



**INDEPENDENT AGENCY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN EDUCATION
(IQAA)**

**STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES
FOR EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE
PROCEDURES OF INSTITUTIONAL AND PROGRAM (SPECIALIZED)
ACCREDITATION**

Nur-Sultan - 2020

Standard 1. CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

External quality assurance procedures are based on the standards of internal quality assurance of universities. The standards and criteria for institutional and program (specialized) accreditation are developed on the basis of European standards and guidelines (ESG-2015).

Guideline

The university is responsible for the quality of educational programs and other services provided.

The standards and criteria of institutional accreditation cover all aspects of the university's activities and include the following standards: 1. Mission, strategic planning and quality assurance policy; 2. Ethics and Academic Integrity; 3. Management and Information Management; 4. Student-centered learning, Teaching and Evaluation; 5. Student admission, learning outcomes, recognition and qualifications; 6. Educational programs: their development, effectiveness, continuous monitoring and periodic evaluation; 7. Faculty and teaching effectiveness; 8. Research work (creative activity); 9. Resources and student support services; 10. Public awareness; 11. Periodic external quality assurance and follow-up procedures.

Standards and criteria of program (specialized) accreditation assess the quality of educational programs, completeness of program implementation; herewith the following aspects are considered: objectives of educational programs and quality assurance policy; development, approval of educational programs and information management; student-centered learning, teaching and evaluation; student admission, academic performance, recognition and certification; teaching staff; educational resources and student support; public awareness; continuous monitoring and periodic evaluation of educational programs, periodic accreditation.

Standards and criteria contain regulatory requirements for the evaluation of the university/educational program and are the main documents for the preparation of a self-assessment report, for experts - during the examination of reports on the self-assessment of universities and external evaluation (audit).

Standard 2. METHODOLOGY OF THE EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURE

In order to achieve the set goals and objectives for external quality assurance, the agency has developed a methodology for external quality assurance procedures, which is agreed with all interested parties: universities, employers, students and others, while taking into account the regulatory framework of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Guideline

To ensure the effectiveness, objectivity and performance of the external quality assessment procedure, its goals and objectives have been determined, agreed with stakeholders.

When organizing an external assessment (audit), the agency takes into account the level of workload and the cost of the procedure for the university, including the workload of experts (audit days), the cost of accommodation, meals and travel of experts.

Improving the quality of the university/educational programs is carried out through the implementation of the recommendations of an external expert group.

The Agency carries out post-accreditation monitoring of work based on the results of external evaluation and subsequent activities of universities.

Standard 3. IMPLEMENTATION OF EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES

External quality assurance procedures should be reliable, transparent, consistent (the same) for everyone, published and accessible to the public and include the following steps:

- preparation of a report on the self-assessment of the university;
- preparation of technical expertise for the self-assessment report of universities/educational programs;
- organization and conduct of an external assessment (audit) of a higher educational institution or educational program;
- preparation of the report of the external expert group (EEG) on the results of the external assessment;
- Preparation of the Agency's Conclusion based on the EEG report for the Accreditation Council (by Agency departments and Expert Councils);
- Consideration by the Accreditation Council (AC) of the results of the external evaluation of universities/educational programs conducted by the EEG on

the basis of self-assessment reports, EEG reports, Agency conclusions and discussions held at the AC meeting;

- consideration of complaints of educational institutions by the Complaints Commission in case of disagreement of the university with the comments and recommendations of the EEG;

- consideration of an Appeal against the decision of the Accreditation Council based on the application of the university;

- publication of reports on the results of external evaluation (audit) of AC decisions on the Agency's website and DEQAR.

Guideline

External quality assurance procedures are carried out in accordance with the standards and criteria of institutional / program (specialized) accreditation, guidelines for the organization and conduct of self-assessment of universities / educational programs, guideline for external evaluation (audit).

The university carries out a self-assessment procedure and, based on its results, a report with supporting documentation is submitted to the agency.

When conducting an external assessment (audit), the results of interviews and questionnaires of interested parties of the university (faculty, students) are attached to the external assessment (audit) reports. Based on the results of an external assessment (audit), an external expert group (Standard 4) is preparing a EEG report (standard 6). The

Agency has developed and published a procedure for responding to complaints from educational organizations that disagree with the comments and recommendations of a team of external experts.

The decision-making by the Accreditation Council is based on the study of the university's self-assessment report, the EEG report, the agency's conclusion and the regulations on making decisions on the accreditation of the university/educational programs.

The Agency has an appeal procedure for educational organizations against a decision on institutional or program (specialized) accreditation, which is adopted by the Accreditation Council.

Reports of an external expert group and decisions on accreditation of universities/educational programs are posted on the agency's and DEQAR's websites.

The Agency conducts post-accreditation monitoring through:

- implementation by the university of the action plan for the implementation of the agency's comments and recommendations on the results of institutional and/or program (specialized) accreditation and the provision of annual reports on achievements and changes that have occurred over the year in maintaining the internal quality assurance system;

- agency experts visit an accredited educational organization and/or educational program to conduct an external evaluation procedure within the framework of post-accreditation monitoring, as a rule, after 2 years.

Standard 4. EXTERNAL EVALUATION (AUDIT) EXPERTS

The external quality assurance procedure is carried out by an expert group formed and including experts from the academic environment, international experts, representatives of employers and students.

Guideline

The Agency attracts experts representing various stakeholders - university faculty, employers, students with the necessary competencies and knowledge to conduct an objective and qualitative assessment of the quality of services provided by the university or educational program.

The Agency ensures high-quality and consistent work of experts for all universities through:

- careful selection of experts with relevant skills and competencies who have been trained at seminars/briefings, including in the format of video-conferences or webinars to familiarize themselves with the accreditation procedure, the methodology of external evaluation (audit), preparation of the report;
- appointment of an applicant who does not have a conflict of interest as a member of the expert group;
- involvement of international experts as members of the expert group, contributing to the further improvement of quality in educational institutions;
- conducting a systematic assessment of the effectiveness of the work of external evaluation (audit) experts and applying its results to the internal quality assurance system of the agency's activities.

Standard 5. DECISION-MAKING CRITERIA

Determining when making a decision on accreditation is the assessment of the quality of educational services of the university / educational programs for compliance with the standards and criteria of institutional / program (specialized) accreditation, developed with the participation of interested parties, published and posted on the agency's website and consistently used at all stages of external quality assessment.

Guideline

The results of the external evaluation (audit) contribute to improving the quality of the university/educational program.

Implementation of a consistent interpretation of the compliance of the university/ educational programs with the standards and criteria of accreditation based on the analysis of evidence.

Preparation of a report based on the results of an external assessment (audit) by an expert group containing comments and recommendations on improving the quality of the university's activities/educational programs.

The Accreditation Council makes a decision on accreditation based on consideration of the report on the self-assessment of the university/educational programs, external evaluation (audit) reports, the agency's conclusion and the Regulations on making a decision on the accreditation of universities/educational programs.

In case of a positive decision, the agency issues a certificate of accreditation of the university/educational program for 5 years and posts this EEG report and the AC decision on the agency's website and DEQAR.

If there is a large number of insignificant compliance with the accreditation standards for institutional or program accreditation in accordance with the Regulations on making decision, the university or educational program is accredited for a period of 2 years.

In case of a negative decision on accreditation, re-submission of an application for accreditation of a university/educational program is allowed after 1 year from the date of submission of the first application.

In case of refusal of accreditation of the university/educational program, the agency sends a reasoned notification.

Standard 6. EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORTS

The Agency publishes on the website the information on accredited universities/educational programs and full EEG reports in an understandable and accessible form for the academic environment, employers, students, parents and other interested parties.

Guideline

The report of experts on external evaluation (audit) is the basis for improving the activities of the university / educational program and a source of information for the public about its activities.

The report should have a clear structure, clarity of presentation, contains an assessment of the compliance of the information provided in the self-assessment report with the actual state of affairs in the organization and consists of the following sections:

- the context and objectives of the visit, which provides a general description of the external assessment process (audit), self-assessment methods, as well as the main characteristics of the university, the level and degree of participation of the university staff in the preparation of the self-assessment report;

- assessment of compliance with the standards and criteria of institutional/program (specialized) accreditation with a mandatory description of evidence, good practices, comments and recommendations;

- conclusion on the results of external evaluation and recommendations for further sustainable quality improvement;

- an application indicating the full program of external evaluation (audit) and a list of all participants in the interview meetings with contact details (e-mails, mobile phones), personal data of experts are excluded when posting on the website.

When preparing for an external visit, experts prepare an initial version of the external assessment (audit) report and send it to the coordinator and the head of the group a week before the visit to the university. Experts can record their opinion about the university or educational program based on the self-assessment report, and subsequently have the opportunity to compare statements during the interview and examination directly with the original version of the report, as well as discuss the highlighted points with other experts. Writing a preliminary summary report contributes to a better structuring of the external assessment.

The university has the right to check the report of an external expert group for the presence of factual errors. Within 10 working days, the agency sends by e-mail the report of the expert group to familiarize the university with the report and eliminate factual errors, if any.

If the university has not submitted comments to the report within three days, the agency considers that the university has no objections to the report.

If there are comments in the university's response to the submitted report, the head of the expert group, in agreement with the other members of the group, makes changes, if necessary, or gives a reasoned refutation of the comments.

After the meeting of the Accreditation Council, the experts' report on the external assessment (audit), the decision of the Accreditation Council on the accreditation of the university/educational program is posted on the agency's website and DEQAR.

Information about universities/educational programs that have passed institutional/program (specialized) accreditation is transmitted to the authorized body for placement in the National Registers 2 and 3.

Standard 7. COMPLAINTS AND APPEAL

One of the components of the external quality assurance process is the complaint and appeal procedures, which are brought to the attention of educational institutions and are available on the agency's website.

Guideline

In order to implement the principle of openness and accountability in order to protect the rights of educational institutions and fair decision-making, the agency has developed procedures for reviewing complaints and appeals.

The Agency has published procedures for responding to complaints from educational organizations that disagree with the comments and recommendations of a team of external experts, which is regulated by the "Regulation on the Complaints Procedure".

Consideration of the complaint of educational organizations makes it possible to identify violations committed during the external audit and offer recommendations for their elimination.

An accredited university/educational program has the right to apply to the Complaints Commission on the basis of:

- complaints about the work or behavior of the chairman or a member of the agency's external experts team or a coordinator working in the agency;
- complaints about the inaccuracy of information provided to the agency.

After making decisions on accreditation (institutional or program (specialized)), the educational organization has the right to appeal against the decision of the Accreditation Council. The Agency has established an Appeal Commission, which carries out its activities on the basis of the "Regulations on the Appeal Commission and the Appeal Procedure".

A university that has received the decision of the Accreditation Council "not to accredit" based on the results of institutional or program (specialized) accreditation has the right to appeal to the Appeal Commission on the following claims: violation of the accreditation procedure, "factual errors" - this means that the information provided by the educational organization was used incorrectly by the Accreditation Council, which led to a negative decision.

Consideration of claims by universities allows you to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the procedures used, maintain the openness and responsibility of the activities of agency employees, experts involved in external evaluation and is part of a strategy aimed at improving the quality of the agency's work.