	440	0,1	3,6	82,5	73	76,3	36,9
UNTREF	5.768	1,2	6,4	s/d	s/d	s/d	s/d
<b>Promedio Universidades Conurbano</b>			<b>18</b>	<b>46,5</b>	<b>63,2</b>	<b>79,1</b>	<b>35,4</b>

Source: Own elaboration based on SPU information

A first aspect to highlight with respect to the profile of new entrants to the universities of the conurbano is that, in the great majority of cases, the average number of students under 19 years of age is much lower than the national average (the most extreme cases are those of UNSO, UNTREF and UNGB, which are much lower than 10%, while the average for national universities is 35.3%). Conversely, in the universities of the Buenos Aires suburbs there is a higher average of new entrants who work in addition to studying with respect to the total number of students in the national universities. In the case of national universities in general, the average is 26.7% of new entrants who work, and this rate rises to 46.5% in the universities of the surroundings (reaching, for example, 57.2% in UNSAM or 50.8% in UNQ).

In addition, and to further examine this data on labor market insertion, of the total number of new entrants who work among those who attend universities in the Greater Buenos Aires area, 63.2% work more than 20 hours per week, which implies a strong dedication to work with an impact on the time available for courses and study. One last aspect to highlight with respect to new entrants is related to the education of their parents. The available data indicate that, in the national universities as a whole, the average number of new entrants who are first generation university students is 62.3%, while for the average of the universities in the conurbation this rate rises to 79.1%.



This data is relevant to consider that, out of 100 new entrants to universities in the suburbs, 79 are the first generation of their family to do so (in UNAJ, UNAHUR, UNPAZ, UNM and UNO this average exceeds 80%). In addition, an average of 35.4% of those entering universities in the conurbano are first generation high school students (i.e., they are the first generation in their direct family to attend high school).

Although none of these factors is considered in itself a determinant of the trajectory, they do show a profile of new entrants on which institutions can plan actions, think of possible strategies to improve their academic performance, and develop inclusive pedagogical interventions.

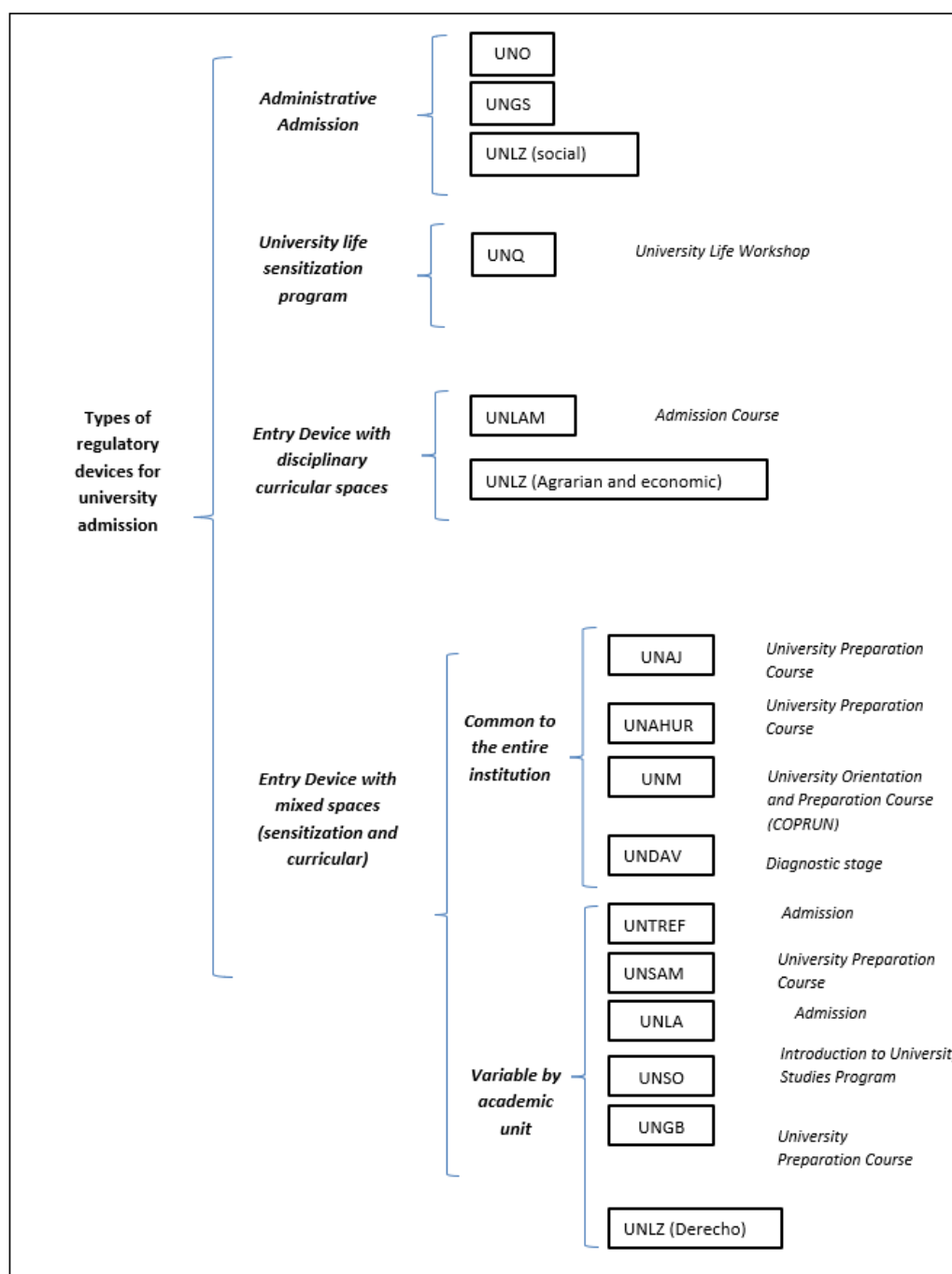
### On the regulatory modalities of admission to the universities of the Conurbano.

In order to problematize the issue of university entrance, it is necessary to transcend the reductionist barrier that considers that ensuring access only implies allowing students to enroll and begin their university studies. For this reason, the main objective of this article is to analyze the regulatory mechanisms organized by national universities (in this case, in the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires) to accompany the initial stage of the link between new students and their careers.

In the vast majority of universities in the Buenos Aires metropolitan area, an institutional admission model established to regulate university admission can be identified. The only exception is the case of the UNLZ, since each faculty organizes a specific admission modality (with a wide variation among them). In the other cases, a common admission regulatory system can be identified, although with two variants: those universities that have an admission regulatory system common to all university careers and those universities that have a system shared among the careers but with some variation in content according to the field of knowledge to which the careers refer.

However, it is possible to make a preliminary distinction between four general formats for organizing the different mechanisms created to regulate the admission of students to the selected universities. First, there are those cases in which admission is reduced to the administrative process of enrollment (i.e., without any additional regulatory device). A second type of admission is based on an instance of preparation/awareness for university life. In third place, we can consider those cases in which the admission mechanism focuses on curricular spaces and seeks to "level" curricular knowledge in specifically selected fields with which the new entrants begin their university experience. Finally, in fourth place, there is the mixed admission model, which combines aspects of subjective preparation for the transition to university and disciplinary training to strengthen admission.

**Figure 4.** Types of regulatory devices for admission to universities in the Buenos Aires metropolitan area.



Source: Prepared by the authors based on information published on institutional websites and regulations.

The first group of cases is made up of institutions that do not have any specific admission mechanism. Among them is the case of UNO, which does not have any regulatory mechanism for admission to its programs: the enrollment of applicants is purely bureaucratic,

through the presentation of personal documentation and proof of high school studies. This is a case of full unrestricted admission policy since the student is enrolled upon presentation of documentation. In the case of the UNGS, admission is also based on the presentation of administrative documentation. However, in the first months of each course, the so-called initial workshops are taken, which function as a propaedeutic space for the course of the course. Something similar occurs at the UNLZ in the School of Social Sciences, which does not have specific activities for admission, but includes reading and writing workshops in the first four-month period, complementary to the beginning of the course. Except for these three exceptions, the rest of the institutions have some regulatory instance for admission, with different intensity and organization modalities.

The second group of institutions is made up of those that organize a regulatory device for admission that aims to sensitize the student to the specificities of university life. This group includes the UNQ, which proposes the "University Life Workshop" (TVU), a 5-day workshop prior to admission that is complemented with tutorials during the first four-month period. This space seeks to help students entering the University to have different tools on how to develop themselves in this new stage of academic life. It is of a face-to-face and mandatory nature and in order to pass it the student must attend at least 75% of the meetings.

Thirdly, there are the universities that have organized an entrance regulatory system focused exclusively on curricular aspects of specific fields. Among these cases are the UNLAM and the faculties of Agricultural Sciences and Economic Sciences of the UNLZ. The UNLAM proposes a semester course with final exam, with three disciplines that vary according to the career chosen by the student (philosophy / mathematical logic / history / biology, etc.) to be taken simultaneously with the last year of high school. At the UNLZ, the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences does not have an entrance course, but it has diagnostic activities that evaluate the knowledge of students in certain fields of knowledge and if they demonstrate sufficient knowledge, they enroll in the careers and if not, they take a Complementary Training Course (CCF). On the other hand, the School of Economics of the UNLZ has a 7-week leveling course (Elements of Accounting, Elements of Mathematics and Comprehension of Texts).

The fourth group includes the rest of the universities that combine aspects of subjective sensitization with respect to the transition to university and specific curricular spaces. These cases can be divided into two large subgroups: those universities that organize an admission process common to all degree programs and those universities that organize admission procedures with variations among the degree programs. In the first group, we can consider the cases of UNAJ, UNDAV, UNPAZ, UNM and UNAHUR. UNAJ, UNPAZ and UNAHUR have organized a "University Preparation Course" (CPU) and in the case of UNAHUR the space continues in the first four-month period of admission and tutoring hours are added. The UNM proposes the University Orientation and Preparation Course (COPRUN), a course with three workshops and a four-monthly or intensive seminar with procedural evaluation. In the case of

the UNDAV, the entrance exam is called " Diagnostic Instance" and includes reading comprehension activities common to all and mathematics for some careers.

Finally, the last group includes universities with a mixed admission system (i.e., with activities to raise awareness of university life and curricular activities) and, at the same time, differentiation of activities according to career. These are the cases of UNLA, UNTREF, UNSAM, UNSO and UNGB. The UNLA proposes an entrance course common to the entire university that includes a course with contents related to the introduction to university life and knowledge of the functioning of the university and study methods, and then a subject that varies according to the career. UNSAM proposes a "University Preparation Course" (CPU) which includes a curricular unit common to all careers and from 2 to 4 curricular units defined by each academic unit. In the case of UNTREF, the "Entrance" includes two subjects, one of them common to all careers (Oral and Written Communication) and a second one that will depend on the chosen career and in all cases an Introduction to University Studies Workshop is taken and there are spaces to get in touch with the coordination of the chosen career, has instituted the Program of Introduction to University Studies (PIEU), an eight-week course with three seminars with procedural evaluation (a seminar on university life, a seminar on reading comprehension and academic writing, and an introductory seminar for each area of knowledge chosen by each department). It is worth mentioning the case of the UNGB, which includes a bimonthly "Admission Course" with a seminar common to all careers, a specific subject according to career and an innovative instance for university entrance: a workshop on gender and human rights awareness common to all careers.

**Table 3.** Characterization of university entrance according to the name of the device, type of organization, duration of the device, course modality, curricular composition, and approval modality.

Institution	Name of the Entry device	Organization	Duration	Course Modality	Composition for Curricular Spaces	Approval Modality
UNQ	University Life Workshop (TVU)	Institutional (common to all careers)	Vestibular stage and first four-month period	5 days of workshop in vestibular stage and tutorials during the first four-month period	Workshop with contents on the history and organization of the university and administrative processes.	For regularity and active participation in the proposals
UNTREF	Admission	Shared structure, but with variations in subject matter according to academic unit	Quarterly	3 days per week (or 4 for engineering) with 4 hours of daily classes.	Oral and Written Communication common to all careers and then subject according to career: mathematics, biology, comprehension of information, music.	Regularity of the course and final exam for each subject.

Institution	Name of the Entry device	Organization	Duration	Course Modality	Composition for Curricular Spaces	Approval Modality
UNLAM	Entry Course	Shared structure but with variations of seminars according to academic unit	Semiannual	7 hours per week distributed in 2 days simultaneously with the last year of high school.	Three variable disciplinary curricular areas per academic unit: philosophy / mathematical logic / history / biology, etc.	Regular attendance and passing of the final exam (if not, retake in intensive mode).
UNAJ	University Preparation Course (UPC)	Institutional (common to all careers)	Seven weeks	6 hours per week simultaneously with senior year of high school.	Three courses: mathematics, language, and University Life Workshop.	Mid-term papers and final exam and practical work for the workshop.
UNDAV	Diagnostic stage	Institutional (common to the entire university)	Two weeks	Talks with authorities, two days of diagnostic activities and two days of feedback (4-hour days) simultaneously with the last year of high school.	Reading comprehension activities common to all and mathematics activities for some careers	After the diagnostic stage, it is determined if they take support workshops during the first four-month period of the course.
UNPAZ	University Initiation Cycle (UIC)	Institutional (common to the entire university)	Quarterly	12 hours of classes per week with workshops of 4 hours each.	From 3 to 6 workshops: mathematics, reading and writing, university life and 3 other subjects for medical students.	Regularity of coursework and presentation of practical activities
UNM	University Orientation and Preparation Course (COPRUN)	Institutional (common to the entire university)	Two modalities: regular (1 four-month period) and intensive.	Once a week per workshop with 4 hours and 2 hours per week for seminar.	Academic reading and writing workshop, problem-solving workshop, science workshop and seminar on approaching university life.	Regularity of the course and delivery of practical work per workshop.
UNAHUR	University Preparation Course (UPC)	Institutional (common to the entire university)	2 modules: 7 weeks prior to admission and then during the first four-month period.	Weekly workshop and then tutorials during the first four-month period.	University Life / Mathematical Thinking and Reading and Writing	Regularity of coursework and submission of practical work per course
UNSAM	University Preparation Course (UPC)	Shared structure, but with course variations according to academic unit	Intensive (6 weeks) or regular (approx. 20 weeks)	Four meetings for the introduction to university studies workshop and then 1 class per week for 6	Three to five courses: Introduction to University Studies and two (or more) courses that define each	Regularity of coursework and passing of the final exam for each course.

Institution	Name of the Entry device	Organization	Duration	Course Modality	Composition for Curricular Spaces	Approval Modality
				weeks of each course.	major: reading and writing, mathematics, physics, chemistry...	
UNLA	Admission	Shared structure, but with variations in subject matter according to academic unit	intensive (February) and four-monthly option for some careers	The intensive modality involves 4 days of coursework per week during the month of February.	Three subjects: UNLA and institutional project / Methods and techniques of study and Introductory subject according to career	Regularity of the course and final exam.
UNOS	Introduction to University Studies Program (PIEU)	Shared structure, but with seminar variations according to career path	Bi-monthly	8 classes of 4 hours of each seminar	University Life / Reading comprehension and a departmental introductory seminar (social sciences, health, environmental, applied, communication and technology).	Regularity of attendance and delivery of partial work and final integrative work of each seminar.
UNGB	University Preparation Course (UPC)	Shared structure but with seminar variations according to career path	Bimonthly (February and March)	Seventy-two (72) hours online course, preferably in six (6) weeks.	Two common subjects (Introduction to University Studies and Gender and Human Rights Awareness Workshop) and one subject depending on the degree program (mathematics, social sciences, health sciences).	Regularity for workshops and passing the exam for the specific subject of each career.

Source: personal elaboration based on institutional regulations and web information.

## Discussion

For many decades in the region, it was assumed that access to Higher Education could not be conceived as universal and, therefore, admission criteria were required to restrict access linked to merit or academic ability (CMES, 2022). However, in unequal and impoverished societies, merit or ability tends to operate as disguised inequality. If income policies and mechanisms do not pay attention to social inequality, they end up excluding those who have

talent and merit and were born in disadvantaged contexts. And thus, they only reproduce and intensify inequalities.

In Argentina, the evolution of income policies experienced in the second half of the twentieth century a winding path, from the alternation of democratic and de facto governments, with phases of openness and restriction linked to macro political and ideological issues (FERNÁNDEZ LAMARRA et al., 2018). With the consolidation of democracy in recent decades finally the university was opened to mass access. The admission mechanisms implemented in most higher education institutions in Argentina are in principle non-selective. Applicants do not have to pass general exams at the end of high school or at the time of enrollment in higher education institutions, nor is there usually a maximum number of applicants per degree program (ADROGUÉ, GARCÍA DE FANELLI, 2021). However, within the framework of university autonomy, each institution organizes the admission mechanisms according to institutional resources/context/objectives.

The creation since the 1990s of new national universities in the conurbano bonaerense -which preferentially serve economically and socially disadvantaged populations- brought new challenges by seeking to incorporate traditionally excluded social sectors into the university (FERNÁNDEZ LAMARRA et al., 2018). Therefore, throughout the preceding paragraphs, the general characteristics of the regulation of admission to the higher level that develop in the national universities of the Buenos Aires conurbation in Argentina have been presented. Although it is not possible to construct a univocal view of university admission, given that each institution develops a specific type of regulatory device, it is possible to establish some trends from the construction of a comparative view.

The first characteristic that becomes evident from the comparative reading of the multiple cases considered is the diversity of the devices constructed and their names (entrance course, orientation course, preparation course, university life workshop, diagnostic stage, beginning cycle, etc.). This diversity of names and formats creates a complex panorama that each applicant must decipher in order to anticipate the initial path. It should be noted that, beyond the name, the main purpose of the entrance courses is to prepare the entrants for university life and to reinforce the skills and knowledge necessary for the beginning of university studies. However, it is not clear in some cases whether the nature of the courses is mainly preparatory or selective, considering that there is a requirement to pass exams and that some careers establish quotas (CAMBOURS DE DONINI, GOROSTIAGA, 2019).

A second issue to highlight is the mutability over time: the admission procedures developed by each university are changing as they undergo adjustments according to periodic evaluations conducted by the institutions, within the framework of university autonomy. Currently, the universities of the Buenos Aires metropolitan area are in search of the most efficient way to organize their admissions, and this is evidenced by the recent changes that have

been made in several of them in organizational and regulatory aspects regarding admissions. Even in the context prior to the pandemic, several universities updated the model for regulating the access of new entrants. Several investigations have reported high dropout rates in entrance courses and in the first years of public universities in the early years of this century that already included particularly universities in the conurbation (EZCURRA, 2007; MARQUINA, 2011; PARRINO, 2010). The regulatory modification of the Higher Education Law in 2015 meant the implementation of new rules of the game and this contributed to a reflection by universities on the problems of dropout and student lag. Admission policies, in action, are transformed and their contingency is evidenced by the fact that not in all cases there is a formal normative regulation that organizes admission, which gives the team responsible for its management a wide capacity for innovation.

Thirdly, it is possible to observe a tendency to be concerned about the configuration of the university student's profession. Several research referred to the articulation between high school and higher education delve into the institutional mediations necessary to overcome the difficulties of passage between different institutional cultures (BOMBINI, LABEUR, 2017, POGRÉ et al. 2018) and propose the need for the construction of institutional devices in the university for the construction of the new institutional affiliation. Charlot (2014) states that the first thing a university student has to learn is to be a university student, given that from the passage from the secondary to the higher level a new world opens up for students, with new rules, new responsibilities, new codes, which must be learned. And, therefore, it is convenient to teach them. In this sense, the University Life Workshop developed at UNAJ, UNAHUR or UNTREF, as well as the Seminar of Approximation to University Life at UNM or the Seminar of Introduction to University Studies at UNSAM can be examples of institutional devices organized for the scaffolding of the construction of "being a university student" in the entrance to the higher level. In these spaces, institutions in particular are concerned with accompanying the immersion in the students' craft which, according to Charcot (2014) involves new rules (tacit or explicit) and new ways of being and doing. Following Pierella (2014), it is possible to affirm that the diversification and complexity of the student experience, based on the heterogeneous nature of the socio-educational trajectories of university entrants, generates new challenges for the democratization of higher education, particularly for teachers who work in university entrance.

Fourthly, some reflections can be made on the intensity of the training that is organized for university entrance (RAMALLO AND SIGAL, 2010). In this section it is possible to make some specifications on the format of the device proposed for admission and its mode of organization. According to the information gathered, the courses are organized in quite different ways. Thus, for example, there are mandatory courses, with evaluations that seek to promote the beginning of the process of adaptation of students to the new academic demands of university education. These courses imply that admission is understood as an instance of diagnosis of the level of knowledge of applicants, seeking to level previous knowledge with



that required for a specific field of study. On the other hand, there are cases in which the admission stage consists of a series of informative talks about the institutional functioning, the organization of the building (in campuses, annexes, etc.), the people responsible for the institution, the necessary documentation to carry out administrative procedures, the professional areas of expertise of the degree program in question, etc., topics that seek to internalize the student about the dynamics of university life. Other forms of courses were also identified, where the student is required to comply with formal requirements of class attendance, approval of practical work and approval of partial and final exams. These activities imply a greater effort from the academic point of view since they are mandatory. In addition, according to their mode of organization, the devices established in university entrance can be distinguished between intensive courses, of short duration, up to 4 weeks, which sometimes include some compulsory blended learning instances but of shorter duration than the face-to-face stage, and "regular" courses, lasting 5 to 15 weeks, of compulsory coursework and which include some form of academic evaluation, either through procedural evaluation or with partial and/or final exams (RAMALLO AND SIGAL, 2010).

## Final considerations

In the Final Declaration of the Regional Conference on Higher Education (CRES) organized by UNESCO's Institute of Higher Education for Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC) in Cartagena de Indias in 2008, it was established that higher education is a public and social good, a universal human right and a responsibility of the States. More than five years after that CRES declaration and after years of dispute, in Argentina in 2015 a reform of the Higher Education Law No. 24,521 (LES) passed in 1995 was reached, where Argentina's positive law established that higher education is a universal right and, more recently, it was reaffirmed that admission to public universities should be unrestricted and that public universities should uphold the challenge of free education. Later, at the III Regional Conference on Higher Education held in Cordoba, Argentina, the postulate that higher education is a public social good and a universal human right was ratified and emphasized, and the responsibility of the States to guarantee the fulfillment of this right to all citizens was stressed. "These principles - the text states - are based on the conviction that access, use and democratization of knowledge is a social, collective and strategic good essential to guarantee basic human rights" (CRES, 2018).

Debates over university access are not new in this part of the world. They regained strength with the return of democracy. As Chiroleu, Suasnabar and Rovelli (2012) point out, in the beginning the struggle was limited to formal access to institutions without this achievement being accompanied by the generation of adequate conditions for different social groups to access, remain in and graduate from university. The recognition of the diversity of student profiles and the heterogeneity of student trajectories is much more recent. Thus, demands

appear to guarantee equity in access, but also changes in the academic and institutional organization that "open" the university to all. Many battles remain to be fought in this struggle. Eduardo Rinesi argues that, if there is a "human right" to the university, "...the university has an obligation towards the subjects who are the bearers of this right: to guarantee its effective and successful exercise. If the university recognizes (and it does not always do so without difficulty) the idea that there is a "human right" to it, it has to ask itself if it is doing things in the right way to guarantee that right to everyone" (RINESI et al. 2016:18).

It is urgent to deepen studies on the democratization of university entrance in order to guarantee the end of the revolving door that Tinto (2008) announced several years ago. UNESCO warns in its roadmap for designing Higher Education in the coming decades that countries and institutions must accelerate efforts to eliminate the barriers that prevent all students from accessing quality higher education, giving priority to vulnerable groups, responding with flexibility to an increasingly diverse population (CMED, 2022). Only in this way will the universities of the region, and those of Argentina in particular, be able to contribute to sustainable development and the construction of just, peaceful, and democratic societies.

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