



PEB Exchange, Programme on Educational Building 2003/17

Sierra University in Mexico

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SIERRA UNIVERSITY IN MEXICO

Sierra University was designed to promote the development of the mountain communities in the State of Sonora, Mexico. The university offers high school graduates an opportunity to pursue their studies in their home region, in order to stimulate economic development and contribute to social cohesion in the highlands area. The university is equipped with modern facilities, while its architecture is rooted in the past. The main campus, built in 2002 in the town of Moctezuma, is strategically located in the heart of Sonora, which has over 90 000 inhabitants and attractive natural resources with scope for economic growth.

The university aims to produce graduates who can not only provide competitive labour and perform to high standards in the productive economy but also play an active part in the life of the community. Its mission is to form technicians, professionals and specialists of high academic and cultural attainment who bring a humanist outlook to their various disciplines of knowledge. Sierra University offers students three diplomas at University Higher Technical level, with the option of continuing to degree level at the same university in the following areas: Administration and Management, in the field of Social and Administrative Sciences; Systems and Industrial Technology, in the field of Engineering and Technology; and Biology in the field of Natural and Exact Sciences. Courses are based on a credit system, and students can take part in exchange programmes to benefit from the learning environment available at other institutions of higher education.

As part of the university's policy to reduce social inequalities and foster non-discrimination, there are a number of support programmes, funded by local councils and regional authorities, in the form of grants for medical expenses, food and transport.

Sierra University possesses a modern and up-to-date technological infrastructure that allows the central campus to exchange information with its 13 regional annexes located in towns throughout the highlands of Sonora which have high schools. These annexes deliver distance learning courses to both registered and unregistered students, as well as host academic and cultural events and extramural studies.

The design of the central campus seeks to identify the building with the region. Its architectural forms, elements and materials from the past are integrated harmoniously into present-day spaces. The building surrounds a classical central patio, a common configuration historically used for residential accommodation, public buildings, schools and monasteries. Arcades surrounding the patio form a cloistered area that exudes a sense of calm and community spirit. The process of building and equipping this new university was carried out in accordance with the standardised procedures of the state-run Sonoran Institute of Educational Infrastructure (*Instituto Sonorense de Infraestructura Educativa*) which was responsible for its design and construction.

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