

Requirements and Procedure for Accreditation of Study Programmes in Moldova



Approved by EKKKA Quality Assessment Council on January 28, 2015

I. General Provisions

1. The purpose of accreditation of study programmes is to determine the study programmes at the higher education level in which a higher education institution may conduct studies and issue graduation documents which are recognized by the state.
2. Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency (hereinafter referred to as EKKKA) shall assess the study programmes in five assessment areas: study programme and its development, teaching and learning, teaching staff, students and resources, and on the basis of the assessments make a proposal to the Minister of Education of the Republic of Moldova (hereinafter referred to as Ministry) to accredit the programme.
3. The working language of accreditation is English.
4. The accreditation of study programmes is conducted according to the timetable drafted by EKKKA and approved by the Ministry.

II. Requirements for Accreditation of Study Programmes

5. Study programme and its development

- 5.1. A higher education institution regularly plans its development: the higher education institution has a development plan accompanied by an action plan to ensure sustainability both in the institution and in a given study programme. The implementation of the action plan is analysed and forms the basis for planning of the next development period.
- 5.2. A study programme is authorized and functions in accordance with the normative acts in force.
- 5.3. The title of a study programme is consistent with its content.
- 5.4. The conduct of studies, including the student workload of independent work and internship, support achievement of the objectives of the study programme.
- 5.5. The objectives and learning outcomes of a study programme are in coherence with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). The structure and content of the study programme is internationally comparable.
- 5.6. The objectives, content and learning outcomes of the Master's study programme are clearly distinguishable from those of the Bachelor's study programme.
- 5.7. Study disciplines of the study programme are presented in a logical succession.
- 5.8. Development of a study programme takes into consideration the needs of the labour market.
- 5.9. Study programme development is a continuous process which, among others, involves feedback from students, employers and other relevant stakeholders.
- 5.10. The members of the teaching staff are aware of the objectives of a study programme and of their role in achieving these objectives.
- 5.11. Study programme provides opportunities for further education at doctoral level.

6. Teaching and Learning

- 6.1. Study management is regulated, publicly available, and supports the achievement of learning outcomes. In course of study management development, the results of feedback surveys and the analysis of learning activities are taken into account.
- 6.2. Within the education process of study programme, efficient teaching strategies are applied (modern, interactive, teamwork-based, etc.) and oriented towards active learning of the students.
- 6.3. Within the education process of study programme, up-to-date teaching materials are used.
- 6.4. Organisation of internship is clearly regulated, the requirements for the completion of internship are determined, the instructions for conducting the internship are available and the supervision of students in work environment is ensured.
- 6.5. The higher education institution has a network of partner organisations offering internship opportunities for students and supporting the achievement of learning outcomes of study programmes.
- 6.6. Assessment of learning outcomes of students is performed in accordance with the existing requirements. Assessment methodology is consistent with learning outcomes and includes feedback supporting student development.
- 6.7. The higher education institution recognizes prior learning and work experiences.
- 6.8. Systematic analysis of achievement of learning outcomes is performed and improvement measures are undertaken.
- 6.9. Students are involved in research and development activities, the supervision of student research papers (seminar papers, applied projects, final thesis) is well organised and the satisfaction rate with the quality of supervision is high.

7. Teaching Staff

- 7.1. The number and qualification of full-time teaching staff complies with the requirements established by legislation. At least 60% of the study programme is covered by full-time staff. 100% of full-time staff involved in the study programme have PhD degree or equal.
- 7.2. Distribution of full-time teaching staff by age and the percentage of young members of the teaching staff ensure the sustainability of studies in a higher education institution and a study programme.
- 7.3. The total number and qualification of teaching staff is – based on their responsibilities, workload and the number of supervised students – sufficient and adequate for achieving the objectives and learning outcomes of the study programme at MA level.
- 7.4. The members of the teaching staff have an adequate teaching competence and improve their teaching methods.
- 7.5. The staff development system is effective: the members of the teaching staff have opportunities for self-improvement, staff development methods are applied by the higher education institution.
- 7.6. Visiting members of the teaching staff (including from foreign higher education institutions) are involved in teaching in a study programme.
- 7.7. The members of the full-time teaching staff of a higher education institution regularly develop their skills at foreign higher education institutions and participate in international networks.
- 7.8. Teaching staff are involved in national and international research projects and participate in forums, national and international scientific conferences.
- 7.9. Research activities of the teaching staff are planned and monitored efficiently.

8. Students

- 8.1. The admission requirements for student applicants are based on qualities necessary for completing the study programme. The admission of students is performed by procedures stipulated in the normative acts.
- 8.2. The counselling system of students (including study, career and psychological counselling) is planned/targeted and effective.
- 8.3. Students are provided with internal and external mobility opportunities.
- 8.4. Students participate in international mobility programmes. The percentage of students participating in student mobility is stable or growing.
- 8.5. Students are involved in the decision-making process at different levels of the higher education institution.
- 8.6. A system has been established for the detection and prevention of academic fraud.
- 8.7. Higher education institution has a tracking mechanism of graduates' employment and is monitoring the evolution of graduates' career.
- 8.8. The competitiveness of the graduates of a study programme is demonstrated by employment rate according to obtained qualification; unemployment rate; employment rate in other fields than the one studied within the programme.
- 8.9. There is a system in place for monitoring academic progress. Graduation of students per each year meets the legal requirements. Effective measures are implemented to reduce the drop-out rates.

9. Resources

- 9.1. The financial resources of a higher education institution are adequate for conducting studies, development activities related to studies and supporting the development of the teaching staff.
- 9.2. Trends in the number of students and graduates of a higher education institution in the last three to five years indicate sustainability.
- 9.3. Teaching and learning environments have been developed according to the teaching and learning objectives, include all facilities necessary for conducting studies in a given study programme and are of adequate capacity considering the number of students (auditoriums, seminar rooms, laboratories, rooms for students independent work and recreation, video projectors, internet etc.).
- 9.4. Both the conduct of studies and other activities of a higher education institution are supported by up-to-date information technology solutions, including the study information system, e-learning opportunities, and communication portals for students and teaching staff.
- 9.5. The students are provided with dormitories and medical service.
- 9.6. A library supports the conduct of studies ensuring that up-to-date information sources are available, and provides students with the opportunities for independent work.

III. Self-Evaluation of Study Programmes

10. A higher education institution shall conduct self-evaluation of study programmes and prepare a self-evaluation report according to the *Template for the self-evaluation report*, see Annex 1.
11. EKKA shall provide basic training in preparing self-evaluations of study programmes to higher education institutions.

IV. Formation of Assessment Committees

12. Assessment committees (hereinafter referred to as committees) shall have three to five members. A committee shall comprise at least two academic representatives and one student representative who is a student at the time of applying. In addition, a member from outside the higher education sector (employer representative) is involved whenever possible.

13. Requirements for members of an assessment committee:

13.1. members of an assessment committee shall be independent, they shall not represent neither the interests of the organisation they belong to, nor the interests of any other third parties;

13.2. members of an assessment committee shall confirm by signature an obligation to maintain the confidentiality of information that has become known to them by reason of their membership in an assessment committee and the lack of conflicts of interest. A conflict of interest is presumed to be present in the following cases:

- a committee member has an employment or other contractual relationship with the higher education institution under evaluation at the time of assessment, or he or she has had an employment relationship with that higher education institution within three years prior to the assessment visit;
- a committee member is participating in the work of a decision-making or advisory body of the higher education institution under evaluation at the time of assessment;
- a committee member is studying at the higher education institution under evaluation, or graduated from it less than three years ago;
- the membership connected with the study programme of the higher education institution under evaluation includes a person closely related to a committee member – spouse or life partner or a family member.;

13.3. members of an assessment committee shall know the functioning of the higher education system and the legislation that regulates it the respective country, and they are familiar with the trends in higher education in the European Union and worldwide;

13.4. members of an assessment committee (excluding the student) shall have past experience in management and/or development in the area of a given study programme, and/or they have undergone training related to external quality evaluation and they shall preferably have past experience in external evaluation of higher education;

13.5. members of an assessment committee (excluding the student) shall preferably have experience in teaching or supervising in a higher education institution.

13.6. members of a committee shall have the necessary teamwork skills to conduct the assessment.

13.7. members of a committee shall be proficient in the working language of the assessment.

13.8. the student member of a committee has preferably participated in the process of study programme development or in the work of decision-making bodies at a higher education institution.

14. Duties of members of a committee include the following:

14.1. reviewing a self-evaluation report of a higher education institution;

14.2. examining documents that regulate the accreditation of study programmes;

14.3. completing the assessment training provided by EKKA;

14.4. participating in the meetings and discussions of the committee;

14.5. contributing to the priming of the assessment report before the assessment visit;

14.6. participating in wording of recommendations and preparing the assessment report;

14.7. examining the comments of the higher education institution on the assessment report and considering them when coordinating the output of the final assessment report;

- 14.8. performing other tasks related to assessment activities according to the division of tasks among the members of a committee;
- 14.9. adhering to the agreed committee deadlines.

15. Duties of the chairperson of a committee include the following:

- 15.1. chairing the meetings of the committee;
- 15.2. dividing tasks among the members of the committee;
- 15.3. leading the committee during the visit;
- 15.4. after the visit, giving the overview of provisional conclusions of the committee to the higher education institution;
- 15.5. ensuring that the opinion of the committee is justified;
- 15.6. preparing and confirming the assessment report.

16. A higher education institution has the right to present its position on the composition of the assessment committee.

17. The Director of EKKA shall approve the final composition of a committee by his/her order and appoint a chairperson of the committee and an assessment coordinator.

18. An assessment coordinator (hereinafter 'coordinator') is a support person of a committee and an administrator of the assessment process whose main duty is to ensure smooth functioning of the assessment process on the basis of the requirements and the timeframe provided in this document.

19. EKKA shall enter into contracts for services with members of a committee and compensate the members of a committee for travel and accommodation costs related to performing their duties.

V. Organisation of Work of Assessment Committees

20. The higher education institution who receives an assessment committee shall appoint a contact person who ensures the smooth communication between EKKA and the higher education institution.

21. An assessment visit to a higher education institution shall last one to three days. The coordinator shall prepare a schedule of the visit in cooperation with the higher education institution and the chairperson of the assessment committee.

22. In the course of an assessment visit, a higher education institution shall make an adequately furnished room available to the members of an assessment committee and allow them to:

- 22.1. access statutes and normative documents which provide for and govern the activities of the higher education institution and its structural units;
- 22.2. interview employees and students of the higher education institution at the choice of experts;
- 22.3. access information related to teaching, learning and students; educational materials; and the study information system;
- 22.4. access information related to the teaching staff concerning their CVs, work load, methodological work and research activities;

- 22.5. examine the internal quality assurance system of teaching and learning;
 - 22.6. examine the condition of the infrastructure of the higher education institution;
 - 22.7. access subject syllabuses/programmes as well as instructional documents related to the content of teaching and learning;
 - 22.8. access students' final papers;
 - 22.9. access information related to financial activities of the higher education institution;
 - 22.10. visit any forms of contact learning (lectures, seminars, laboratory work, etc.);
 - 22.11. if necessary, obtain other information related to teaching, learning and research.
23. An assessment committee shall evaluate a study programme at a given higher education level in five separate components: the study programme and its development, teaching and learning, teaching staff, students and resources (hereinafter referred to as 'component assessments').
24. Assessment report shall include a description and analysis of information that the component assessments are based upon.
25. As a result of a component assessment, an assessment committee shall determine whether the component under evaluation:
- 25.1. conforms to requirements;
 - 25.2. partially conforms to requirements; or
 - 25.3. does not conform to requirements.
26. The higher education institution has the right to provide comments to the draft assessment report.
27. An assessment committee shall analyse the comments provided by the higher education institution and formalise the final report.
28. It is recommended that component assessments of the report shall be adopted by consensus. If consensus is not reached, the decision shall be made by a simple majority of members of an assessment committee who evaluated the studies at the higher education level within a study programme of a given higher education institution and the dissenting view(s) together with the reasons shall be included. In the case of an equal division of votes, the vote of the chairperson of the committee shall be decisive.
29. The EKKK Bureau shall forward the final report of the assessment committee and the comments of the higher education institution to the EKKK Quality Assessment Council.

VI. Final Assessment by EKKK Quality Assessment Council

30. The EKKK Quality Assessment Council shall provide a final assessment decision on a study programme at its session according to the document *Rules of Procedure of EKKK Quality Assessment Council*.
31. The EKKK Quality Assessment Council shall base its final assessment on the component assessments presented by the assessment committee, and the comments by the higher education institution received within the specified time, as well as additional materials submitted at the request of the Quality Assessment Council.
32. In case of contradictions in component assessments by an assessment committee or inadequate justification, the EKKK Quality Assessment Council shall have the right to return the component

assessments to the assessment committee to be reviewed and clarified; the assessment committee shall review the component assessments within two weeks after their receipt and return them with additional explanations and reasons to the EKKA Bureau.

33. The EKKA Quality Assessment Council shall, on the basis of the final assessment, base the proposal to the Minister of Education of the Republic of Moldova on the following principles:

33.1. If all five of the component assessments are “conforms to requirements”, the Quality Assessment Council shall decide to make a proposal to the Minister of Education to accredit the study programme for a period of five years.

33.2. If at least one of the component assessments is “does not conform to requirements”, the Quality Assessment Council shall decide to make a proposal to the Minister of Education not to accredit the study programme.

33.3. If all five of the component assessments are “partially conforms to requirements”, the Quality Assessment Council shall analyse the strengths and areas of improvement of the study programme and decide to make a proposal to the Minister of Education to accredit the study programme for a period of three years, or not to accredit the study programme.

33.4. If three or four of the component assessments by an assessment committee are “partially conforms to requirements”, the Quality Assessment Council shall decide to make a proposal to the Minister of Education to accredit the study programme for a period of three years.

33.5. If one or two of the component assessments by an assessment committee are “partially conforms to requirements, the Quality Assessment Council shall analyse the strengths and areas of improvement of the study programme to accredit the study programme for a period of five years or for a period of three years.

34. The EKKA Bureau shall forward the final assessment by the Quality Assessment Council to the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Moldova, the higher education institution, and the members of the assessment committee within ten working days after its adoption.

VII. Contestation of Evaluation Proceedings Conducted by EKKA and Final Assessments by Quality Assessment Council'

35. Evaluation proceedings conducted by EKKA may be disputed if the proceedings do not comply with the procedure provided for in this document. The challenge is filed with the Management Board of the Archimedes Foundation within 30 working days after the person filing the challenge became or should have become aware of the contested finding.

36. The final assessment by the EKKA Quality Assessment Council may be disputed after adoption of the corresponding administrative decision by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Moldova.