

What is New? An Analysis of the Evaluation Process of Graduate Programs in CAPES Area 27 for the 2025–2028 Quadrennium

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Once upon a time, in a kingdom NOT so far away... There was, in this kingdom, an evaluation process that was, in a certain sense, perverse and even cruel, since those being evaluated did not previously know the assessment instrument to which they would be subjected. In this process, the instrument was finally disclosed by the evaluator only at the end of the evaluation cycle. In other words, the evaluated spent the entire assessment period working without knowing exactly how their processes and results would be judged. It would be as if, in our courses, we designed an evaluation system in which students would only discover how they were being assessed after the semester had ended.

However, thanks to the demands of its subjects, supported by justice, this process no longer exists in its original form within the kingdom. The significant change was the publication of the assessment instrument, to which the subjects would be subjected, at the very beginning of the evaluation cycle.

Any resemblance to the evaluation process of graduate programs (PPGs) conducted by CAPES across all evaluation areas is not coincidental. In this context, the major innovation is that, for the first time (for the 2025–2028 cycle), the assessment instrument is known in advance. In other words, since May 2025, we have had access to the Evaluation Form that will be used to assess PPGs in all evaluation areas for the 2025–2028 cycle, in preparation for the 2029 quadrennial assessment.

It is essential to acknowledge the complexity that this advanced knowledge introduces to the evaluation process. Previously, the assessment instrument (the Evaluation Form) was developed just a few months before its application, allowing it to be designed with a thorough understanding of the evaluation context. From now on, however, the Evaluation Form is constructed approximately four years in advance, which introduces the challenge of creating a tool that can be effectively applied in a future context that is less well known.

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In this context, the purpose of this editorial is to elaborate on the main changes in the Evaluation Form for graduate programs (PPGs) in CAPES Area 27 (including Accounting PPGs) for the 2025–2028 quadrennium. We will begin by addressing the topic that is always of most significant interest: research output.

Regarding research output, there has been a significant change in the procedures for selecting qualified publications. In the two previous quadrennia (2017–2020 and 2021–2024), PPGs' coordinators were forced to rely on guesswork. Coordinators had to select the best publications according to the Qualis-CAPES ranking without actually knowing the ranking. In other words, CAPES required the selection of each faculty member's best publications, which should have been based on the Qualis-CAPES ranking, but did not make this ranking available to guide the coordinators' decisions.

However, in the new quadrennium (2025–2028), the procedure is substantially different. Coordinators will still need to select the best publications at the end of the cycle. However, the criteria for this selection are now clear, public, accessible, and known in advance. As a result, coordinators will have all the necessary information to make informed decisions, enabling them to evaluate the ranking of each faculty member's publications accurately.

I want to emphasize that this procedural change has led to the end of the Qualis-CAPES. However, this is of minimal significance compared to the change itself. The discontinuation of Qualis-CAPES is merely a natural consequence of the implemented changes. This fact occurred due to a change in focus in the evaluation of research output, from the journal (which required the publication of a ranking list of journals) to the individual product itself, even though the evaluation of the product may still utilize bibliometric indicators of publication venues.

Regarding research output (by professors, students, and alumni), I would also like to highlight a change that did not occur just now, but two quadrennia ago. Since the 2017–2020 quadrennium, there has been a shift in the focus of evaluating research output. Contrary to what many claim, there has been no reduction in the importance of research output. It remains the core of the PPG evaluation process. What has changed is the significance assigned to the journal in which the product is published. I will explain...

For illustrative purposes, I will refer to the Evaluation Form for Academic PPGs; however, the same logic applies to the Evaluation Form for Professional PPGs, although there are some differences in values due to the inclusion of PPTs. In the Evaluation Form for the 2013–2016 quadrennium shows, the research output accounted for approximately 38.5% of the final score of a PPG in Area 27. This weight

was primarily concentrated in items 3.3, 4.1, and 4.2. It is important to emphasize that this entire weight was focused on the journal. In other words, 38.5% of a program's score depended directly on the bibliometric indicators of the journals in which the PPG had published its products.

In the 2017–2020 and 2021–2024 quadrennia, there was a shift in focus. Contrary to what many may think, research output did not lose importance in determining a PPG's final score. An analysis of the Evaluation Forms used in these two quadrennia shows that research output accounted for approximately 39.7% of a PPG's final score, remaining close to 40%, mainly due to items 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 3.1, and 3.2. However, only 21.7% of a program's score depended directly on the bibliometric indicators of the journals in which the PPG had published its products. The remaining 18% depended on the impact of these products. This was the major change: the focus shifted from being exclusively on the publication outlets to also considering the impact of the products. Therefore, the change was not in the overall importance or weight of research output in the evaluation process, but rather in the focus of its assessment.

For the upcoming 2025–2028 quadrennium, the trend continues in the same direction, with research output accounting for slightly less than 40% of a PPG's final score, mainly from items 2.1, 2.3, 2.4, and 3.3. However, the importance of bibliometric indicators of the journals used by the PPG remains limited to approximately 21%.

Moving beyond research output, it is important to consider other significant changes for the 2025–2028 evaluation cycle. This comparison is based on the 2021–2024 Evaluation Form. The first notable difference is the transformation of some indicators from items 1.2 and 2.5 of the 2021–2024 Evaluation Form into adjustment criteria for the concept in item 1.1 of the 2025–2028 Evaluation Form.

Additionally, regarding item 1.1 of the 2025–2028 Evaluation Form, it is essential to note the increased weight assigned to the research project funding indicator. This indicator rises from approximately 3% in the 2021–2024 Evaluation Form to nearly 10% of a PPG's score in the 2025–2028 Evaluation Form.

To conclude this item, it is also important to emphasize the issue of meeting the minimum number of Permanent Professors (PPs). Both the 2025–2028 Evaluation Form and the 2025–2028 Area Document specify that a PPG offering only a master's degree must have at least 10 PPs, while a PPG with a doctoral program must have at least 12 PPs. Although this requirement is not entirely new, the consequences of noncompliance have been substantially increased. In the 2021–2024 Evaluation Form, failing to meet the minimum number of PPs resulted in an "INSUF-

FICIENT" rating for item 1.2, affecting approximately 17% of the program's final score. In the 2025–2028 Evaluation Form, however, this issue results in an "INSUFFICIENT" rating for the entire topic 1, impacting one-third of the program's score. Moreover, let us examine CAPES's Reference Document for the 2025–2028 evaluation cycle. We can see that a PPG receiving an "INSUFFICIENT" rating in topic 1 will not be able to achieve a final score of 3 and, consequently, will be required to cease its activities.

Regarding items 1.2 and 1.3 of the 2025–2028 Evaluation Form, which refer to self-assessment and strategic planning, it can be observed that the concept of "maturity stage" is no longer highlighted within these items. This reflects a natural evolution in the level of requirements for these two PPG management mechanisms. In addition, it is important to note that the weight/importance of both strategic planning and self-assessment has doubled between the 2021–2024 and 2025–2028 cycles.

Finally, topic 3 has undergone a restructuring. The focus is now more clearly on outreach and engagement (international, national, regional, or local), on innovation, knowledge transfer and sharing, and on impact. These elements were already present to some extent in the 2021–2024 Evaluation Form. However, the restructuring and reorganization of the sub-items of this topic provide more explicit guidance on what will be evaluated and how the evaluation will be conducted.

And so, the story of this kingdom comes to an end. Under the new logic of the evaluation process starting with the 2025–2028 quadrennium, it is important to become familiar with the schedule for developing the Evaluation Form. In principle, the development of the Evaluation Form for the next cycle should begin at the end of the second year of the current cycle and continue until the end of the third year. Thus, the development of the Evaluation Form for the 2029–2032 period should begin at the end of 2026. All stakeholders should pay close attention to the call from the Area Coordination for debates and contributions regarding the new form.

I hope this analysis will be useful to all PPG coordinators and to everyone interested in the evaluation process, helping to clarify the recent changes in this process. I strongly recommend reading at least three essential documents for the 2025–2028 evaluation cycle: (i) the 2025–2028 Evaluation Form for Area 27; (ii) the 2025–2028 Area Document; and (iii) the Reference Document – Common Guidelines

for the Permanence Evaluation 2025–2028. The first two can be accessed on the Area 27 Coordination webpage, and the third is available on the DAV/CAPES website.

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