

**Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency
for Higher Education**



**Quality in the Slovenian Higher
Education and Higher Vocational
Education Area in the Period from 2014
to 2017**

August 2017 – February 2018

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Introduction

The Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (hereinafter: SQAA) has prepared its second analysis of quality in the Slovenian higher education and higher vocational education area. This document provides detailed insight in the quality of higher education and higher vocational education in the period from 2014 to 2017. It draws from the findings of external evaluations in the procedures of re-accreditation of higher education institutions and study programmes, from external evaluations of higher vocational colleges, as well as from self-evaluation reports of higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges.

In the first chapter, the current situation in the area of state-approved study programmes, public and private higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges is summarised, and an overview of the accreditations granted (higher education) and opinions issued (higher vocational education) by the SQAA is given.

The following chapters provide a detailed analysis of evaluation reports on public and private higher education institutions which have been re-accredited from 2014 to 2017. This group of institutions does not include any universities, since the latter had all been re-accredited previously and had thus been covered by the previous system-wide analysis from 2010 to 2013. Second is a large group of first, second and third cycle study programmes of public and private higher education institutions. For the purpose of this document, only a general summative analysis is provided for the entire group of study programmes based on a group of selected survey questions so that the quality indicators best correspond with those covering the external evaluation of higher education institutions. However, the database allows for subsequent specific and comparative analyses individually or according to specific data groups, i.e. field/discipline, level, status, ownership, area of assessment, quality indicator, evaluatory practices, composition of expert groups and date of external evaluation. Third is the analysis of evaluation reports on public and private higher vocational colleges evaluated in the same period from 2014 to 2017. The external evaluations are then followed by the chapters on the analysis of self-evaluation reports of higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges. These two chapters cover both the content as well as the evaluatory extent or depth of the analysed reports.

Research methodology was based on surveys with closed questions which were used for guided interpretation of expert and self-evaluation reports, in order to transform the researched content, findings and evaluations into a structured database for general qualitative, quantitative and comparative analysis. Since each chapter builds on a specific or modified research methodology and observed group of texts, detailed research parameters will be given in each chapter respectively. Where reasonable, this document also relates to the findings from the previous analysis and reports by the SQAA. The content of individual chapters is mainly structured according to the Criteria for the Accreditation and External Evaluation of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programmes (hereinafter: the Accreditation Criteria) and the Criteria for the External Evaluation of Higher Vocational Colleges (hereinafter: the Evaluation Criteria) valid during 2014 and 2017, thus following these areas of assessment : (1) integration with the environment, (2) functioning of the institution, (2) human resources, (3) students, (4) material conditions and (5) quality assurance. In case of higher education institutions and their study programmes, the

additional area of assessment covers (6) organisation and provision of study. The discourse used in this document follows that of the stated regulations and of the SQAA.¹

The key purpose of this research was to establish the qualitative state of affairs in the Slovenian higher education and higher vocational education area in the period from 2014 to 2017 – i.e. what is good, what could be better and what is not good, and perhaps less so: is there something in quantitative terms, how much of it is there and whether it is being reproduced through distinct practices. One aspect of the research question is covered with the analysis of external evaluations, and another with the analysis of self-evaluation at higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges.

This document concludes with a brief summary and an outlook on the future of quality assurance and enhancement in Slovenia.

¹ SQAA criteria are in accordance with Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

Slovenian higher education and higher vocational education from 2014 to 2017

At the end of 2017, 7 universities and 48 higher education institutions were entered in the eVŠ records of students and graduates at the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports (register of accredited study programmes and higher education institutions).² While according to the previous system-wide analysis (2010–2013) the number of universities has risen by two, the number of private higher education institutions has dropped on account of 7 such institutions having merged into new private universities.³

In the academic year 2016/2017, 79,547 students were enrolled in universities and private higher education institutions, which is approximately 1,000 less than a year before, more than 5,000 less than in 2012/2013, and more than 36,000 less than in 2006/07.⁴

At the end of 2017, 994 study programmes in total were state-approved, which is 75 more than at the end of 2013 and 331 more than prior to the introduction of the Bologna reform.

Currently, there are 28 public and 17 private higher vocational colleges in Slovenia, in which approximately 11,000 students studied in the academic year 2016/2017. This is approximately 2,500 students less than in 2012/13. The total number of higher vocational colleges has dropped by 3 – all these colleges that terminated new enrolment are private.

Review of initial accreditations of non-university higher education institutions (all private) according to ISCED in the period from 2014 to 2017:

ISCED	Total
34 – Business and administration	1
72 – Health	1

Nova univerza consolidated its status through a merger of European Faculty of Law, the Faculty of Slovenian and International Studies, and the Graduate School of Government and European Studies in 2017. Its ISCED fields are:

ISCED
22 – Humanities
31 – Social and behavioural science
34 – Business and administration
38 – Law

The University of Novo mesto was accredited based on a merger of the Faculty of Business and Management Sciences Novo mesto, Faculty of Technologies and Systems, Faculty of Business, Management and Informatics Novo mesto, and Faculty of Health Sciences Novo mesto in 2017. Its ISCED fields are:

² All information in this chapter has been taken from publically available sources at the end of 2017.

³ For comparisons with system-wide analysis from 2010 to 2013, see p. 6 through 8 of that document [here](#).

⁴ See the data of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia. Further reading is available [here](#).



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ISCED
34 – Business and administration
52 – Engineering and engineering trades
72 – Health

In the said period, there were 74 study programmes newly accredited in total, among them 14 professional higher education study programmes (first cycle) and 4 university study programmes (first cycle). Almost a half (35) of newly-accredited study programmes are masters' study programmes, while 10 are doctoral. The remaining 11 granted initial accreditations were in the field of supplementary education. Compared to the period from 2010 to 2013 which was still under the influence of transiting to Bologna regime, the total number of newly accredited study programmes dropped significantly, from 248 to 74 (335%).⁵ The drops were most significant in case of first cycle university study programmes (475%) and master's study programmes (440%), and less so in case of supplementary study programmes (236%), doctoral study programmes (230%) and first cycle professional higher education study programmes (186%).

Comparative review of total initial accreditations of study programmes according to Klasius-SRV:

Klasius SRV	Description	Total 2010–2013	Total 2014–2017
16203	Professional higher education (first Bologna cycle)	26	14
16204	Academic higher education (first Bologna cycle)	19	4
17003	Master's education (second Bologna cycle)	154	35
18202	Education leading to doctorate of science (third Bologna cycle)	23	10
36100, 36200 & 37000	Sublevels 6/1, 6/2 and 7: Activities/Achievements, supplementary education	26	11
	Total	248	74

The majority of the newly accredited study programmes are from the field of business and administration (26%). The number of these study programmes is even greater than in the 2010–2013 period which in retrospect is characterised by a vastly greater number of newly accredited study programmes. Similarly, there is the surge in study programmes from the field of health which represent 16% of all new study programmes in the 2014–2017 period. Despite the average 335% decrease in the number of newly accredited study programmes, the number of study programmes from the field of health has increased by 50% when compared to the 2010–2013 period. A substantial share of newly accredited study programmes in 2014–2017 is from the field of teacher training and education (11%), humanities, as well as engineering and engineering trades (8% each). Compared to the 2010–2013 period, the number of study programmes has decreased notably in the fields of teacher training and education (ninefold), humanities and social and behaviour science (both sevenfold), and personal services (six fold).

⁵ All percentages in this document are rounded to integers.

Review of initial accreditations of study programmes according to ISCED:

ISCED	Total 2010–2013	Total 2014–2017
14 – Teacher training and education science	73	8
21 – Arts	13	4
22 – Humanities	44	6
31 – Social and behaviour science	26	4
32 – Journalism and information	3	2
34 – Business and administration	15	19
38 – Law	5	2
42 – Life science	2	0
44 – Physical science	2	0
46 – Mathematics and statistics	3	0
48 – Computing	1	2
52 – Engineering and engineering trades	23	6
54 – Manufacturing and processing	2	0
58 – Architecture and building	4	4
62 – Agriculture, forestry and fishery	1	0
64 – Veterinary	5	0
72 – Health	8	12
76 – Social services	0	1
81 – Personal services	11	2
84 – Transport services	2	0
85 – Environmental protection	4	1
86 – Security services	1	1
Total	248	74

From 2014 to 2017, the number of external evaluations of higher vocational colleges, as well as institutional and programme re-accreditations was more than 3 times greater than in the period covered by the previous system-wide analysis. 492 study programmes and 26 higher education institutions in total were re-accredited, while 31 higher vocational colleges underwent external evaluation.

Comparative review of re-accreditation and external evaluation procedures:

Procedure	Total 2010–2013	Total 2014–2017
Re-accreditation of a higher education institution	16	26
Re-accreditation of a study programme	139	492
External evaluation of a higher vocational college	22	31
Total	177	551



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Since the analyses in subsequent chapters cover the specifics of higher education institutions, their study programmes and higher vocational colleges in re-accreditation and external evaluation procedures during 2014 and 2017, further information will be presented below, while details on the decisions (positive or negative) by the SQAA Council in these matters can be found in [SQAA self-evaluation reports](#).

Methodological framework for the analysis of external evaluations

The analysis of external evaluations draws from publicly available expert opinions and findings in the final reports of expert groups that were appointed by the SQAA Council in re-accreditation and evaluation procedures. This direct expert opinion which is based on the studied documentation for assessment, the experience at site visits and applicants' responses was selected instead of explications in the final SQAA Council decisions.

The reports were selected based on the time of the SQAA Council decision, i.e. all decisions were adopted during 2014 and 2017; however, some decisions in 2014 were adopted based on evaluation reports from 2013 which were excluded from the previous system-wide analysis. Although all available and accessible reports in this time frame were selected and analysed, a few reports were unavailable and thus not included in this research. For example, out of 492 study programmes reaccredited during 2014 and 2017, 485 or 99% were included in this research.

All collected expert reports on higher education institutions, their study programmes and higher vocational colleges were selected for qualitative and quantitative analysis with the aid of closed question surveys specifically tailored to the type of external evaluation. Due to differing sample sizes, the questions were structured to a variable degree. They were structured according to the areas of assessment and specific quality standards in the Accreditation Criteria and Evaluation Criteria. While the questionnaires for higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges covered broader topics due to the small number of institutional reports, the questionnaire for study programmes exactly due to the size of the sample addressed numerous specific aspects of the Accreditation Criteria. All questionnaires followed the same areas of assessment: (1) integration with the environment, (2) functioning of the institution, (2) human resources, (3) students, (4) material conditions and (5) quality assurance. In case of higher education institutions and their study programmes, an additional area of assessment covers (6) organisation and provision of study.

The key purpose of this research was to establish the qualitative state of affairs in the Slovenian Higher Education and Higher Vocational Education Area in the Period from 2014 to 2017 – i.e. what is good, what could be better and what is unsatisfactory.⁶ Therefore, each questionnaire was aimed at encoding and interpreting the parts of expert reports, where expert findings are given a distinct qualification and are expressed either as (1) strengths, (2) opportunities for improvement or (3) inconsistencies (with regulations). In other words, these categories span from good (perhaps even excellent) to unsatisfactory (inconsistent with minimal expectations laid out in legal provisions or even less satisfactory than this). According to official templates for writing expert reports, each report concludes an individual area of assessment with the above three qualitative categories. In this manner, experts assigned to a set of emphasized findings a qualitative value, even though these findings might have literarily been expressed as statements without an inherent or explicit qualitative value – only being mentioned under a specific qualitative category demonstrates a qualitative judgement in itself. Furthermore, because these findings at the end of each area of assessment stand out and are expected to be summarized at the end of the report, they bear an additional summative emphasis and importance, which is representative of the entire expert opinion within a particular area of assessment.

⁶ This document does not tackle the issue of defining quality since no such official attempts in Slovenia exist. It takes the meaning of quality for granted and leaves it to full extent of its relativism.

Since individual questions are structured according to specific criteria and areas of assessment, the database of encoded value judgements yields a cumulative qualitative value for each question, thus enabling the assessment of quality for the entire sample of expert opinions. It also allows for comparing filtered subgroups against any other groups of comparable data.

All other expert findings were excluded from the research because they may be bare descriptions, quotations of documentation or statements by others, paraphrases of criteria, argumentations, and as a rule often represent statements with no or limited qualitative value.

The encoding of qualitative expert opinion into the questionnaires required subjective interpretation only in the extent of assigning particular expert statements to individual questions. While the qualitative manner of the statement was clear because the experts have already categorized it, interpretation was required to decide, whether a certain statement does or does not correspond with a certain question in the questionnaire – whether it is too broad or specific, concordant or different in content, or whether it corresponds with only one or more questions. As a result, the surveys also monitored whether particular aspects of quality actually received any attention by the experts.

At the end of each area of assessment, a specific question (slider type) was aimed at observing the ratio between the total number of findings that the experts designated as strengths on one side (1) and the total number of findings that the experts designated as opportunities as well as inconsistencies on the other (7) on a scale from 1 to 7. This indicator is marked as the quantitative average ratio. Average standard deviations and average mean values were calculated for individual areas of assessment and cumulatively as well.

Apart from quantitative average ratios, total ratios were calculated between all strengths, opportunities for improvement, inconsistencies with regulations as well as for additional category labelled "Not mentioned" in order to further reference the results for specific indicators against cumulative or mean values.

The following ground rules of interpretation in assigning qualitative statements to survey questions were determined before the surveys were launched:

- If the expert report is written for more than one study programme and an individual study programme is not specially mentioned in a stated qualitative opinion, the latter holds for all assessed programmes, including the individual one.
- A single qualitative statement in the report (even though it may be complex) may only be designated to a single qualitative category in the questionnaire. However ...
- The same qualitative statement may correspond with more than one question only if this statement is complex, composite or general enough to completely correspond with more than one question.
- If a qualitative statement is overly vague or general, it is necessary to consult with the argument in support of this statement in the remaining part of the expert report to ensure, to which question the statement corresponds. If this does not help, or if the statement is overly specific, it should not be assigned to any question.
- If a qualitative statement is categorized as a strength in one part of the report and as an opportunity for improvement in the other, the argument in the remaining part of the expert report should be consulted in support of this statement and based on the prevailing explanation, the dominant qualitative value in the question should be assigned. If this does not help, the statement should not be assigned to any question.



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- If several specific qualitative statements demonstrate correspondence with a single question, a common prevailing qualitative value should be derived and assigned to this question.
- If two or more questions address the same prevailing issue within a statement, the statement should be assigned to the question pertaining to the area of assessment, in which this statement was emphasized in the expert report, and not (also) to a related question in a different area of assessment.
- Qualitative statements that according to the Accreditation Criteria or Evaluation Criteria have clearly been categorized in the false areas of assessment, are to be assigned to the corresponding questions and areas of assessment in the questionnaire.
- The few study programmes that during 2014 and 2017 might have been externally evaluated more than once, are to be included in the survey for each evaluation separately.
- If a higher education institution or higher vocational college has changed its or its study programme's type, status or name, it is necessary to fill in the state of affairs from the day when the final evaluation report was submitted to the SQAA.
- Any obvious mistakes or inconsistencies in expert reports are to be excluded from the surveys in order to avoid falsification or distortion of results, i.e. assigning qualitative properties to a study programme in a report for several study programmes, in which it is clear that these properties cannot be true for a particular study programme, for example, due to its specific nature.

Each survey was consistently carried out by only one respondent according to the methodology and guidelines stated in this chapter.

The survey results show, what received most attention by experts and in what qualitative manner. This does not mean that the results paint an exact and real picture of quality in the Slovenian higher education and higher vocational education area. They rather represent an evaluation of quality in tertiary education as it results from:

- How the Accreditation Criteria and Evaluation Criteria together with the expert manual, other guidelines and instructions by the workers as well as the Council at the SQAA steered the expert evaluation and influenced its discourse (*selective instruction*).
- How and with what motivation the higher education institutions or higher vocational colleges selected and presented the documentation for assessment and defended themselves in accreditation or evaluation procedures or how and with what motivation the interviewees testified at the site visits (*selective presentation*).
- How and why the experts qualified their findings in a certain manner, as well as understood what they evaluated as autonomous professionals who largely teach, research, study or do other work in similar fields of education or disciplines of research (*selective observation and judgement*).

Practically, the survey results may exhibit the following relation to the reality of quality in tertiary education if we for instance address the issue of habilitations in higher education. If the results show that habilitations are only rarely assigned a qualitative value, this may be influenced by the following conditions:

- This is not a real problem in higher education and consequentially does not deserve a qualitative emphasis.
- The experts do not find this matter worth stressing since they consider it an issue of compliance with minimum standards which has little to do with emphasising whether the assessed matter is actually good or unsatisfactory.



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- The SQAA with its regulations and instructions did not steer the experts sufficiently to pay special attention to the quality of this matter as it did to the quality of other matters.
- This may be a problematic matter with no easy solutions and may perhaps be more relevant than the expert opinion demonstrates. It may be inconvenient to point out something with serious implications to fellow teachers and researchers from a similar field or discipline under review so that the same experts do not find themselves in reversed roles as representatives of higher education institutions being judged by the experts whose institution they once evaluated.⁷
- The experts cannot find anything particularly good or unsatisfactory in this matter. Perhaps it is so because this matter was presented to them not as something with any particular qualitative value but rather as something about which regular autonomous procedures with clearly defined powers and responsibilities are conducted that lie outside the jurisdiction of the SQAA or the evaluatory power of experts.
- The experts are not familiar with the academic values and expectations within a field or discipline and do not wish to pass qualitative judgement in relative uncertainty. Instead, they may more easily pay attention to different or marginal matters that do not require specific knowledge of a field or discipline at hand or in-depth inquiry with possibly far-reaching judgements.
- Experts may not consider expert reports within accreditation and evaluation procedures an appropriate medium to judge the quality of teaching and research of their fellow colleagues from other higher education institutions but rather exercise this within their respective academic communities.
- There may exist a difference in the strictness and consistency among experts with regard to passing qualitative judgements on this matter.
- Experts may harbour views on different concepts of quality in higher education and therefore pass different judgements. With different approaches to the question of quality, no structured system of values and all criteria being of equal importance, some experts may focus on the aspects of governance or participation therein, efficiency, accountability or transparency while others may prefer to follow the system of academic or other pertinent values.

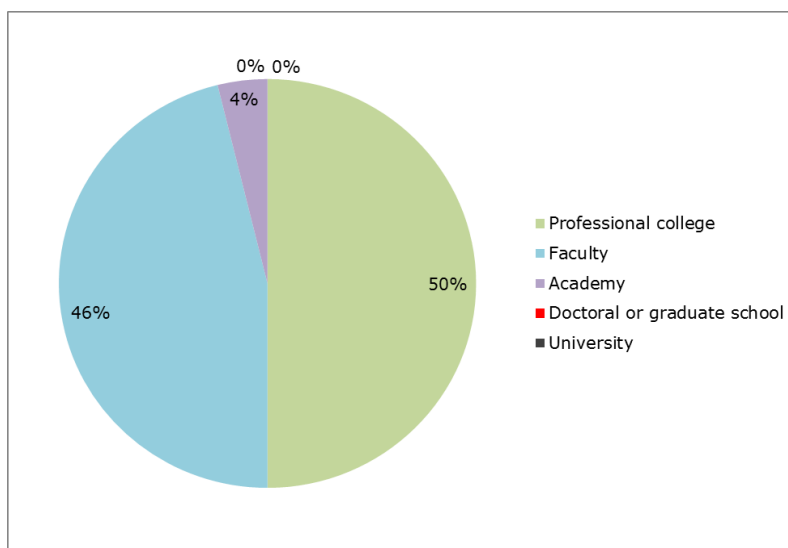
This lengthy caveat is necessary in order to distance the survey results from the complete reality of the situation which remains in the eye of the beholder and lies beyond the reach of this research. However, the results shed specific light on the quality of tertiary education from the viewpoint of the SQAA and its experts who provide official and legitimate professional assessments of quality based on which legally binding decisions are adopted.

⁷ Considering the fact that Slovenia is a small country.

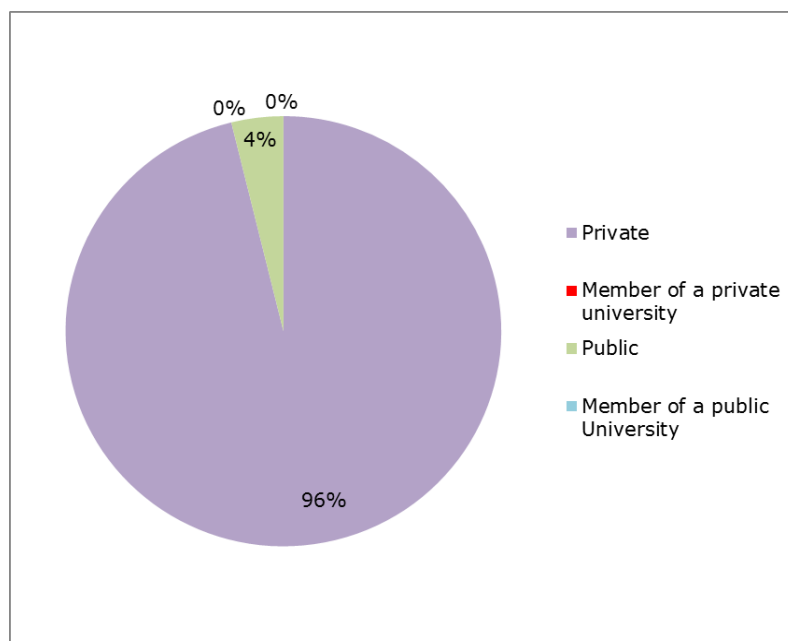
Analysis of expert reports on the external evaluation of higher education institutions

The survey consisted of 19 general questions and covered 26 expert reports on 26 higher education institutions which is 96% of all institutional re-accreditations in the period from 2014 to 2017. In the first part, the questions examine the type of higher education institution, its status and types of study programmes. Almost all higher education institutions re-accredited during 2014 and 2017 are private. Half of them are professional colleges, whereas the majority of the rest are faculties:

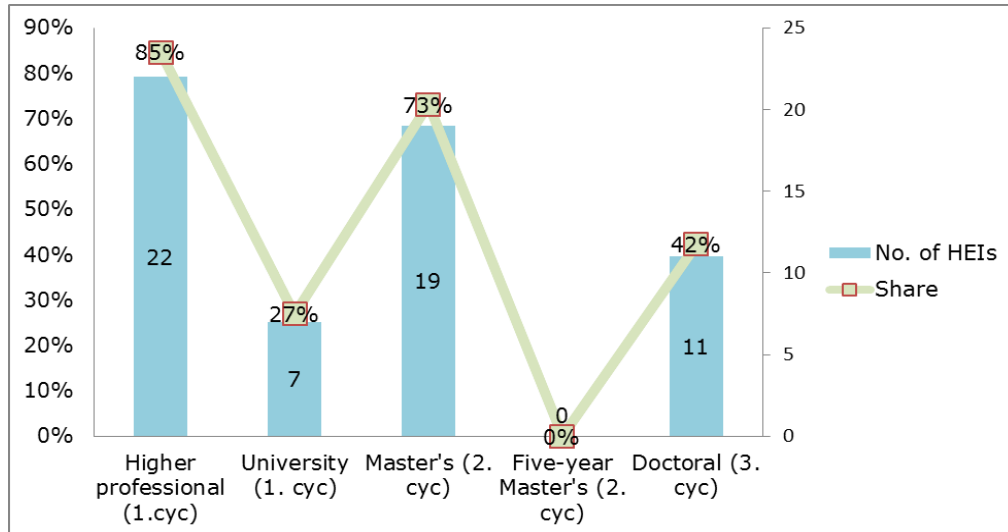
Higher education institutions according to their type:



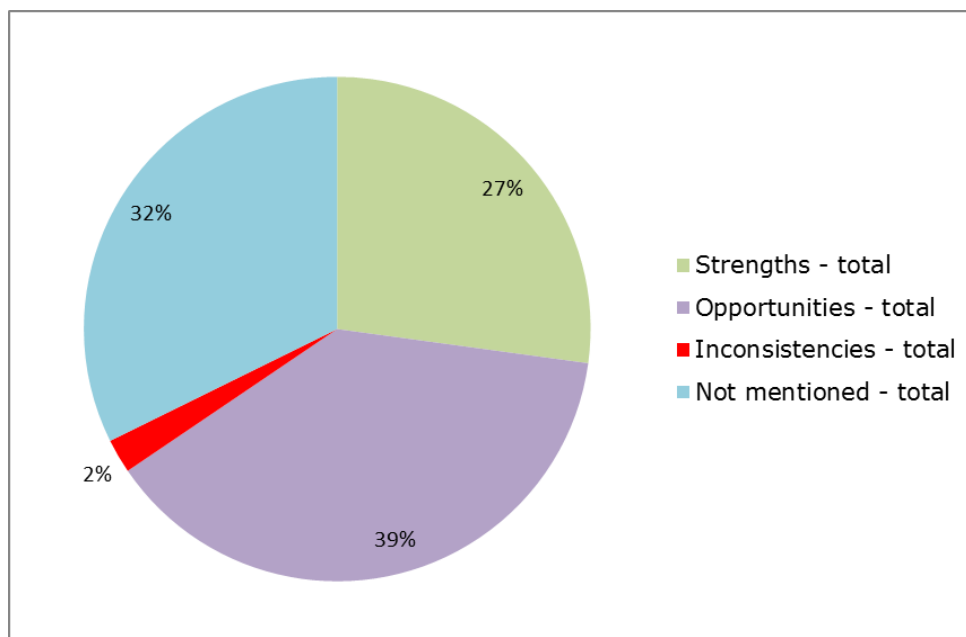
Higher education institutions according to their status:



The prevailing study programmes at the evaluated higher education institutions are the first cycle higher professional and master's study programmes. The frequency of doctoral study programmes exceeds that of the first cycle university study programmes, meaning that evaluated higher education institutions prefer applied and professional first cycle study to a more theoretical and basic study of university first cycle programmes:

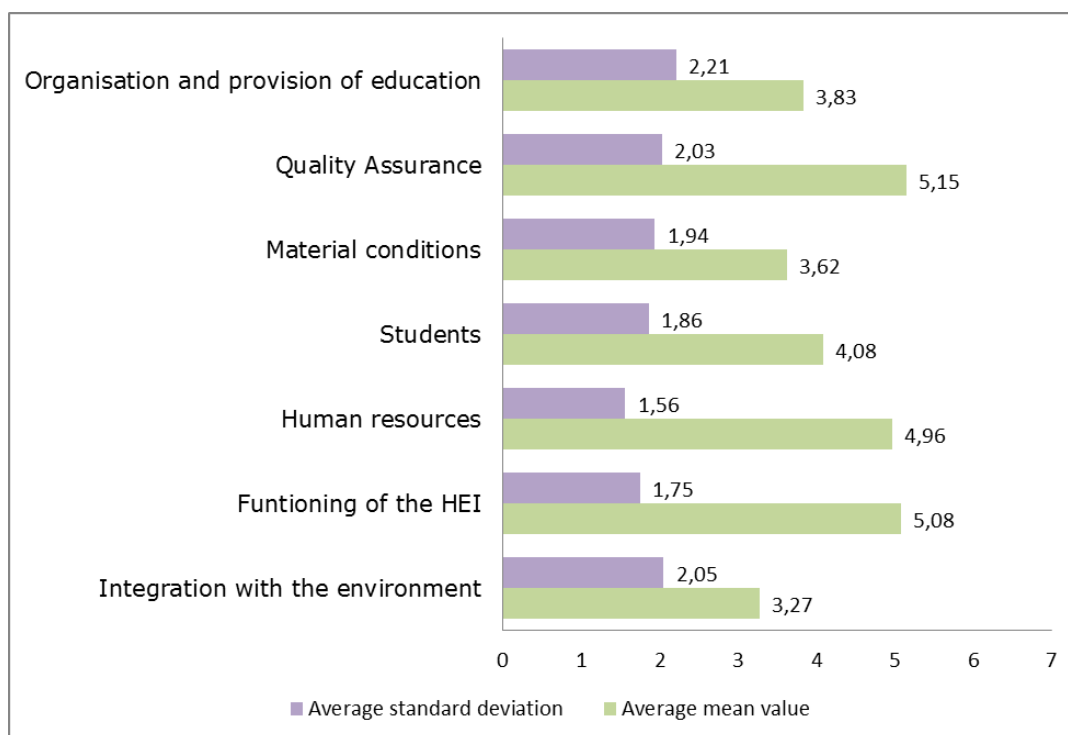


The remaining questions cover the essentials of individual areas of assessment in terms of how the experts characterised their findings: as strengths, opportunities for improvement or inconsistencies with regulations. The fourth category is labelled "Not mentioned" meaning that the experts did not give any qualitative emphasis on, and consequently did not mention a certain property or phenomenon among the three qualitative categories at the end of each area of assessment. The overall distribution of these categories for all responses (915 individual responses; 7 missed entries – i.e. 1% of missed entries) is as follows:



The result shows a slight excess of opportunities for improvement over strengths. While there are only few inconsistencies (20 in total were pointed out), the share of essential findings that were not treated as a strength, opportunity or inconsistency is considerable and amounts to about a third.

The quantitative average ratio between strengths on one side (1) and opportunities as well as inconsistencies on the other (7) on a scale from 1 to 7 is as follows: cumulative average mean value 4.28 with average standard deviation of 1.91. According to individual areas of assessment, the averages are as follows:



While the average mean value confirms the previous finding of a slight excess of opportunities for improvement over strengths, the variation in this excess and especially its extent in particular areas of assessment can be noticed, such as the functioning of the higher education institution, internal quality assurance as well as human resources where the number of opportunities for improvement considerably surpasses the number of strengths. The higher education institutions performed better in the following areas of assessment: integration with the environment and material conditions.

Maximum and minimal occurrences for individual categories in all areas of assessment were calculated as well. For example, this calculation shows that the greatest share of strengths for all quality indicators selected in this research is 73%, and the smallest is 0%, meaning that for one particular quality indicator, the result yielded 73% of strengths, and for another none at all. Later on, we will see that in case of student mobility, experts actually did not emphasize any strength in any analysed report.⁸ Average maximum share of strengths when considering average extremes for individual areas of assessment is 51%, whereas

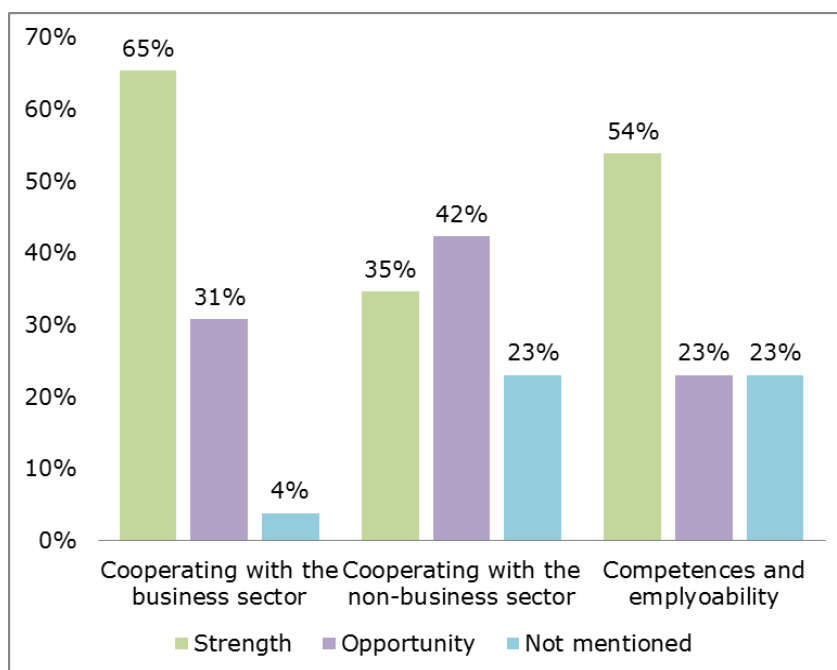
⁸ These results are calculated for all questions of the survey.

average minimum share is 12%. Specific calculations of maximums, minimums and their averages for individual categories can be referenced here:

Category	Absolute maximum	Average maximum	Absolute minimum	Average minimum
Strength	73%	51%	0%	12%
Opportunity	73%	55%	12%	18%
Inconsistency	12%	5%	0%	0%
Not mentioned	69%	54%	4%	11%

(1) The remainder of this chapter offers the distributions of strengths, opportunities and inconsistencies for general quality indicators in individual areas of assessment. First up is the integration with the environment, where qualitative findings of experts were observed for the following indicators:

- Cooperation of higher education institutions with the business sector in terms of partnerships, applicative projects for industry, involving professionals or representatives from the business sector in teaching or in the review of study programmes.
- Cooperation of higher education institutions with the non-business sector in terms of public services, meeting the requirements of the public sector, intellectual and cultural integration with the environment.
- Competences and employability of graduates in terms of their education and skills.

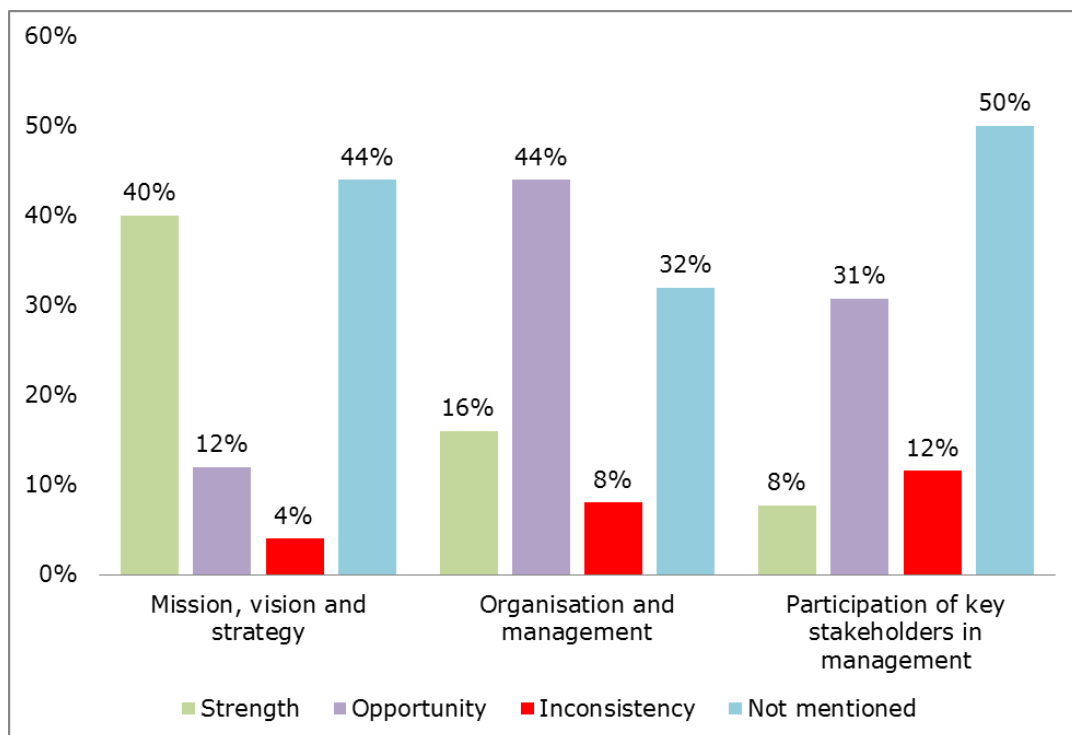


Cooperating with the business sector tends to be one of the greatest strengths of the evaluated higher education institutions. The experts also commended competences and employability of graduates. The most (but only slightly above the total average) opportunities for improvement were expressed for cooperation with the non-business sector while no inconsistencies were observed. It is worth stressing that the experts pay by far the

greatest attention to the cooperation with the business sector in comparison to all other indicators examined in this survey.

(2) In the next area of assessment, functioning of the higher education institution, the following quality indicators were observed:

- Mission, vision and strategy in terms of organisational goals and planning.
- Organisation and management of the higher education institution, i.e. governance.
- Participation of key stakeholders in the management of the higher education institution, i.e. participation in governance.
- Achieving and monitoring learning outcomes and competences, i.e. practices concerning the assessment of knowledge, skills and competences.
- Research or artistic work in terms of scientific and professional research or artistic work, achievements and awards at the institutional level.
- Practical training in terms of its organisation, provision and evaluation.



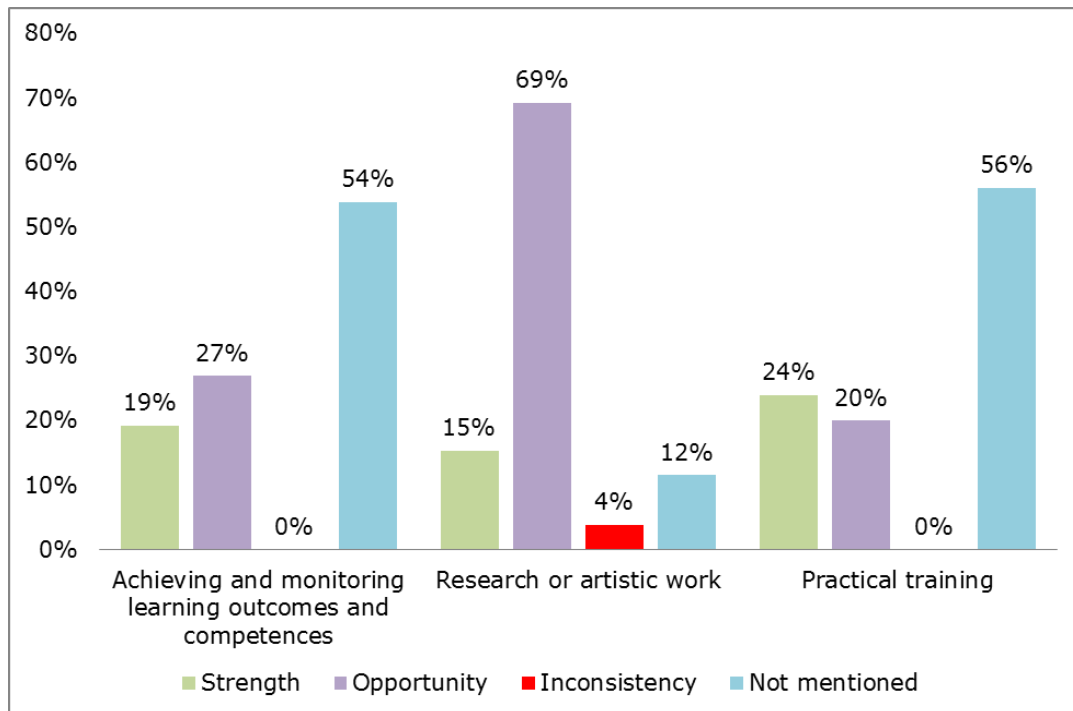


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This area of assessment features significantly fewer strengths on account of opportunities for improvement and also above average inconsistencies, most of which surface in relation to the issue of governance and participation therein. Specifically, experts were mindful of student quotas in management bodies. There was also a great share of opportunities for improvement regarding research or artistic work – 69% is among the highest shares in the entire survey. While most strengths were pointed out with regard to organisational goals (well above the average of total strengths), it is worth mentioning that the issue of practical training was least frequently mentioned, also due to the fact that not all evaluated institutions provide study programmes that include practical training in working environments.

(3) In the analysis of findings on human resources, the following quality indicators were observed:

- Habilitations, their validity and correspondence with the fields of courses that the teachers hold.
- Pedagogical work of teachers.
- Research or artistic work of teachers – at the individual, not institutional level.
- HR structure and stability in terms of the nature of employment of teachers and researchers at the higher education institution – i.e. full-time equivalence, employed vs. external co-workers.
- Administrative, professional and material support in terms of professional supporting and administrative staff – their stability, employment and services.

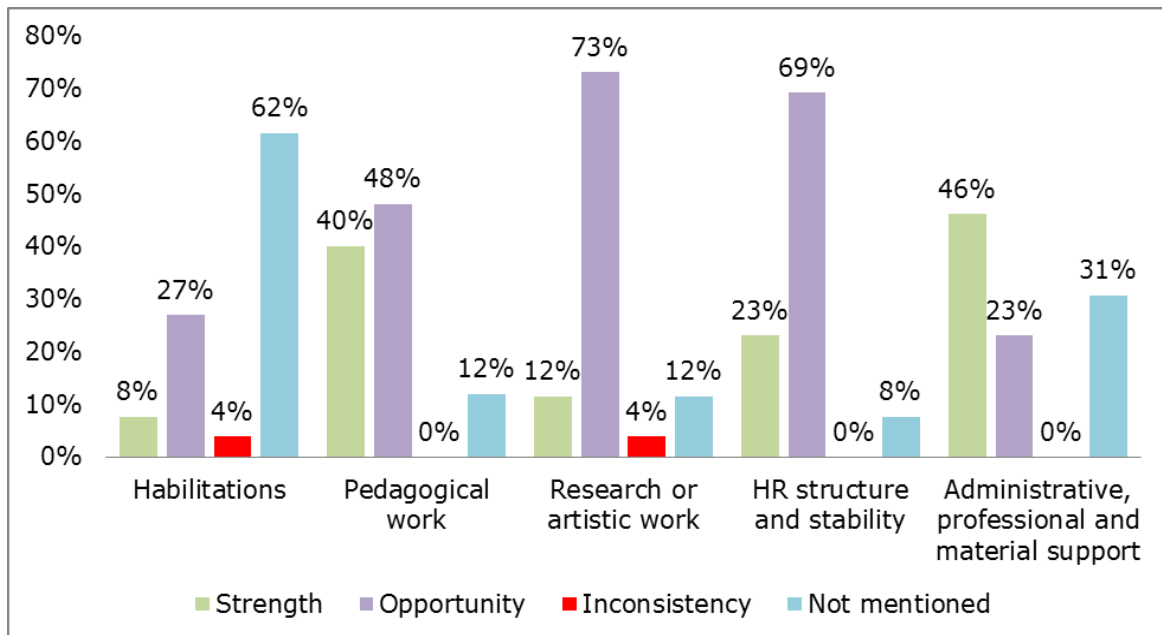


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The only indicator with prevailing strengths is administrative, professional and material support. In case of other indicators, the experts found considerably more opportunities than strengths, especially in the case of research or artistic work, as well as HR structure and stability which have reached peak values with regard to the entire survey, 73% and 69% respectively. When the status of evaluated higher education institutions is taken into account (96% private), a clear trend is evident with regard to the shortcoming of scientific and professional research or artistic work, achievements and awards both at the institutional and individual level. Pedagogical work, however, received a more positive evaluation, but nevertheless the share of opportunities for improvement is greater. Inconsistencies above the average of total inconsistencies were observed in case of habilitations as well as research or artistic work. Habilitations were least frequently mentioned.

(4) Students, being a hybrid area of assessment drawing from all other areas, covers the following quality indicators:

- Participation in research in terms of the actual participation of students in scientific and professional research or artistic work or the possibility to do so.
- Participation in management refers to the inclusion of students in the governance of the higher education institution.
- Participation in the review of study programmes refers to student involvement in evaluating the study programmes and adopting changes thereto.
- Student support refers to the general administrative support in study, i.e. the services of the enrolment office, study affairs office, international affairs office.
- Informing the students refers to the information services of the higher education institution and the state to which students are informed about the matters regarding education, employability, self-evaluation.
- Student mobility refers to the support and conditions for student mobility, its organisation and the actual student exchanges.

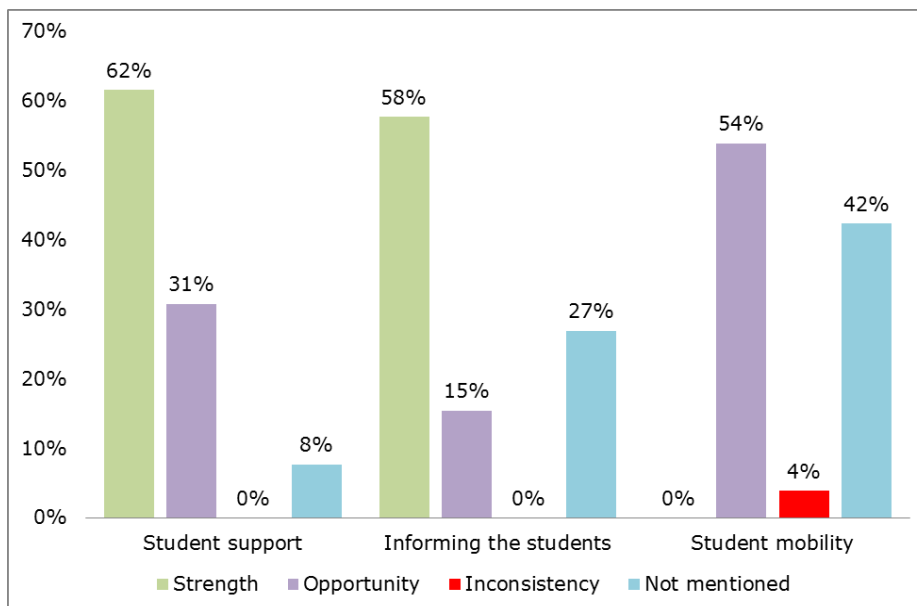
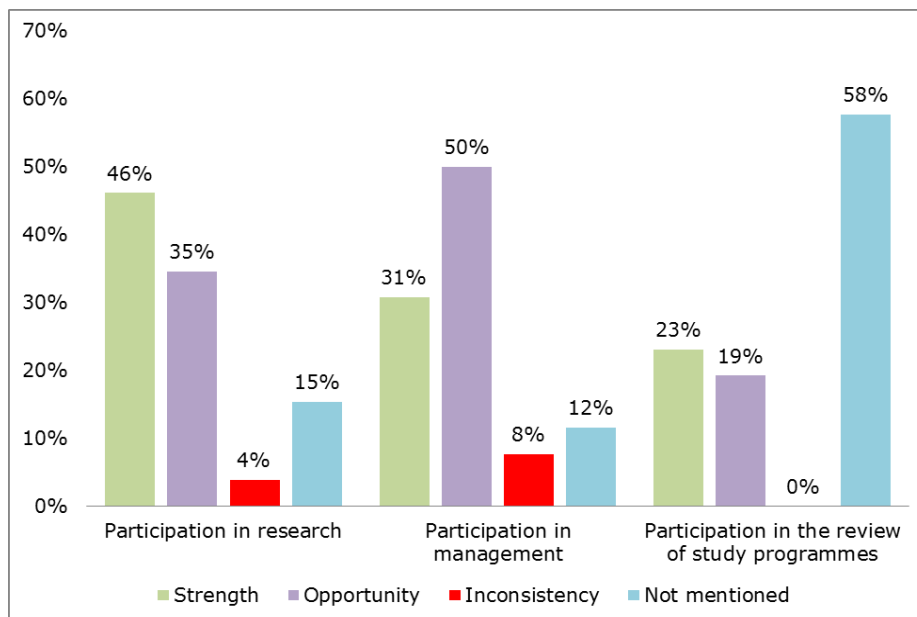


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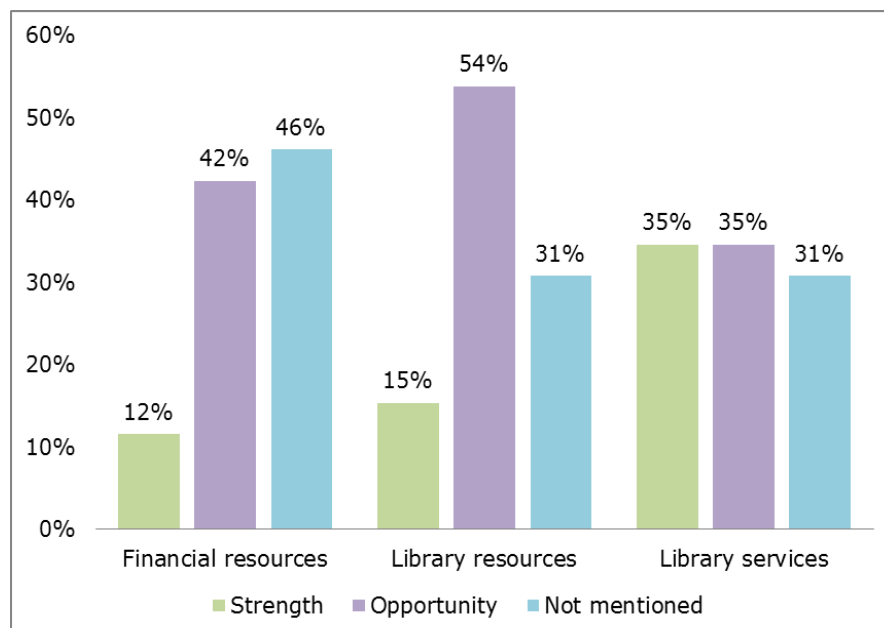
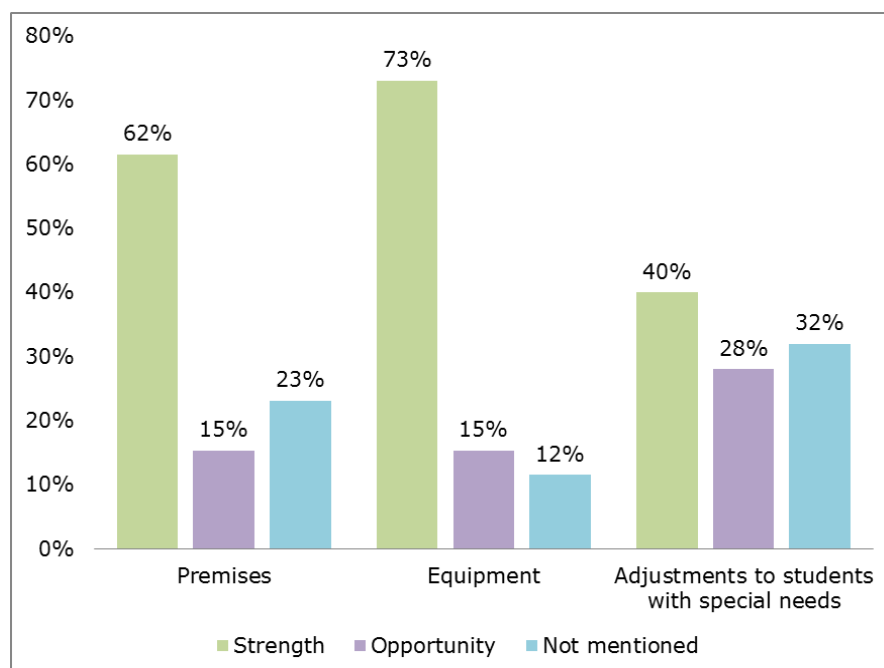
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Despite the nature of the already presented evaluation results on research and artistic work, the experts identified strengths in student participation in research which, unlike the related results above, exceed both the opportunities for improvement as well as the total average of strengths. The results in this area of assessment also confirm the above deficit in strengths in relation to the issue of governance and participation therein. Although the experts do find more strengths than opportunities for improvement in case of student participation in programme reviews, it is worth emphasizing that they seldom considered this matter when passing qualitative judgement within the three categories. Student support and the indicator of informing the students both received a highly positive evaluation while student mobility resulted in above average opportunities for improvement and inconsistencies.

(5) Material conditions cover the following quality indicators:

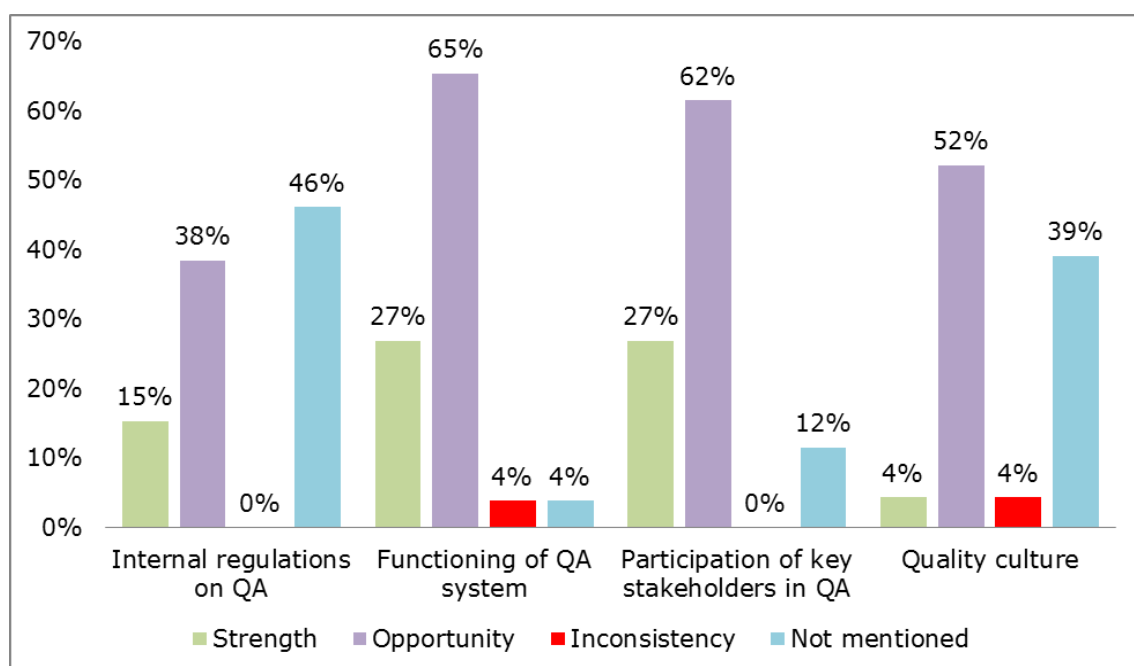
- Premises in terms of facilities for education, research or artistic work.
- Equipment for education, research or artistic work.
- Adjustments to students with special needs in terms of special adaptations of facilities, special equipment, as well as rules (rights and responsibilities) and support.
- Financial resources in terms of financial stability and suitability for the duration of the accreditation period.
- Library resources in terms of hard copies of study and research literature as well as access to databases.
- Library services in terms of professional support to students, teachers and researchers.



Both premises and equipment received a highly positive evaluation illustrating a general picture that private higher education institutions have quality spaces and equipment for education and research. Although many of them provide study programmes in the field of law and business and administration, which require less expensive, complicated and specialised material conditions for education and research, some also provide study programmes from the field of health, which is more demanding in this respect. There is a substantial excess of opportunities for improvement in case of financial and library resources. However, financial resources were not as frequently mentioned in any of the observed categories. Nevertheless, literature for study and research demonstrates the greatest deficit in the quality of material conditions. No inconsistencies with regulations were observed.

(6) Quality assurance as a special area for the assessment of internal quality assurance includes the following quality indicators:

- Internal regulations on quality assurance in terms of quality manuals or other adopted documents.
- Functioning of the internal quality assurance system in terms of its organisation, management and the efficiency and effectiveness of quality assurance processes.
- Participation of key stakeholders in internal quality assurance.
- Quality culture in terms of its state and development.
- Closure of quality loop in terms of completeness of quality assurance processes – i.e. completeness of William Edwards Deming’s PDCA or related quality assurance cycles including follow-up processes.
- Informing about quality assurance – about the quality assurance processes, their relevance and outcomes.
- Quality of self-evaluation in terms of consistency, completeness, methodological rigour and success of self-evaluation.
- Self-evaluation of individual study programmes – i.e. periodic review of study programmes and their development on account of self-evaluation outcomes.



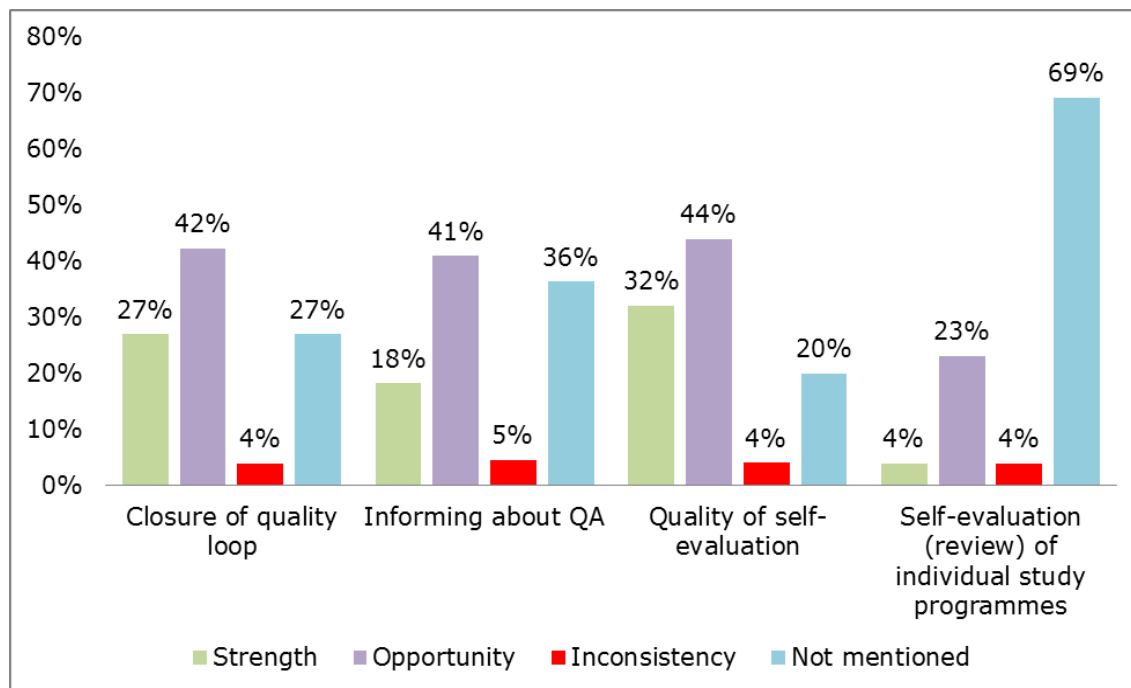


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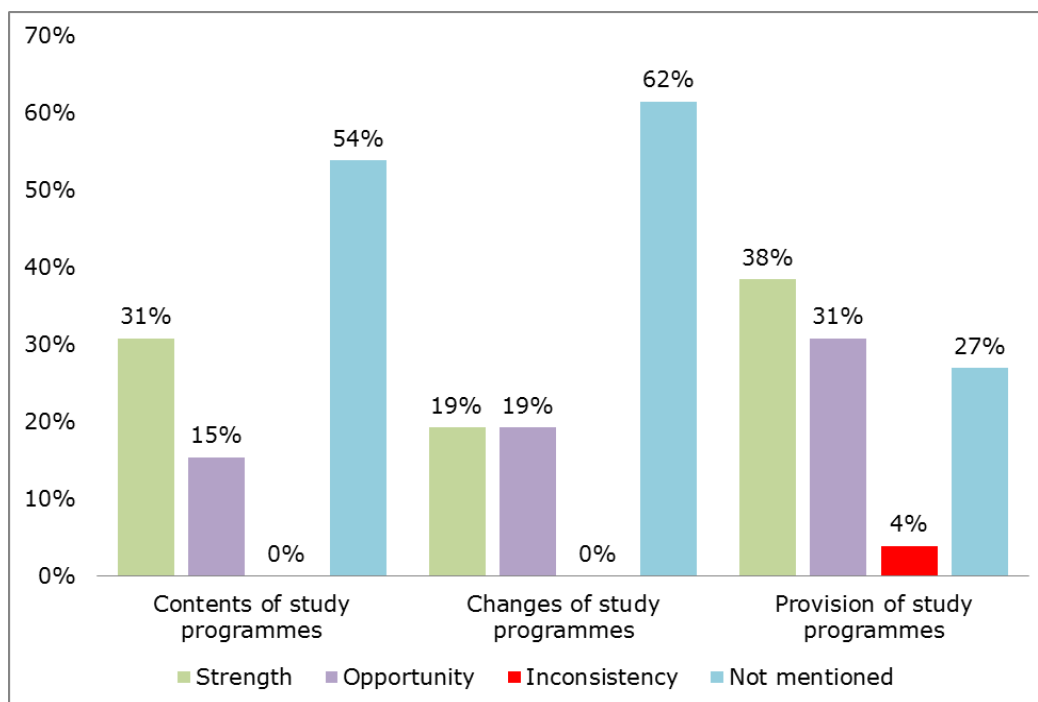
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There is a strong prevalence of opportunities for improvement throughout this area of assessment. In some indicators, there is even an extreme disproportion between strengths and opportunities for improvement, for instance in the case of quality culture and self-evaluation of individual study programmes. Functioning of the internal quality assurance system also received a very high share of opportunities for improvement. In addition, inconsistencies were observed in several indicators. The share of instances (69%) where the experts passed no qualitative judgement on the self-evaluation of study programmes is the highest for the entire survey. When they did so, they predominantly identified opportunities for improvement pointing to qualitative deficits in self-evaluations of study programmes.

(7) Organisation and provision of education comprises the following quality indicators:

- Contents of study programmes – i.e. curricula and syllabi, the structure and consistency of the contents, as well as their correspondence with the field of study or scientific discipline.
- Changes of study programmes in terms of content development (changes of curricula and syllabi), changing study literature, replacement of teachers and changing compulsory provisions such as enrolment criteria.
- Provision of study programmes in terms of the realisation of accredited curricula, stakeholder satisfaction with the study programme and its provision, mode of provision (i.e. distance learning), language of instruction.



While the experts paid less attention to the contents of study programmes and changes thereto, there seems to be a favourable excess of strengths over opportunities for improvement throughout this area of assessment. Although inconsistencies were observed in the provision of study programmes, strengths were identified in 38% of the cases.

The results of this research are not comparable with those of the 2010–2013 analysis of the external evaluation of Slovenian universities due to the differing methodology applied as well as the difference in the number, size and also status of the evaluated higher education institutions. However, the following parallels can be pointed out:

Common strengths: organisational goals and planning; integration with the environment; monitoring of graduate employability; support services, to a lesser extent organisation of practical training; the possibilities for students to participate in research and artistic work.

Common opportunities for improvement: strengthen cooperation with external stakeholders; maintain the stability of teachers and researchers, and increase the share of full-time employment; increase student mobility; inclusion of all strategic stakeholders in the self-evaluation processes.

Differences occur when aligning the following quality indicators: pedagogical work as well as scientific and professional research or artistic work, achievements and awards at the institutional or individual level. In case of these quality indicators, the experts found that the universities surpass the higher education institutions which were evaluated during 2014 and 2017.⁹

⁹ See chapter *External assessment of the Slovenian universities* in [Quality in the Slovenian Higher Education and Higher Vocational Education Area in the Period from 2010 to 2013](#) from p. 8 to p. 22.

General analysis of expert reports on the external evaluation of study programmes

The survey of expert reports on the external evaluation of study programmes consisted of 156 specific questions and covered expert reports on 485 study programmes of higher education institutions, which is 99% of all programme re-accreditations in the period from 2014 to 2017. This sample represents 49% of all accredited higher education study programmes in Slovenia.

In the first part, the survey questions examine the basic properties of the evaluated study programmes such as their type, cycle, classification, the type and status of the higher education institution that provides them, the year of the expert report, correspondence of the appointed groups of experts with the fields of study programmes and other properties that allow to compare and filter survey results.

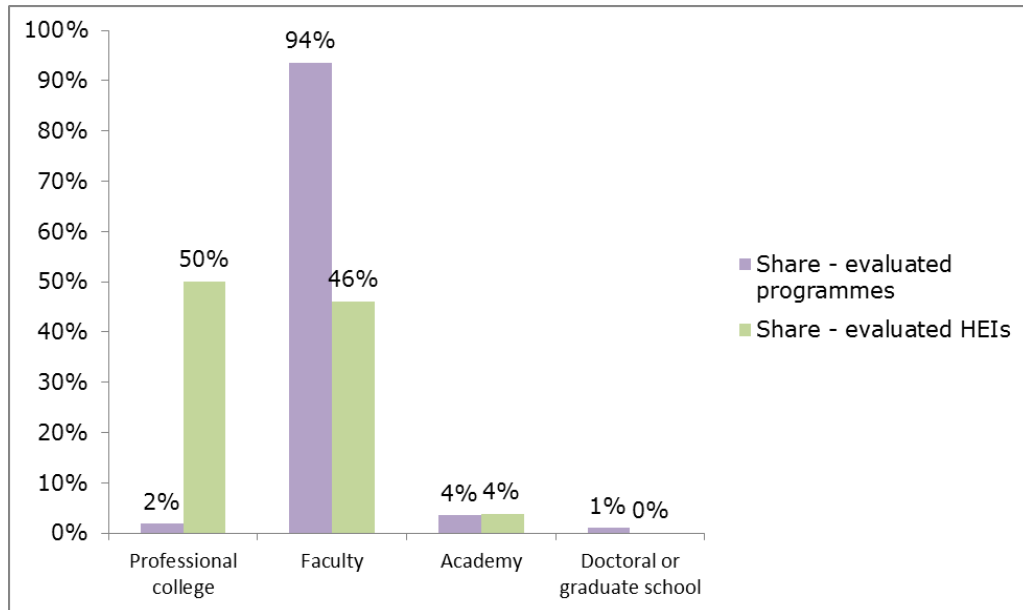
In the following part of the survey, questions are structured according to the areas of assessment and differ in number for individual areas of assessment due to the differing complexity and independence of individual areas of assessment – i.e. while the area of *Students* basically draws from all other areas of assessment and could thus include overly repetitive questions, the area of *Organisation and provision of education* is more independent and more seldom addressed in other areas of assessment. As a result, the former area of assessment consists of 8 broader questions while the latter consists of 33 questions, some of which are also more specific.

The analysis of all questions, as well as any filtering and comparison of results surpass the room reserved for the analysis in this document. Therefore, more thorough and comparative analyses will follow in subsequent reports. For the purpose of comparability and consistency, the questions selected for this chapter tend to mirror the quality indicators presented in the previous chapter on the external evaluation of higher education institutions and the subsequent chapter on higher vocational colleges. In some cases, this correspondence is direct. However, in some areas of assessment additional and more specific quality indicators are introduced. Additionally, in some cases, average results of two or more specific questions were taken to more thoroughly reflect the outcomes for the quality indicators in the analysis of higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges.

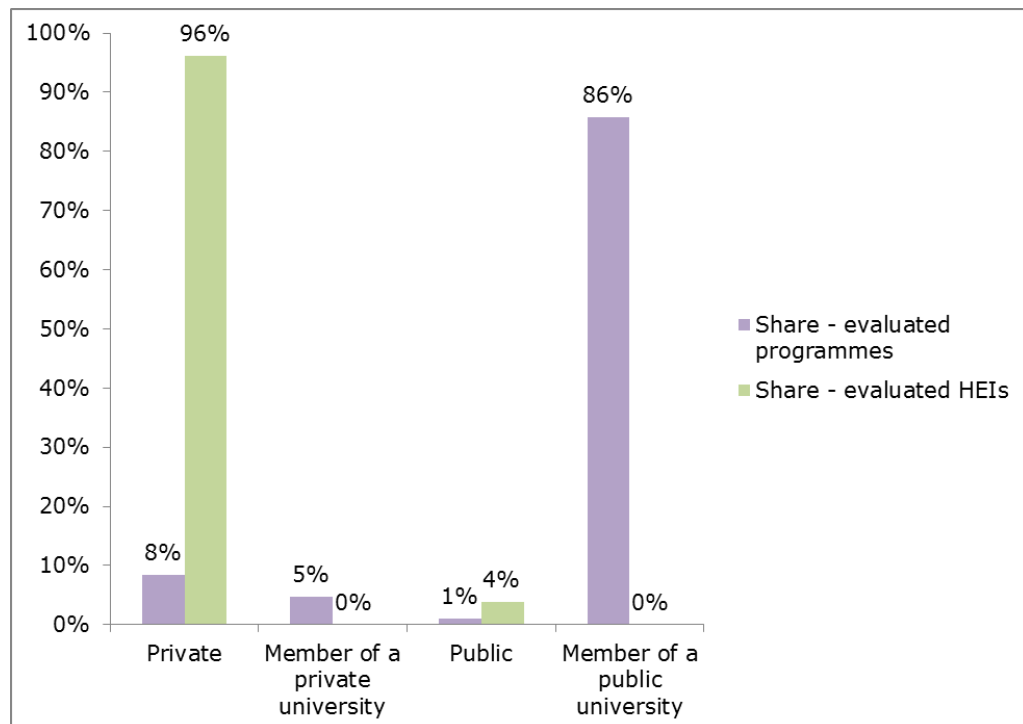
Since the questions vary in depth and specifics, it is necessary to take into account that some questions have more responses than others. In general, the response rates are considerably smaller than in the survey on the external evaluation of higher education institutions or higher vocational colleges mostly because the number of questions in the survey of study programmes is more than 8 times greater than in the survey on higher education institutions.

The majority of study programmes re-accredited during 2014 and 2017 are provided by public higher education institutions which is in contrast to the results of the analysis above. Namely, the results above predominantly address the conditions at private higher education institutions. Only few study programmes are provided by professional colleges, whereas the majority are provided by the faculties of public universities:

Higher education institutions providing the evaluated study programmes according to their type – comparison between evaluated programmes (this survey) and evaluated institutions (previous survey from the chapter above):



Higher education institutions providing the evaluated study programmes according to their status – comparison between evaluated programmes (this survey) and evaluated institutions (previous survey from the chapter above):



Master's study programmes are most frequently provided by the higher education institutions that were included in the sample of evaluated study programmes. The frequency of doctoral study programmes is comparable to that of the first cycle university study programmes and exceeds the first cycle higher professional study programmes, verifying



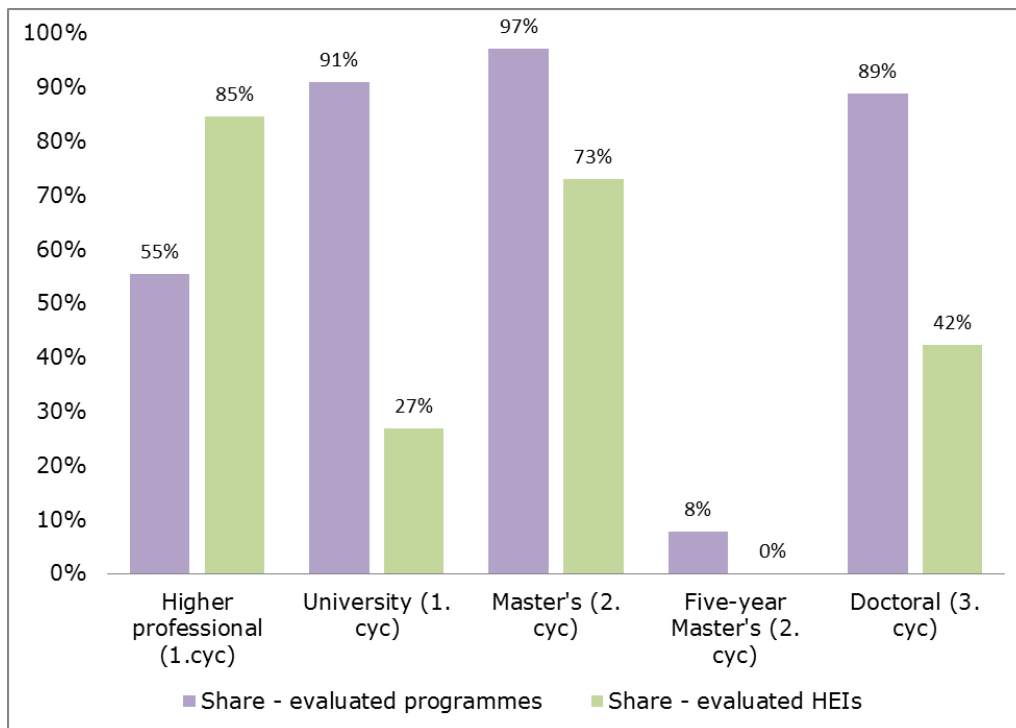
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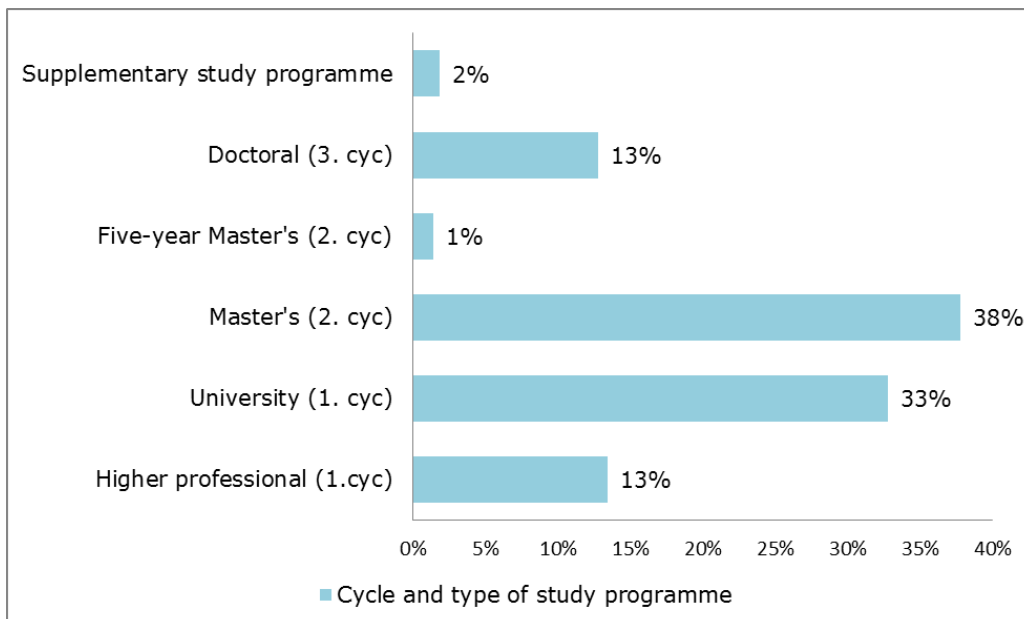
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that the public universities in Slovenia contrary to private higher education institutions give greater emphasis on basic education:



The data in the register of accredited study programmes (eVŠ) also corresponds with this difference: while 24% (70 out of 289) of all accredited first cycle study programmes at public higher education institutions are higher professional programmes, 83% (67 out of 81) are such at private higher education institutions.

The distribution of all 485 evaluated study programmes according to their cycle and type is as follows:





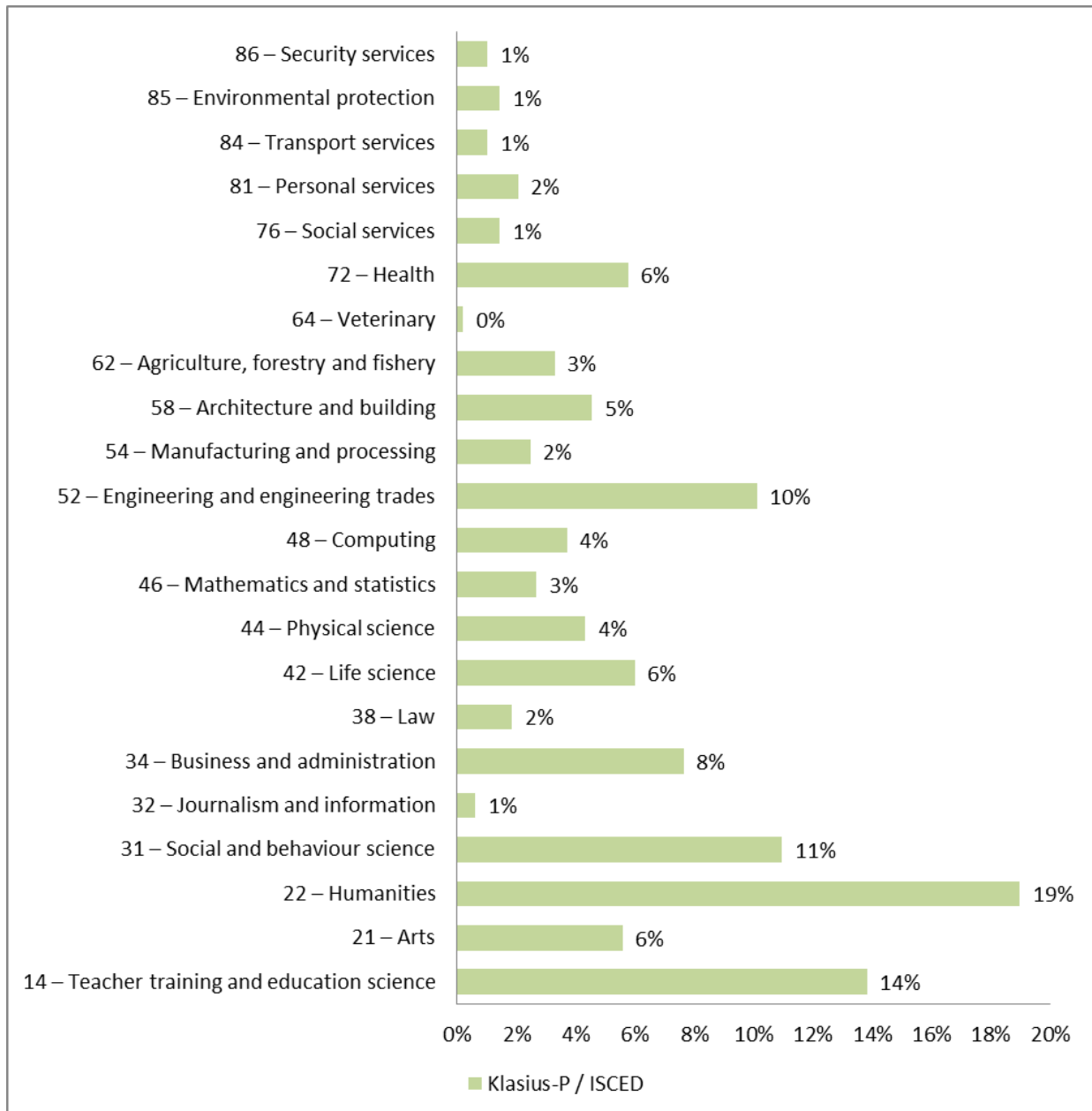
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According to Klasius-P or ISCED, the sample of evaluated study programmes is structured as follows:

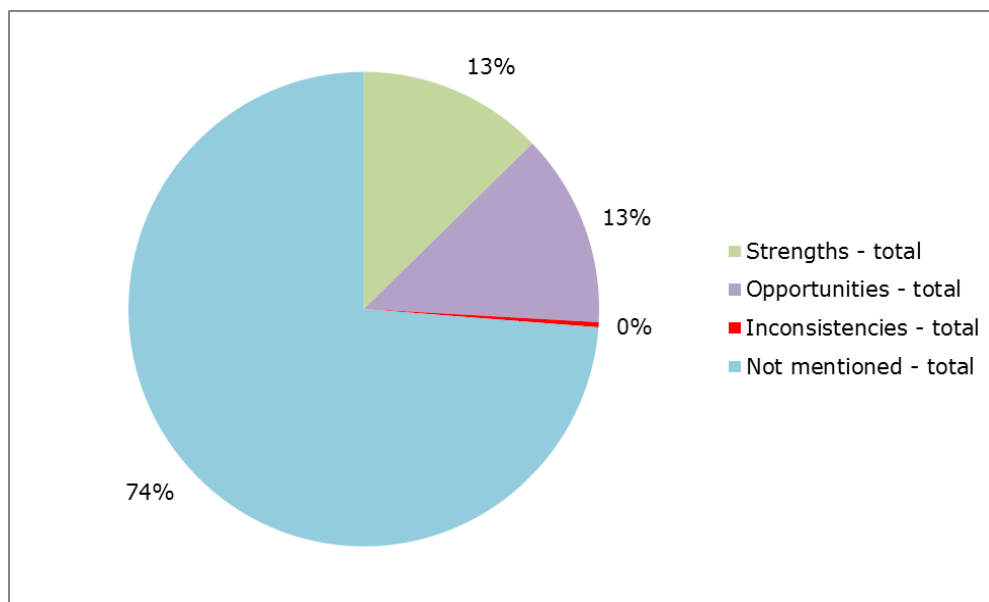


Although humanities take the greatest share of evaluated study programmes, it is worth exemplifying that humanities as a discipline/field comprise diverse lines of thought encompassing languages, philosophy, history, theology, as well as pedagogy, sociology, psychology. On the other hand, law or business and administration as disciplines are more specific and narrow. Any consideration about the distribution of study programmes according to disciplines/fields thus needs to account for the size of an individual discipline/field.

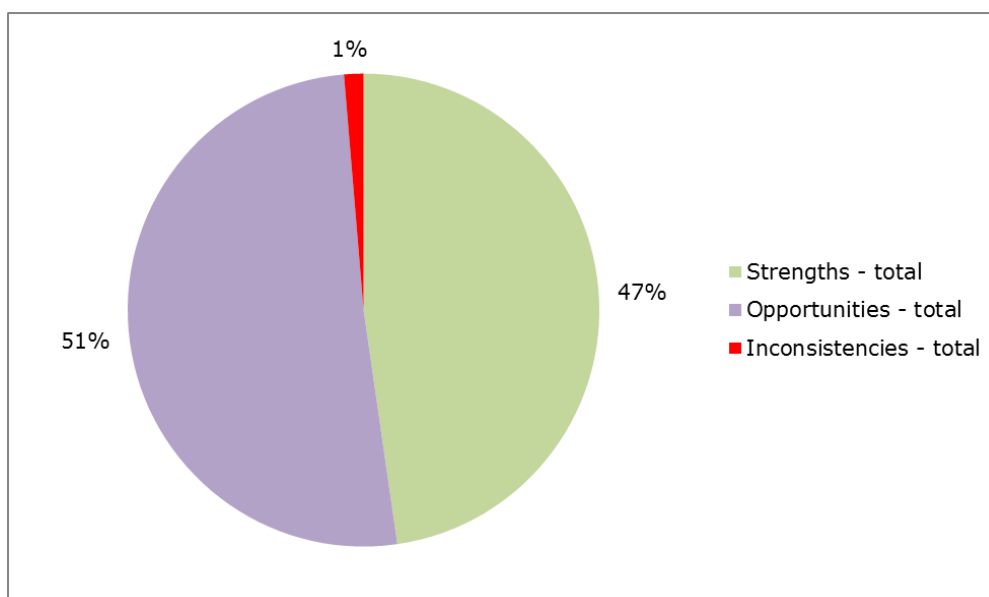
According to the data in the register of accredited study programmes (eVŠ), 93% of evaluated study programmes are associated with only one discipline, while 7% are listed as

interdisciplinary, i.e. associated with more than one discipline. Note that eVŠ may state only the primary ISCED/Klasius-P classification of a study programme, and not all of the disciplines stated in the accredited study programme.

The remaining questions cover individual areas of assessment in terms of how the experts characterised their findings: as strengths, as opportunities for improvement and inconsistencies with regulations. The fourth category is labelled "Not mentioned" meaning that the experts did not give any qualitative emphasis on, and consequently did not mention a certain property or phenomenon among the three qualitative categories at the end of each area of assessment. The overall distribution of these categories for all survey responses (156 questions, 59,228 individual responses; 6 missed entries – i.e. 0% of missed entries) is as follows:

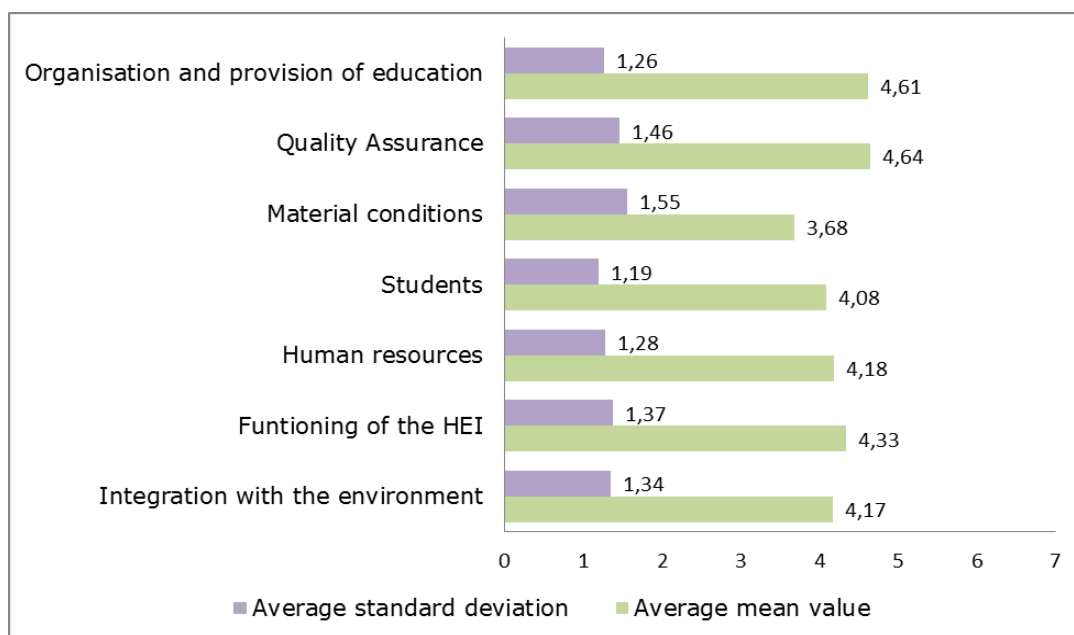


The total ratio for only the first three categories (category "Not mentioned excluded") is as follows:



The result shows a relative balance between opportunities for improvement and strengths. While there are only a few inconsistencies (207 in total were pointed out), the share of essential findings that were not treated as a strength, opportunity or inconsistency is considerable and amounts to three quarters.

The quantitative average ratio between strengths on one side (1) and opportunities as well as inconsistencies on the other (7) on a scale from 1 to 7 is as follows: cumulative average mean value 4.24 with average standard deviation of 1.35. This result, although it is derived only from the questions selected for this particular analysis and thus from fewer quality indicators, corresponds with the above total ratio between the two poles, representing approximately 13% each. Compared to the results on external evaluation of higher education institutions, the ratios (average mean values) in the case of evaluated study programmes, lean towards strengths in the following areas of assessment: human resources, quality assurance and functioning of the higher education institution. They lean towards opportunities for improvement or inconsistencies when it comes to organisation and provision of education and integration with the environment. The results are comparable in case of material conditions and students. According to individual areas of assessment, the averages are as follows:



While the average mean value confirms the previous finding of a relative balance between opportunities for improvement and strengths, a slight variation of this ratio in particular areas of assessment can be noticed, such as material conditions vs. quality assurance.

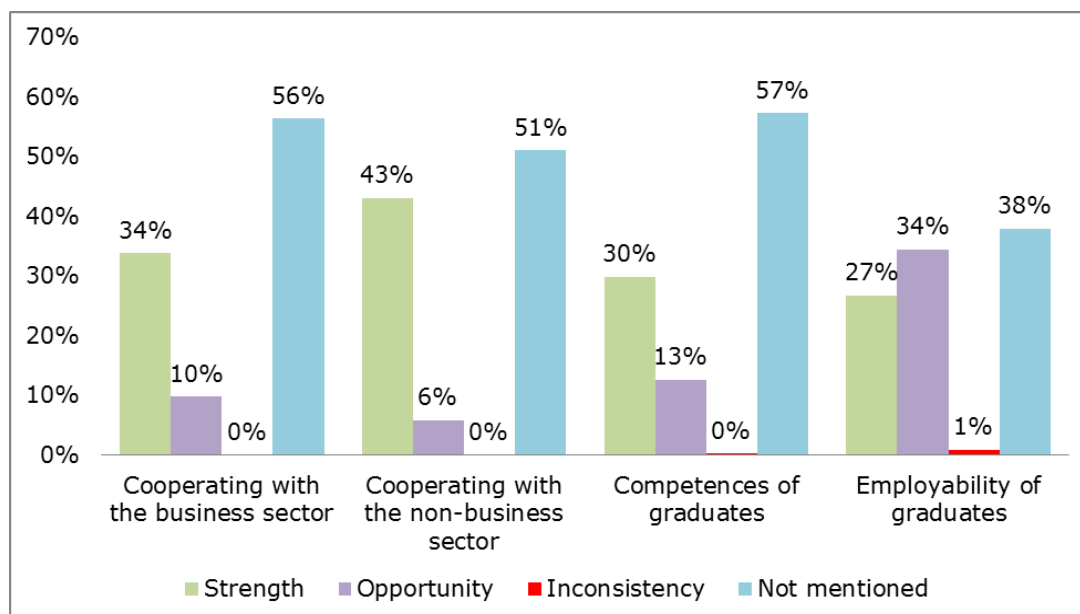
Maximum and minimal occurrences for individual categories in all areas of assessment were also calculated. For example, this calculation shows that the greatest share of strengths for all quality indicators selected in this research is 60%, and the smallest is 4%.¹⁰ Average maximum share of strengths when considering average extremes for individual areas of assessment is 43%, whereas average minimum share is 12%. Specific calculations of maximums, minimums and their averages for individual categories can be referenced here:

¹⁰ These results are calculated for the selected plethora of quality indicators and not for all questions of the survey.

Category	Absolute maximum	Average maximum	Absolute minimum	Average minimum
Strength	60%	43%	4%	12%
Opportunity	63%	39%	2%	9%
Inconsistency	4%	1%	0%	0%
Not mentioned	90%	74%	18%	32%

(1) The remainder of this chapter offers the distributions of strengths, opportunities and inconsistencies for quality indicators in individual areas of assessment. First up is the integration with the environment where qualitative findings of experts were observed for the following indicators:

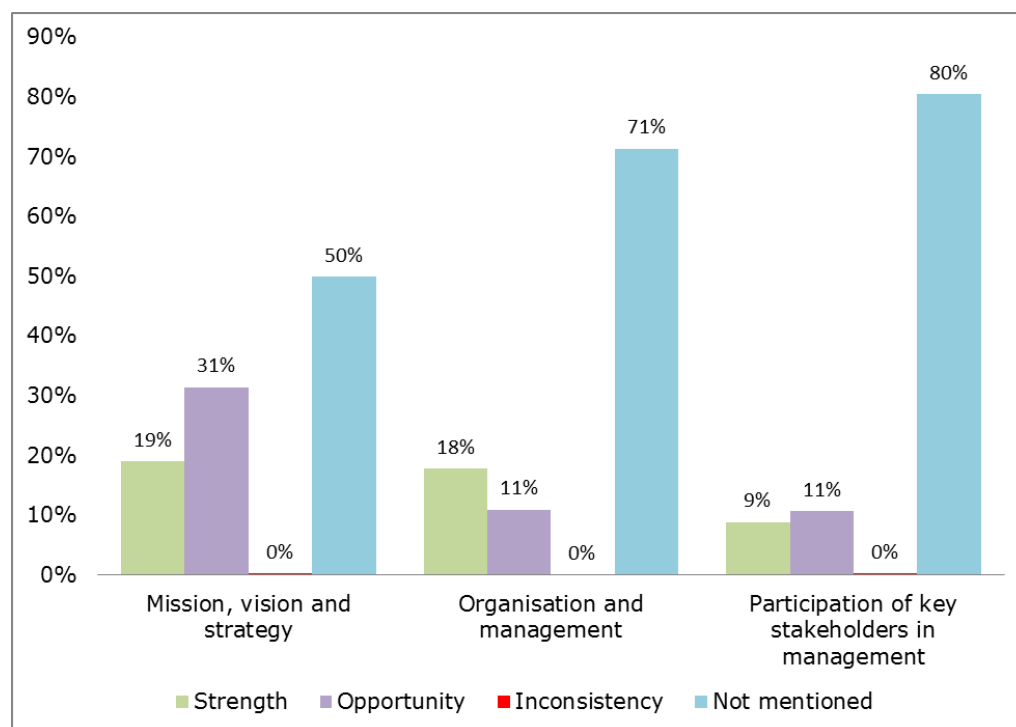
- Cooperating with the business sector combines two survey questions: (1) cooperation through scientific and professional work (i.e. applicative projects), and (2) cooperation through pedagogical work, i.e. teachers from the industry or business environment, these tackling business issues.
- Cooperating with the non-business sector combines two survey questions: (1) Intellectual integration in the academic, scientific, professional or artistic community, and (2) meeting the requirements for public services and public good.
- Competences of graduates in terms of their education and skills.
- Employability of graduates in terms of their possibility for employment as well as their possible ongoing employment.



Cooperation with the non-business sector tends to be one of the greatest strengths of the evaluated study programmes. The experts also commended the cooperation with the business sector and the competences of graduates. However, a noticeable excess of opportunities for improvement, as well as some inconsistencies, were observed in the employability of graduates, while this quality indicator also received the greatest attention.

(2) In the next area of assessment, functioning of the higher education institution, the following quality indicators were observed:

- Mission, vision and strategy in terms of organisational goals and planning.
- Organisation and management of the higher education institution, i.e. governance. This indicator combines two survey questions: (1) Organisation of the higher education institution, and (2) Management of the higher education institution.
- Participation of key stakeholders in the management of the higher education institution, i.e. participation in governance. This indicator combines: (1) the question on the participation of students, and (2) the question on the participation of representatives from the business sector.
- Achieving and monitoring learning outcomes and competences with regard to the employability of graduates.
- Research or artistic work in terms of scientific and professional research or artistic work, achievements and awards at the institutional level.
- Practical training in terms of its organisation, provision and evaluation. This indicator combines two survey questions: (1) Organisation of practical training (agreements, mentors, coordinators), and (2) Provision of practical training, especially with regard to the accredited curriculum/syllabus.



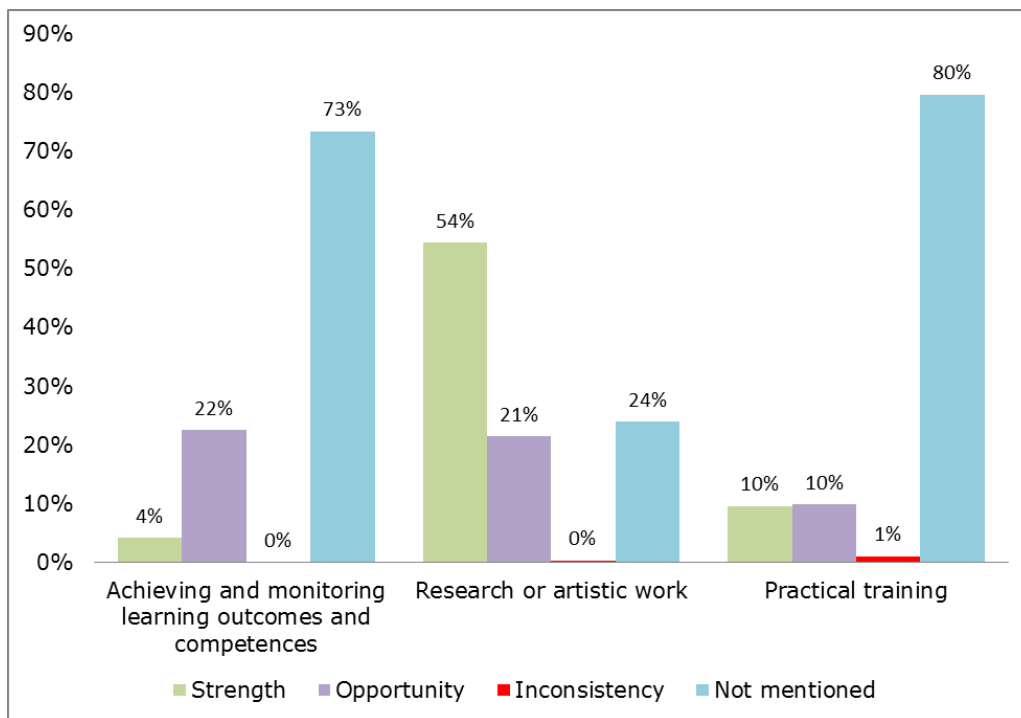


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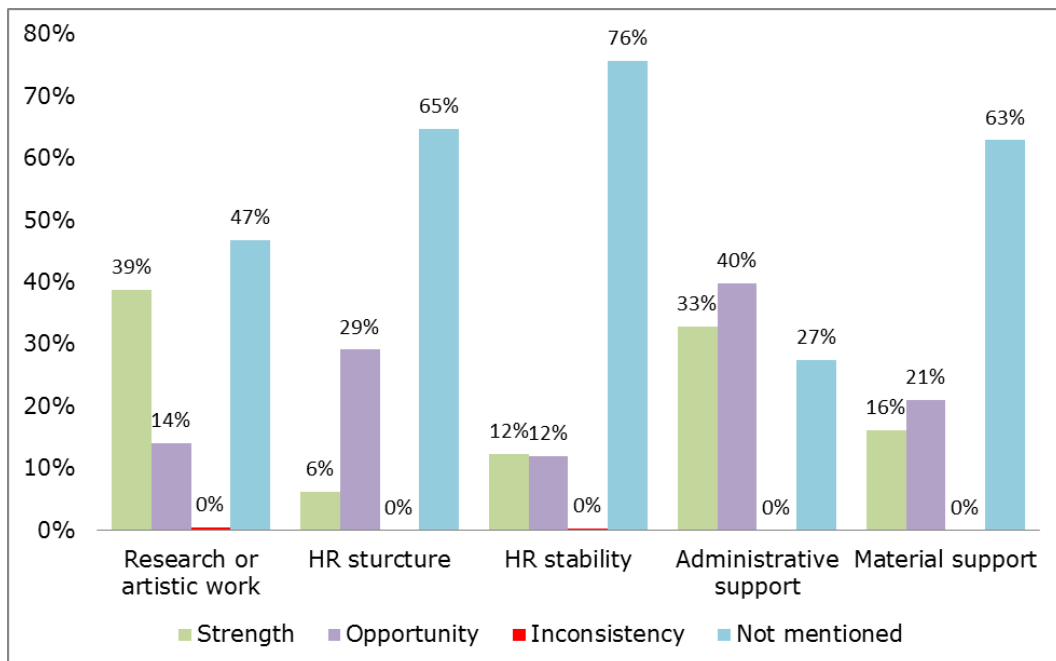
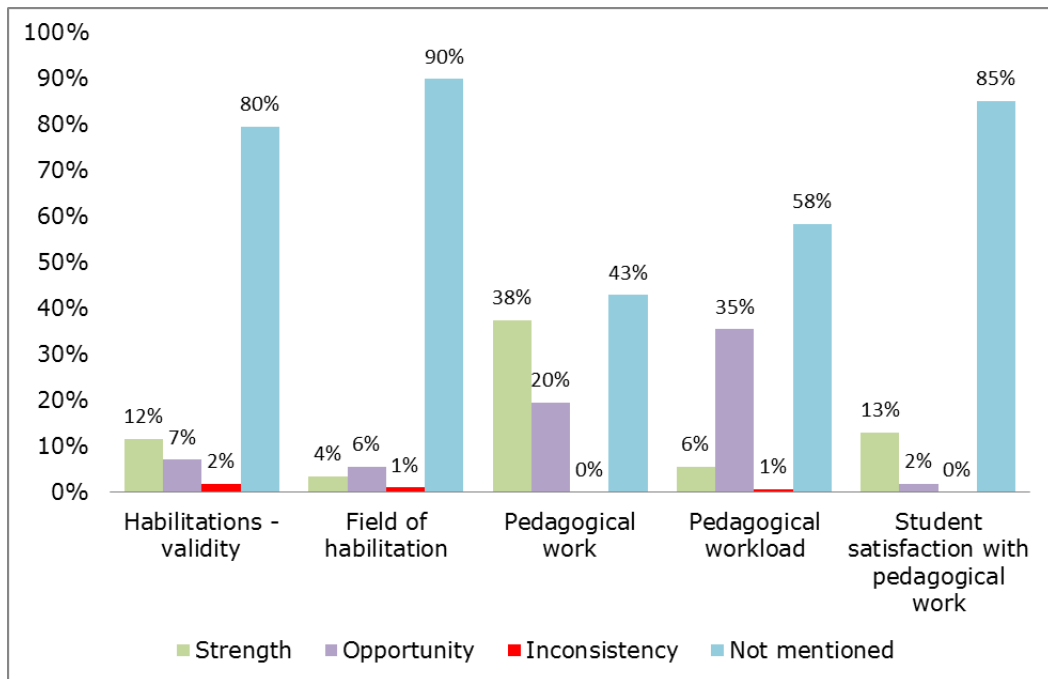


This area of assessment features a rather balanced ratio between strengths and opportunities/inconsistencies with the exception of the excess of strengths over opportunities and inconsistencies in case of scientific and professional research or artistic work at the institutional level. Contrary to the above results on the external evaluation of higher education institutions, this is a good result and is nearing the maximum share of strengths in this survey. It is also necessary to add that experts paid consistent attention to this quality indicator and only in a quarter of reports avoided emphasizing it within any of the qualitative categories. In general, the results for the evaluated higher education institutions from the previous chapter, which are predominantly private, are not as good as these results referring to predominantly public higher education institutions that provide the evaluated study programmes. Most opportunities for improvement were observed in case of organisational goals and planning, as well as in achieving and monitoring of learning outcomes and competences. It is worth mentioning that the issue of practical training was among least frequently emphasized, also due to the fact that only specific types of evaluated study programmes include practical training in working environments.

(3) In the analysis of findings on human resources, the following quality indicators were observed:

- Habilitations, their validity and correspondence with the type of the study programme.
- Field of habilitation in terms of its correspondence with the field/discipline of the study programme or individual courses that the higher education teachers hold.
- Pedagogical work of teachers.
- Pedagogical workload.
- Student satisfaction with pedagogical work.
- Research or artistic work of teachers – at the individual, not institutional level.
- HR structure in terms of systematization and structure of workplaces with regard to habilitations.

- HR stability in terms of the nature of employment of teachers and researchers – i.e. full-time equivalence, employed vs. external co-workers. This indicator combines two survey questions: (1) Stability of human resources, and (2) Full-time employment.
- Administrative support in terms of professional supporting and administrative staff – their stability, employment and services.
- Material support in terms of equipment, facilities and financial support for education, research or artistic work.



Substantial shares of strengths were observed in the quality of pedagogical work of teachers and student satisfaction in this aspect, as well as in research and artistic work of teachers. Opportunities for improvement were prevalent in pedagogical workload and the structure of human resources. Excessive pedagogical workload deserves a special emphasis since it is not specifically rooted in any quality standard of the Accreditation Criteria. The experts have often advised the higher education institutions to alleviate pedagogical responsibilities and allow the teachers for more research work. Regarding the structure of human resources, the experts mostly opted for the promotion of higher education teachers or researchers according to their habilitation and for better employment of assistants. While other indicators show more balanced or average results, it was noticed that the validity of habilitations and especially the field of habilitation were seldom emphasised (see the above table on absolute and average minimal values). It is evident that the experts pay more evaluative attention for instance to the issue of administrative support or to participation in governance as they do to the correspondence of teaching and research/artistic work with the field/discipline of a study programme. When comparing to the results on the external evaluation of higher education institutions above, this survey indicates an excess of strengths over opportunities/inconsistencies contrary to the results of the above survey. This contrast is most notable in case of research or artistic work and somewhat less in case of habilitations. However, the structure of human resources shows an excess of opportunities for improvement in both surveys.

(4) Students, being a hybrid area of assessment drawing from all other areas, covers the following quality indicators:

- Participation in research in terms of the actual participation of students in scientific and professional research or artistic work or the possibility to do so.
- Participation in management refers to the inclusion of students in the governance of the higher education institution.
- Participation in the review of study programmes refers to student involvement in evaluating the study programmes and adopting changes thereto. This indicator draws from a specific survey question on considering student initiatives for changes of study programmes.
- Student support refers to the general administrative support in study, i.e. the services of the enrolment office, study affairs office, international affairs office, and to extracurricular support. This indicator combines two survey questions: (1) Administrative student support, and (2) General support in i.e. tutorship and extracurricular activities.
- Informing the students refers to the information services of the higher education institution and the state to which students are informed about the matters regarding education, employability, self-evaluation.
- Student mobility refers to the support and conditions for student mobility, its organisation and the actual student exchanges.

This area of assessment was covered by fewer questions and thus has a greater response rate.

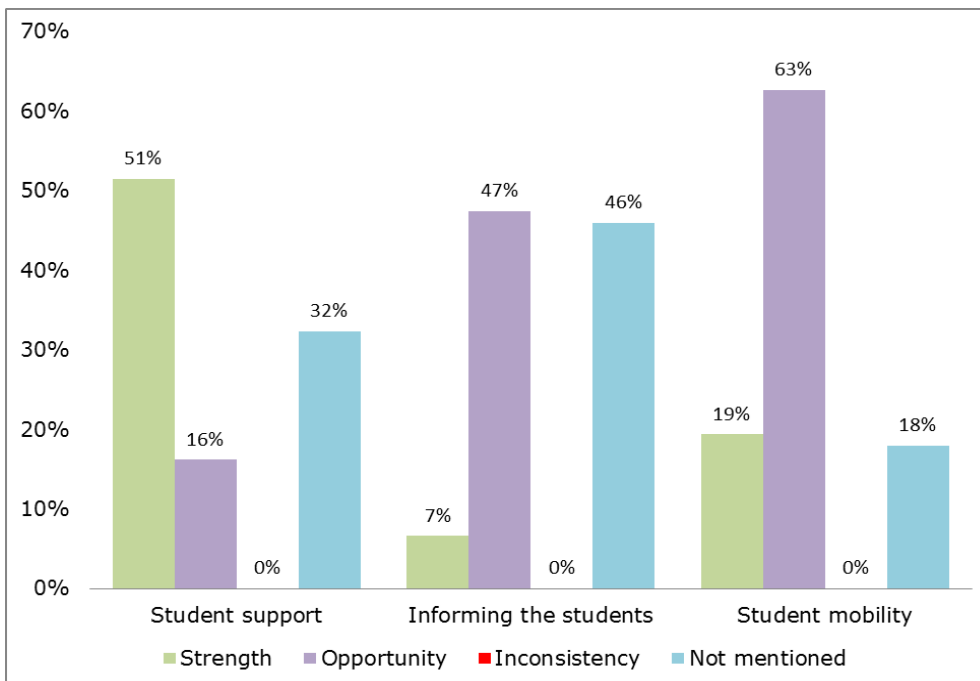
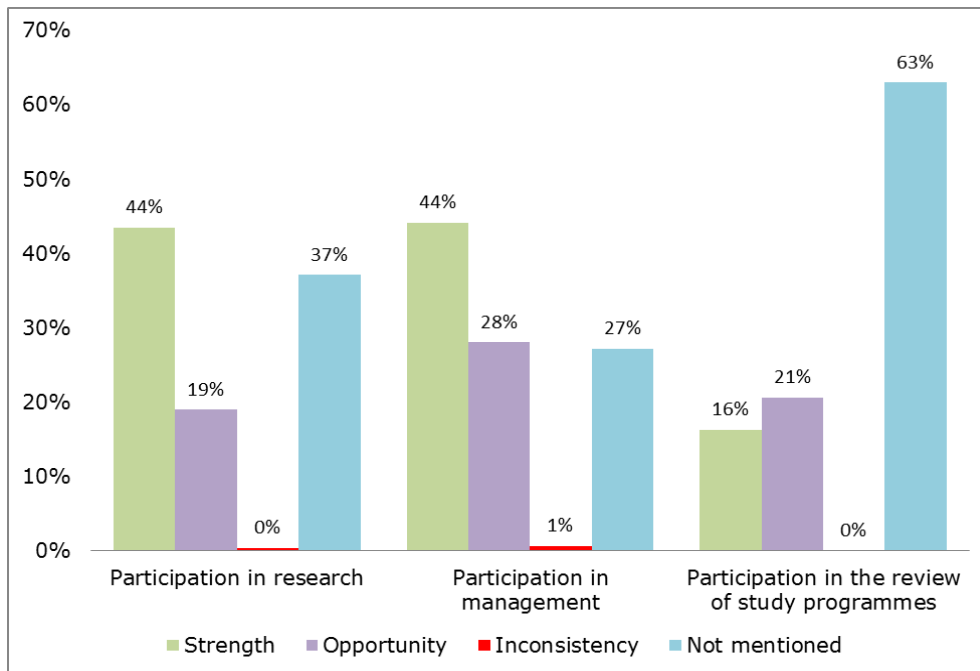


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On the one hand, student support, participation in research as well as in governance all demonstrate an excess of strengths above the average maximum (see the above table on absolute and average maximum values). On the other hand, there is a prevalence of opportunities for improvement in informing the students and in student mobility. The latter actually has the maximum share of opportunities for improvement among the quality indicators selected for the purpose of this analysis. Fewer quality indicators demonstrate a balanced share of strengths and opportunities/inconsistencies compared to other areas of assessment. While participation in the review of study programmes was paid least attention by the experts, student mobility was most emphasized among all quality indicators selected

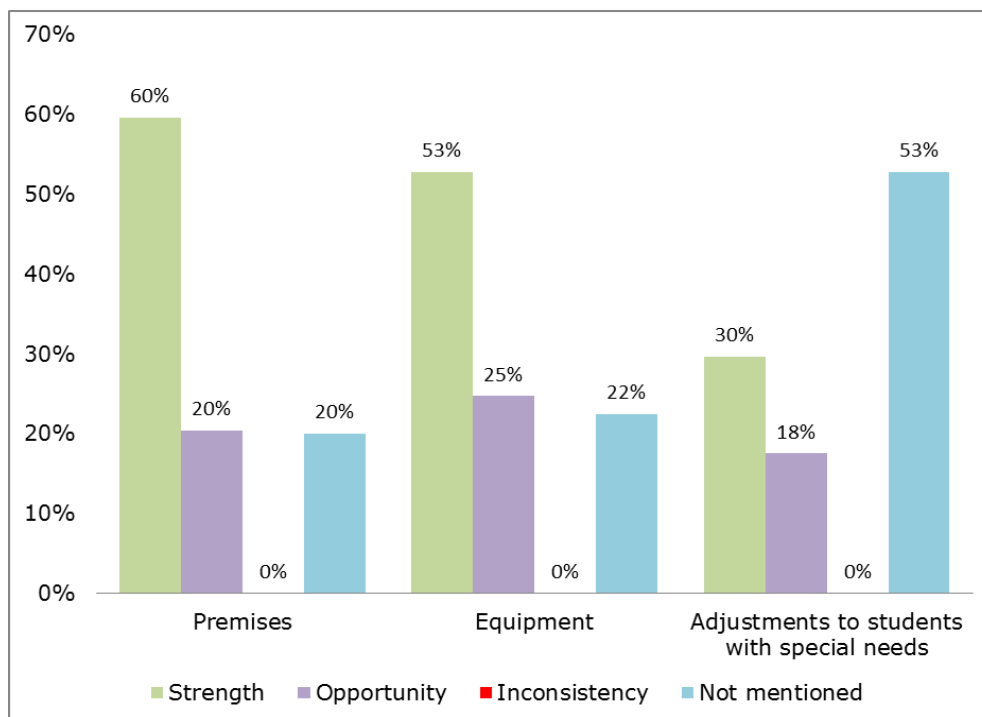


for this analysis pointing to the fact that for experts, student mobility seemed to be the most important issue of quality. When comparing these results with the findings of the survey on external evaluation of higher education institutions, a common excess of strengths over opportunities can be found in student participation in research as well as in student support on the one side, and prevalence of opportunities in case of student mobility on the other. Both surveys also show that the experts paid less attention to student participation in the review of study programmes compared to other quality indicators. However, the results differ for student participation in governance and for informing the students, whereas the former indicator demonstrated an excess of strengths over opportunities and the latter an excess of opportunities over strengths, contrary to the results on the external evaluation of higher education institutions.

(5) Material conditions cover the following quality indicators:

- Premises in terms of facilities for education, research or artistic work.
- Equipment for education, research or artistic work.
- Adjustments to students with special needs in terms of special adaptations of facilities, special equipment, as well as rules (rights and responsibilities) and support.
- Financial resources in terms of financial stability and suitability for the duration of the accreditation period.
- Library resources in terms of hard copies of study and research literature as well as access to databases.
- Library services in terms of professional support to students, teachers and researchers.

This area of assessment was also covered by fewer questions and thus has a greater response rate.



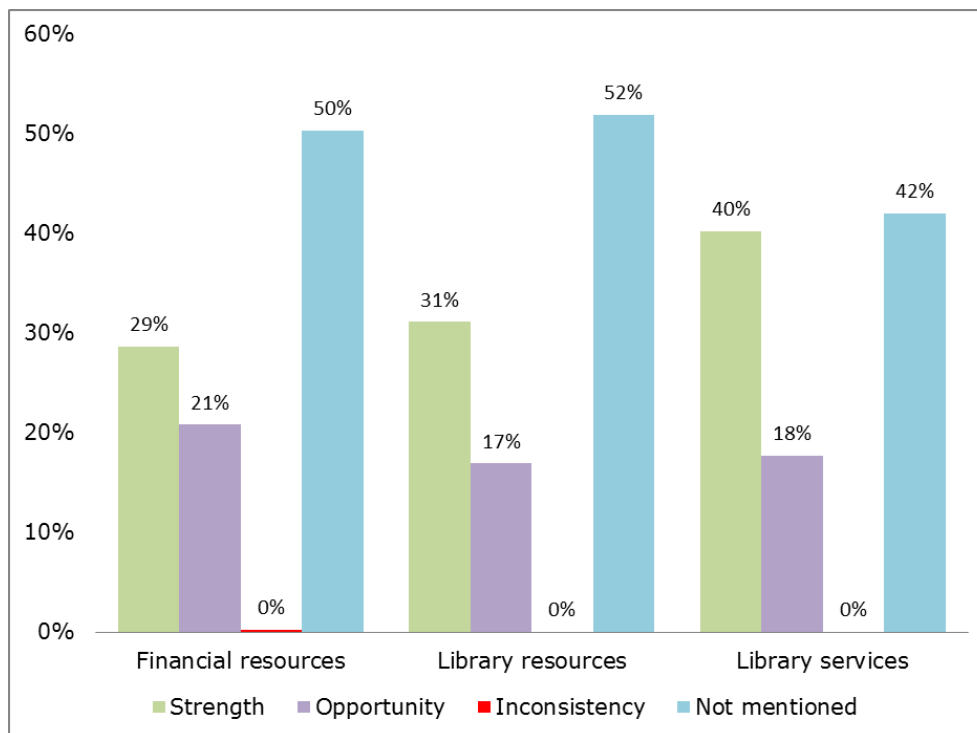


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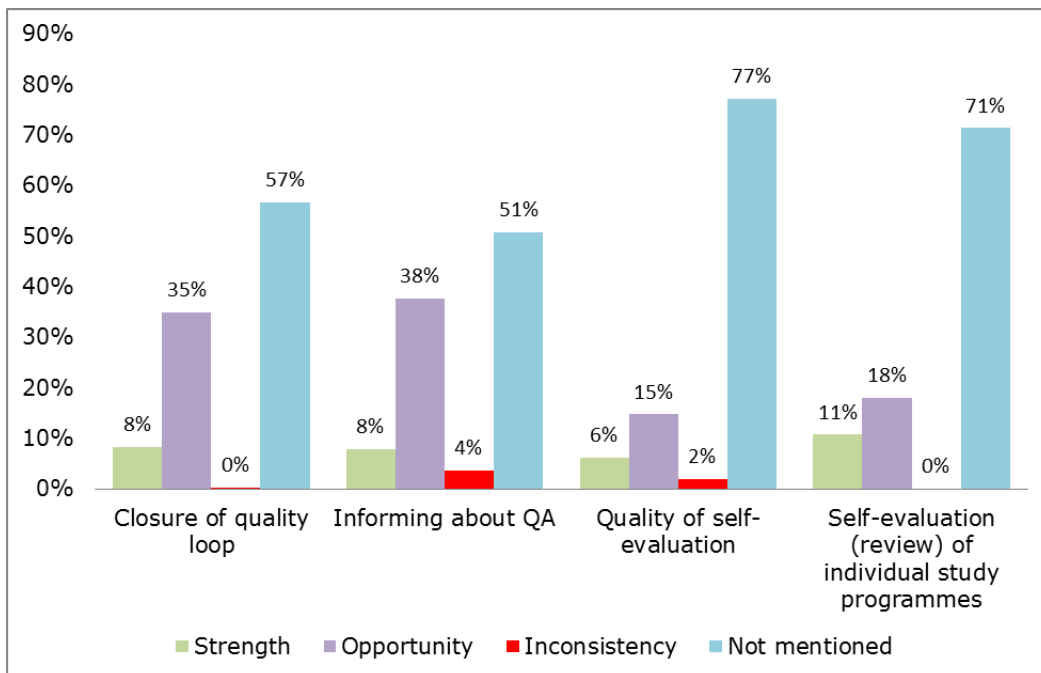
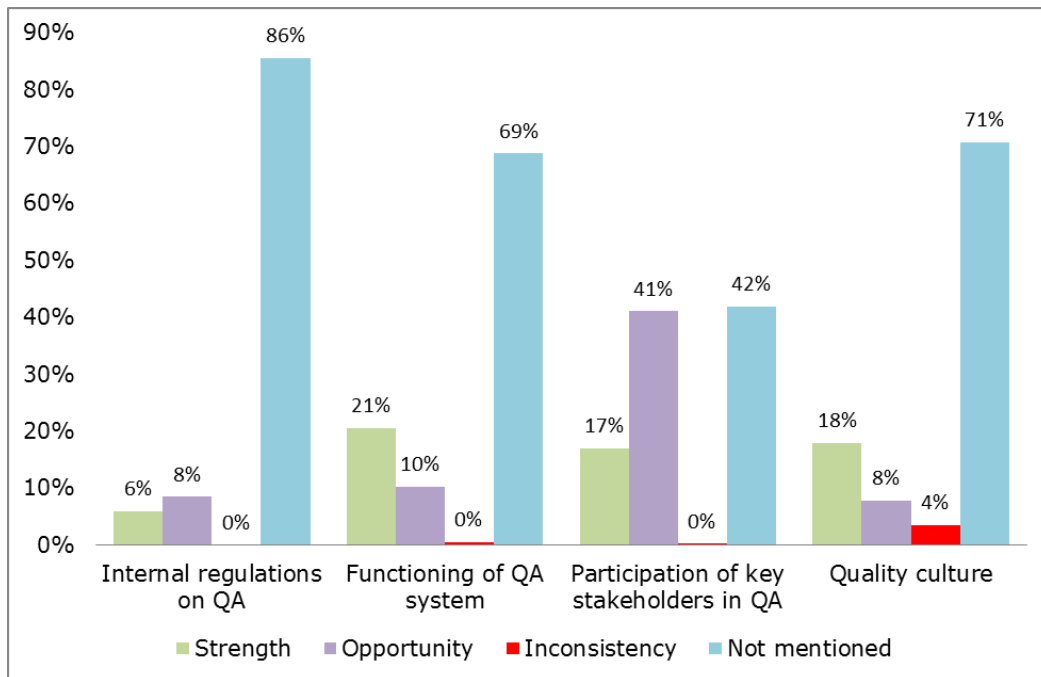


Premises and equipment both received a high share of strengths and were among most often emphasised (i.e. mentioned) quality indicators within this analysis. By this share, the first quality indicator even peaked among all the included indicators. Contrary to other areas of assessment, all quality indicators in this area of assessment demonstrated an excess of strengths over opportunities. Hardly any inconsistencies were observed. Least but still often mentioned compared to other quality indicators were the adjustments to students with special needs and library resources. In comparison to the findings of the survey on external evaluation of higher education institutions, both premises and equipment received a highly positive evaluation illustrating a general picture that both private and public higher education institutions have quality spaces and equipment for education and research. A contrasting difference is that the results in this chapter do not show a substantial excess of opportunities for improvement in cases of financial and library resources.

(6) Quality assurance as a special area for the assessment of internal quality assurance includes the following quality indicators:

- Internal regulations on quality assurance in terms of quality manuals or other adopted documents.
- Functioning of the internal quality assurance system in terms of its organisation, management and the efficiency and effectiveness of quality assurance processes.
- Participation of key stakeholders in internal quality assurance.
- Quality culture in terms of its state and development.
- Closure of quality loop in terms of completeness of quality assurance processes – i.e. completeness of PDCA or related quality assurance cycles including follow-up processes.
- Informing about quality assurance – about the quality assurance processes, their relevance and outcomes.

- Quality of self-evaluation. This indicator combines two survey questions: (1) Methodological and analytical completeness of self-evaluation, and (2) Thematic completeness and completeness of content of self-evaluation.
- Self-evaluation of individual study programmes – i.e. periodical review of study programmes and their development on account of self-evaluation outcomes.



In this area of assessment, the experts identified the most opportunities for improvement. There is an excess of strengths with regard to the functioning of the quality assurance system and quality culture. In all other quality indicators, opportunities for improvement

dominate, and they do so particularly in case of closure of the quality loop and informing about quality assurance. The latter quality indicator is also characterized by the greatest share of inconsistencies among all other indicators included in this analysis. The results show that the experts pay more attention to the emphasis of some quality indicators over others. Participation of key stakeholders in internal quality assurance and informing about quality assurance find considerably more mention than quality of self-evaluation or self-evaluation of study programmes. No particular extreme values were observed within this area of assessment. However, the ratios between strengths and opportunities for improvement are quite imbalanced. In comparison to the findings of the survey on external evaluation of higher education institutions, the prevalence of opportunities for improvement is not as strong. On the contrary, quality culture and functioning of the internal quality assurance system actually received positive assessments. Both analyses show that a relatively extensive share of experts gave no qualitative emphasis on the self-evaluation of study programmes. When they did do so, they predominantly identified opportunities for improvement, pointing to qualitative deficits in the self-evaluation of study programmes.

(7) Organisation and provision of education comprises the following quality indicators:

- Correspondence with the field/discipline in terms of correspondence of study programme's contents (curriculum and syllabi) with its field/discipline.
- Focus on workplace competences in terms of correspondence of study programme's contents with its anticipated workplace competences – i.e. soft skills, professional knowledge.
- Focus on student requirements [CONT] in terms adaptation of study programme's contents to student requirements and needs.
- Programme structure in terms of completeness of study programme's structure – i.e. vertical and horizontal congruence.
- Programme objectives and competences in terms of correspondence of study programme's objectives with its anticipated knowledge, competences and learning outcomes.
- Changes of study programmes in terms of content development (changes of curricula and syllabi), changing study literature, replacement of teachers and changing compulsory provisions such as enrolment criteria.
- Provision of curricular contact hours in terms of the amount and distribution of delivered lectures, seminars and practicals.
- Provision of other contact hours – i.e. consultations.
- Mode of provision – i.e. full-time, part-time, teaching language, cyclical, blended, long distance, according to the number of enrolled students – all with regard to the accredited curriculum.
- Focus on student requirements [PROV] in terms of adaptation of the study programme's provision in relation to student requirements and needs.

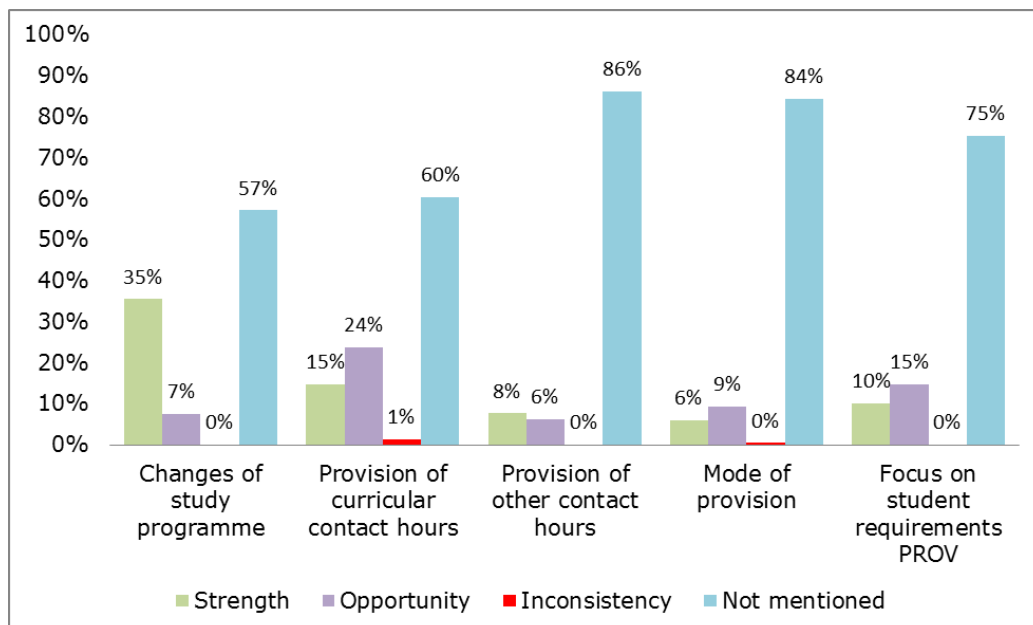
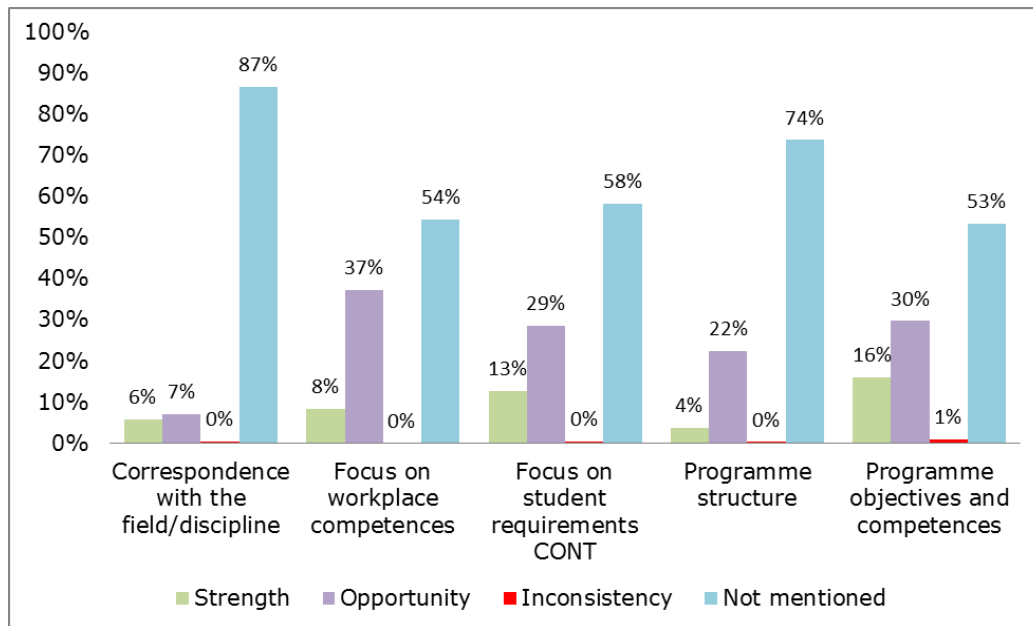


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In this area of assessment, there is a considerable excess of strengths over opportunities for improvement only in case of changes of study programmes. All other indicators show either a balanced result or even more an excess of opportunities for improvement over strengths. The latter is especially evident in the focus on workplace competences, meaning that the experts clearly encourage higher education institutions to introduce more work-related skills and competences into the curricula of their study programmes, thus paying special attention to the employability of graduates when considering the purpose of tertiary education. Similarly, there is a prevalence of opportunities for improvement in focus on student requirements, the programme structure and objectives. Relatively few inconsistencies have been observed. Quality indicators concerning the provision of study programmes predominantly show a balanced ratio between strengths and opportunities for improvement. Experts emphasize the focus on workplace competences and student requirements more



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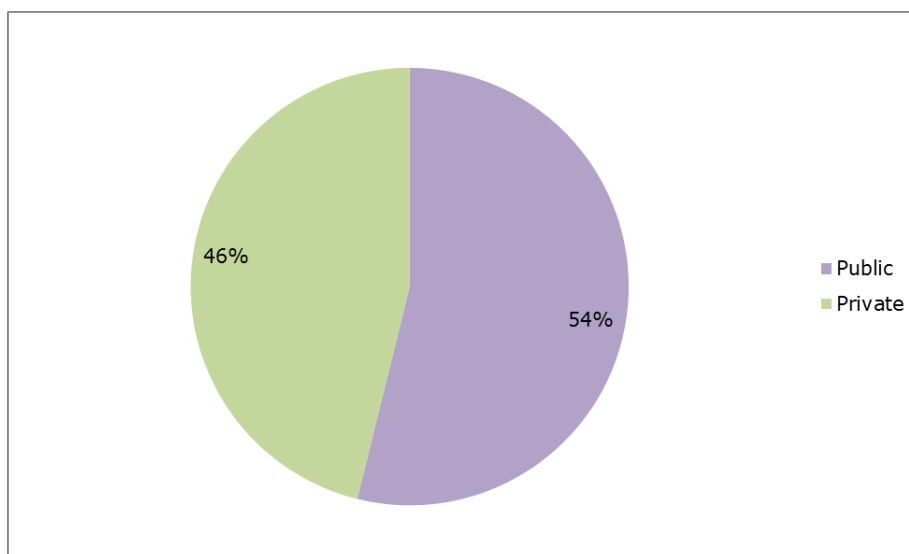
than the study programmes' correspondence with its field/discipline, the provision of contact hours or the mode of provision, all of which are seldom mentioned – near the maximum value of “not being mentioned”. In comparison to the findings of the survey on external evaluation of higher education institutions, the only common quality indicator regarding the changes of study programmes, for which the results of both analyses show a substantive share of strengths.

The results of this research are not comparable with those of the 2010–2013 analysis of the external evaluation of study programmes due to differing applied methodology as well as the difference in the number of evaluated study programmes, the criteria and instructions for reporting in external evaluations.

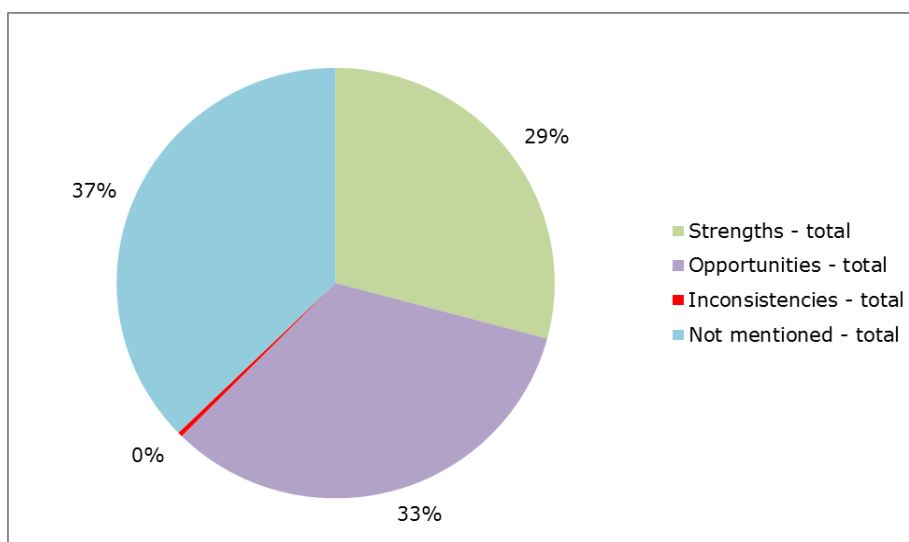
Analysis of expert reports on the external evaluation of higher vocational colleges

The survey consisted of 15 general questions and covered 26 expert reports on 26 higher vocational colleges which is 84% of all (31) external evaluations in the period from 2014 to 2017. Although the majority of higher vocational colleges evaluated during 2014 and 2017 are private, the share of public colleges is not significantly smaller.

Higher vocational colleges according to their status:

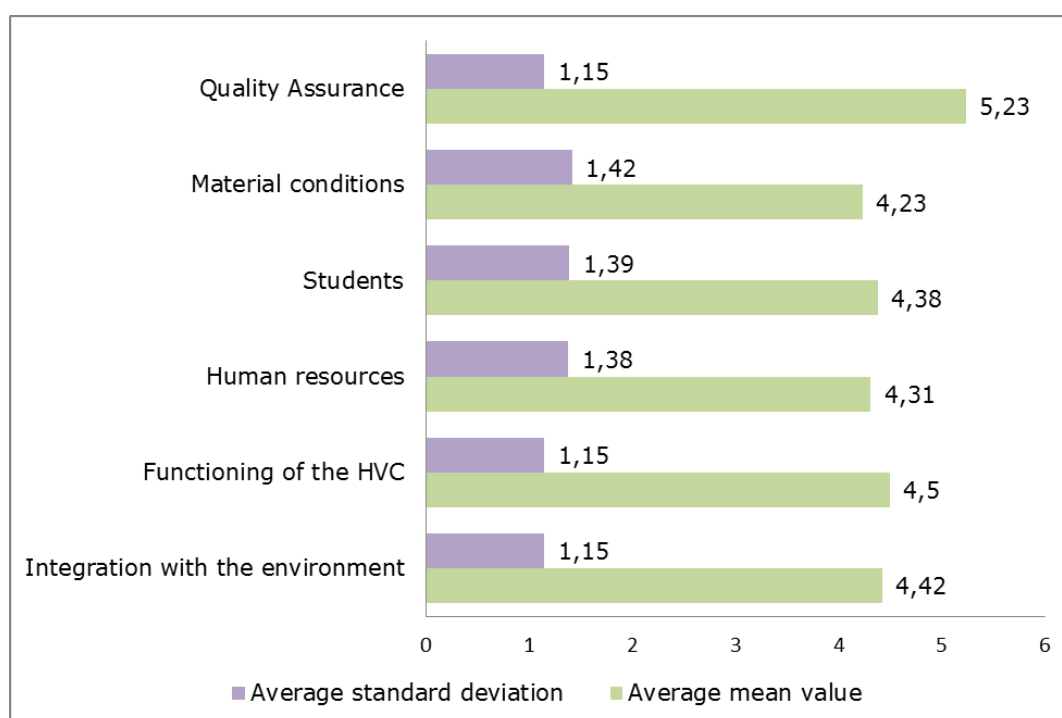


The remaining questions cover the essentials of individual areas of assessment in terms of how the experts characterised their findings: as strengths, as opportunities for improvement and inconsistencies with regulations. The fourth category is labelled "Not mentioned" meaning that the experts did not give any qualitative emphasis on, and consequently did not mention a certain property or phenomenon among the three qualitative categories at the end of each area of assessment. The overall distribution of these categories for all responses (881 individual responses; 0 missed entries) is as follows:



The result shows a slight excess of opportunities for improvement over strengths. While there are only a few inconsistencies (6 in total were pointed out), the share of essential findings that were not treated as a strength, opportunity or inconsistency is considerable also and amounts to little more than a third. This distribution is comparable to the example in the analysis of higher education institutions above.

The quantitative average ratio between strengths on one side (1) and opportunities as well as inconsistencies on the other (7) on a scale from 1 to 7 is as follows: cumulative average mean value 4.51 with average standard deviation of 1.27. According to individual areas of assessment, the averages are as follows:



While the average mean value confirms the previous finding of an excess of opportunities for improvement over strengths, a slight variation in this excess and especially its extent can be noticed. The area of assessment that particularly stands out is internal quality assurance where the number of opportunities for improvement considerably surpasses the number of strengths. The higher vocational colleges performed best when it comes to material conditions.

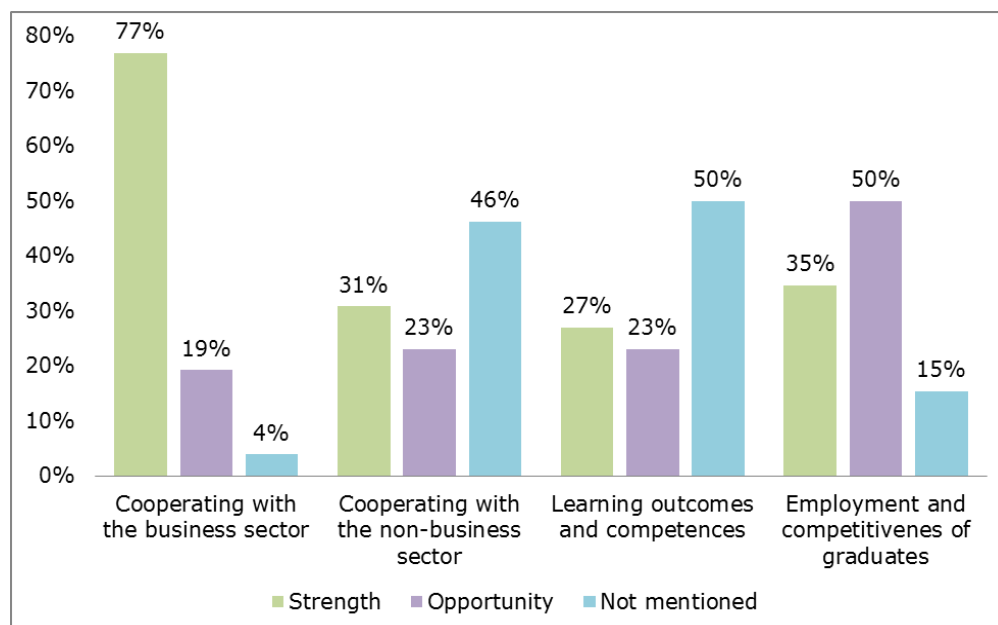
Maximum and minimal occurrences for individual categories in all areas of assessment were calculated as well. For example, this calculation shows that the greatest share of strengths for all quality indicators selected in this research is 88%, and the smallest is 0%, meaning that for one particular quality indicator, the result yielded 88% of strengths, and for another, none at all.¹¹ Average maximum share of strengths when considering average extremes for individual areas of assessment is 60%, whereas average minimum share is 8%. Specific calculations of maximums, minimums and their averages for individual categories can be referenced here:

¹¹ These results are calculated for all questions of the survey.

Category	Absolute maximum	Average maximum	Absolute minimum	Average minimum
Strength	88%	60%	0%	8%
Opportunity	69%	60%	8%	13%
Inconsistency	8%	3%	0%	0%
Not mentioned	96%	66%	4%	8%

(1) The remainder of this chapter offers the distributions of strengths, opportunities and inconsistencies for general quality indicators in individual areas of assessment. First up is the integration with the environment where qualitative findings of experts were observed for the following indicators:

- Cooperation of higher vocational colleges with the business sector in terms of partnerships, applicative projects for industry, involving professionals or representatives from the business sector in teaching.
- Cooperation of higher vocational colleges with the non-business sector in terms of public services, meeting the requirements of the public sector, intellectual and cultural integration with the environment.
- Learning outcomes and competences in terms of education and skills.
- Employment and competitiveness of graduates in terms of their employability and competences on the labour market.

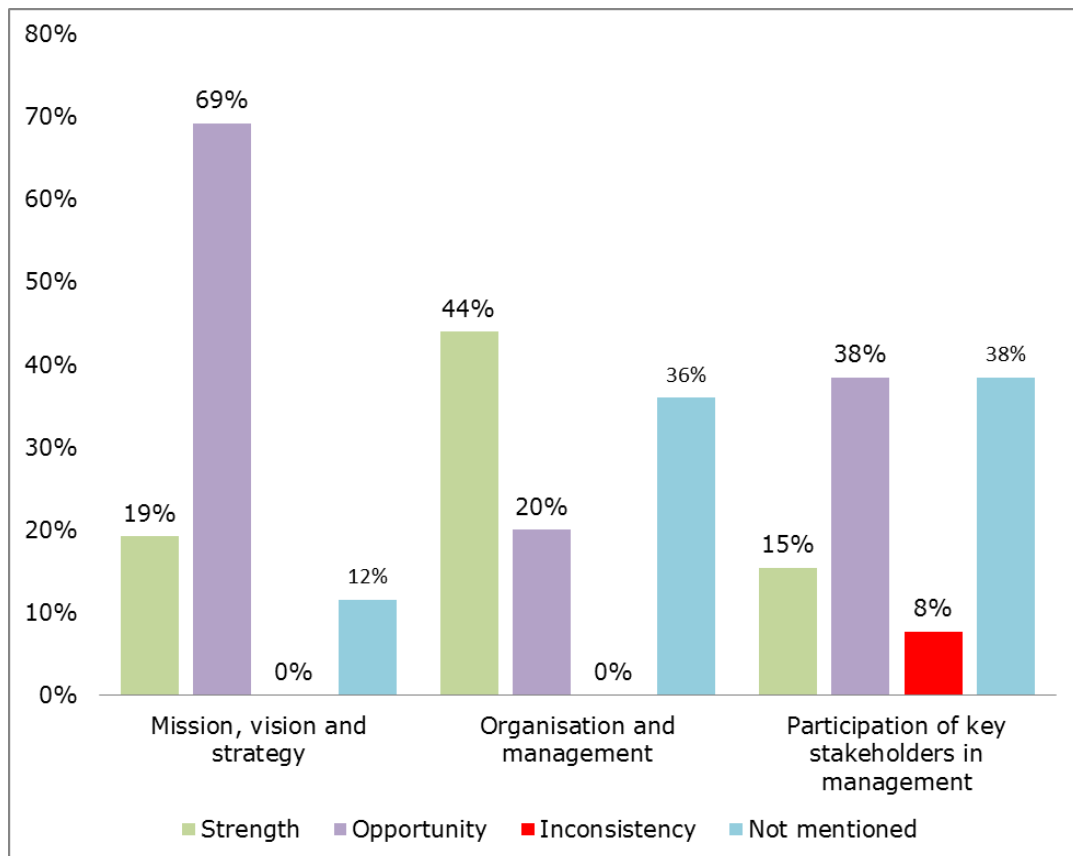


Just like in the analysis on the external evaluation of higher education institutions, cooperating with the business sector tends to be one of the greatest strengths of the evaluated higher vocational colleges. Although less emphatically, the experts also commended the cooperation with the non-business sector, as well as learning outcomes and competences. Employment and competitiveness of graduates, however, is characterised by considerably more opportunities for improvement than strengths. No inconsistencies were observed. It is worth stressing that as in the analysis on the external evaluation of higher

education institutions, the experts pay by far the greatest attention to the cooperation with the business sector when comparing to all other indicators examined in this survey.

(2) In the next area of assessment, functioning of the higher vocational college, the following quality indicators were observed:

- Mission, vision and strategy in terms of organisational goals and planning.
- Organisation and management of the higher vocational college, i.e. governance.
- Participation of key stakeholders in the management of the higher vocational college, i.e. participation in governance.
- Achieving and monitoring learning outcomes and competences, i.e. practices concerning the assessment of knowledge, skills and competences.
- Professional or artistic work in terms of professional research or artistic work, achievements and awards at the institutional level.
- Practical training in terms of its organisation, provision and evaluation.



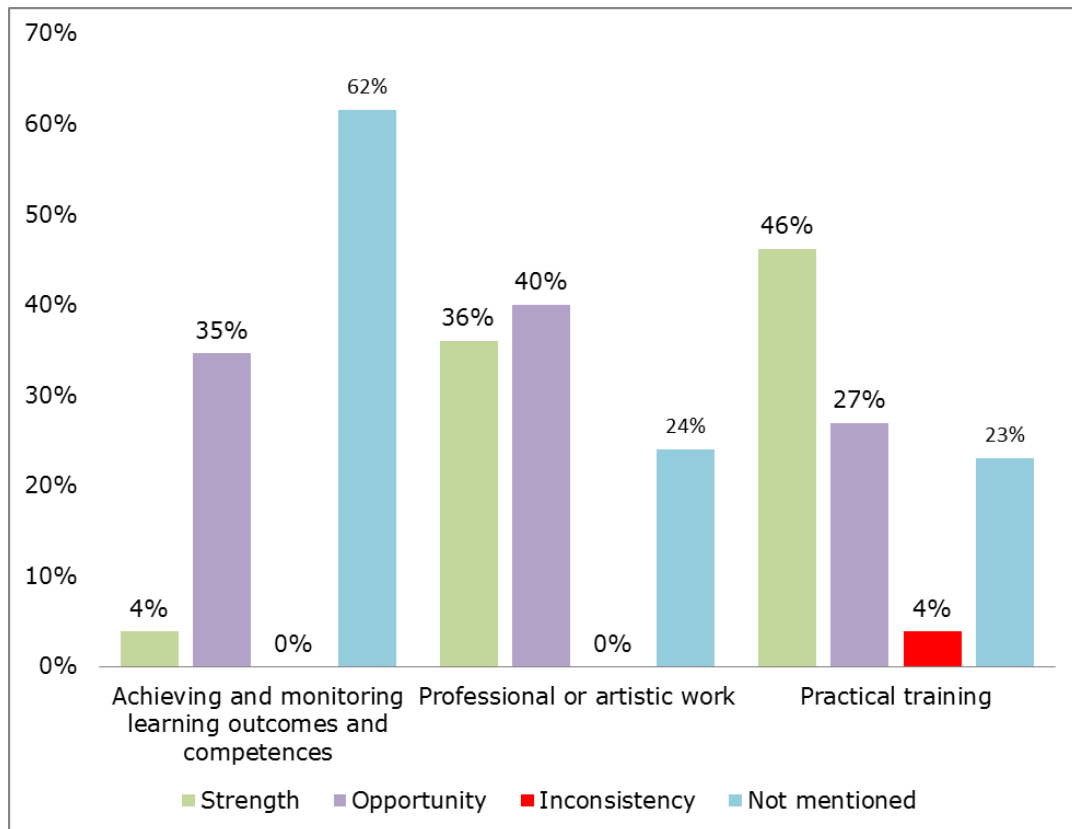


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This area of assessment exhibits an excess of strengths over opportunities for improvement in the organisation and management of higher vocational colleges and in practical training. The opportunities for improvement strongly surpass the strengths in achieving and monitoring learning outcomes and competences, but considerably also in case of organisational goals and planning, as well as in participation in governance. In the latter case, the occurrence of inconsistencies is at total peak value. Other inconsistencies were observed in practical training, although this quality indicator achieved a positive result. The experts put great emphasis on organisational goals and planning, and considerably less on the achieving and monitoring of learning outcomes and competences, demonstrating that they are more likely to emphasize quality in organisation and management, rather than quality of educational outcomes. Contrary to the results of the analysis on external evaluation of higher education institutions, professional or artistic work at the level of the higher vocational colleges received a balanced result, although the excess of opportunities for improvement over strengths is still evident. Another contrast emerges when comparing the results on organisational goals and planning, which in the analysis of external evaluation of higher vocational colleges received a fairly negative evaluation.

(3) In the analysis of findings on human resources, the following quality indicators were observed:

- Habilitations, their validity and correspondence with the fields of courses that the teachers hold.
- Pedagogical work of teachers.
- Professional or artistic work of teachers – at the individual, not institutional level.



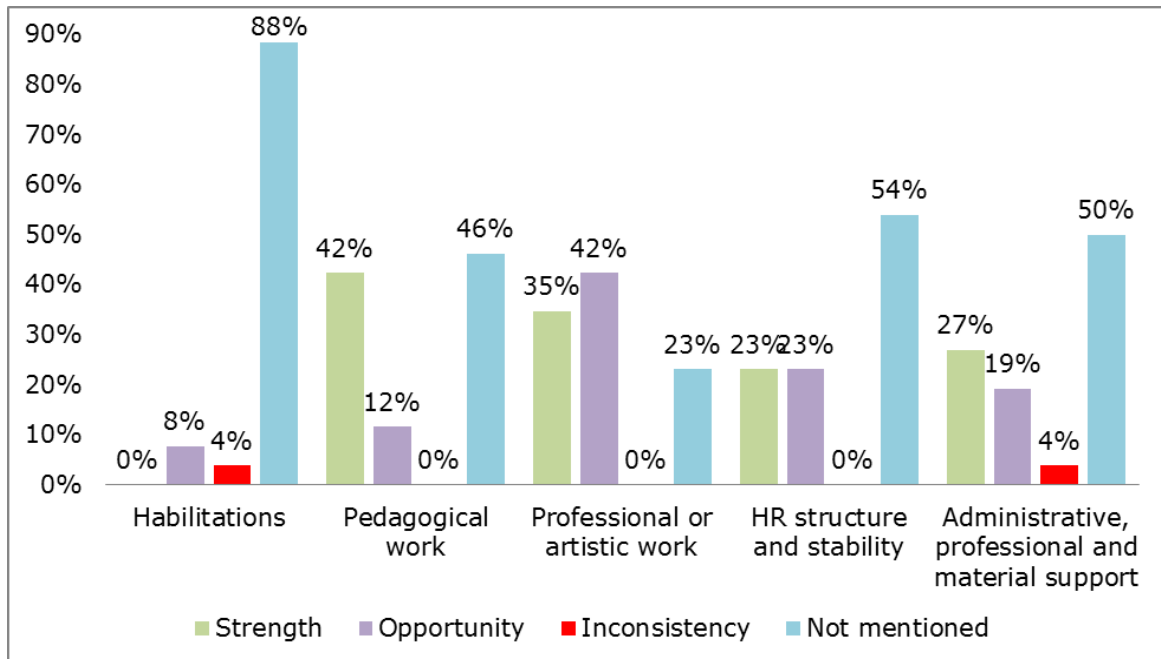
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- HR structure and stability in terms of the nature of employment of teachers at the higher vocational college – i.e. full-time equivalence, employed vs. external co-workers.
- Administrative, professional and material support in terms of professional supporting and administrative staff – their stability, employment and services.



Pedagogical work is the only quality indicator with a considerable excess of strengths over opportunities for improvement. The majority of indicators demonstrate a balance between the two categories. However, the experts did not emphasize any strengths in case of habilitations, making this the minimum share of strengths for any quality indicator in this analysis. Some inconsistencies were observed in administrative, professional and material support, as well as in habilitations. Contrary to the results of the analysis on external evaluation of higher education institutions, professional or artistic work at the individual level received a balanced result, although the excess of opportunities for improvement over strengths is still evident. The structure of human resources yielded a similarly contrasting result. Habilitations were least frequently mentioned, which is probably due to the fact that the Professional Council at the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports exercises sole authority over them.

(4) Students, being a hybrid area of assessment drawing from all other areas, covers the following quality indicators:

- Participation in professional or artistic work in terms of the actual participation of students in professional, research or artistic work or the possibility to do so.
- Participation in management refers to the inclusion of students in the governance of the higher vocational college.
- Student support refers to the general administrative support in study, i.e. the services of the enrolment office, study affairs office, international affairs office.



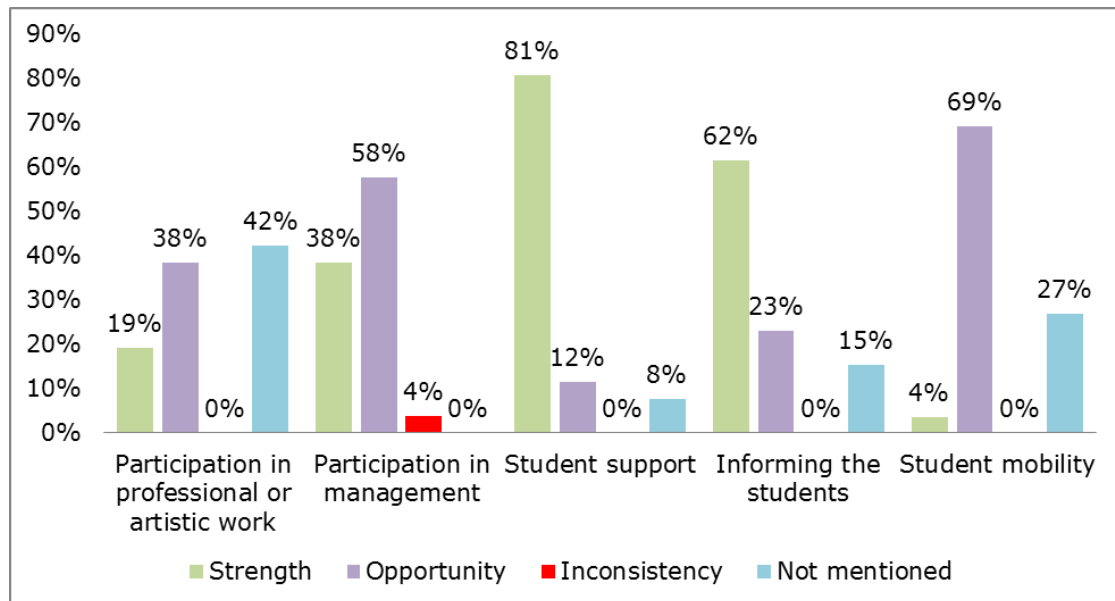
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- Informing the students refers to the information services of the higher vocational college and the state to which students are informed about the matters regarding education, employability, self-evaluation.
- Student mobility refers to the support and conditions for student mobility, its organisation and the actual student exchanges.



On the one hand, student support received an overwhelmingly positive evaluation. Somewhat less positive was the evaluation of informing the students. On the other hand, student mobility hardly shows any emphasized strengths among the higher vocational colleges (maximum share of opportunities) which is comparable to the results of the analysis on external evaluation of higher education institutions. An excess of opportunities for improvement over strengths is also present in student participation in professional or artistic work, as well as in student participation in governance. In the latter case, a few inconsistencies have been observed as well. It is also worth mentioning that in particular student participation in governance has received maximal qualitative emphasis – all expert reports pass qualitative judgement on this matter. While such emphasis on student support is considerable as well, the experts give least evaluatory emphasis on student participation in professional or artistic work. This result thus also confirms that the experts are more likely to emphasize quality in organisation and management, rather than quality of educational outcomes or activities closely related to education.

(5) Material conditions cover the following quality indicators:

- Premises in terms of facilities for education and professional or artistic work.
- Equipment for education and professional or artistic work.
- Adjustments to students with special needs in terms of special adaptations of facilities, special equipment, as well as rules (rights and responsibilities) and support.
- Financial resources in terms of financial stability and suitability for the duration of the period of evaluation.
- Library resources in terms of hard copies of study and research literature as well as access to databases.
- Library services in terms of professional support to students, teachers and researchers.

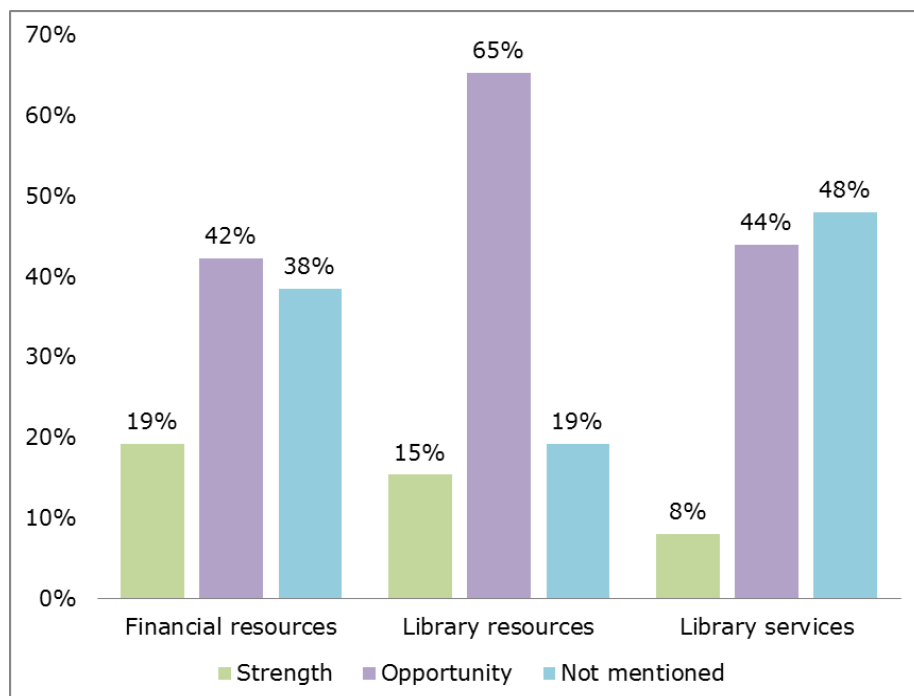
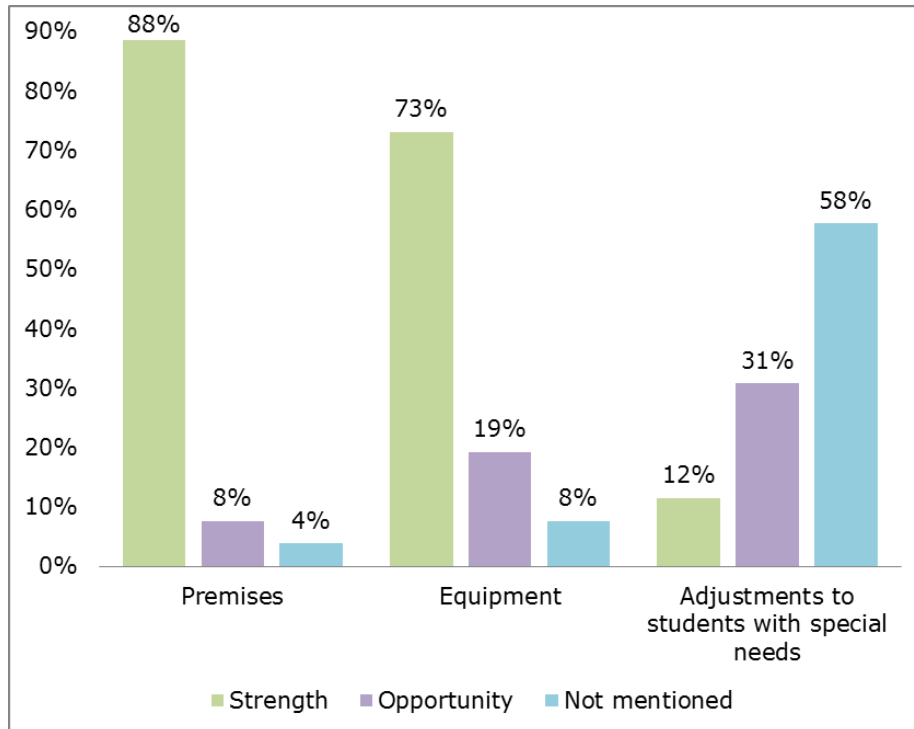


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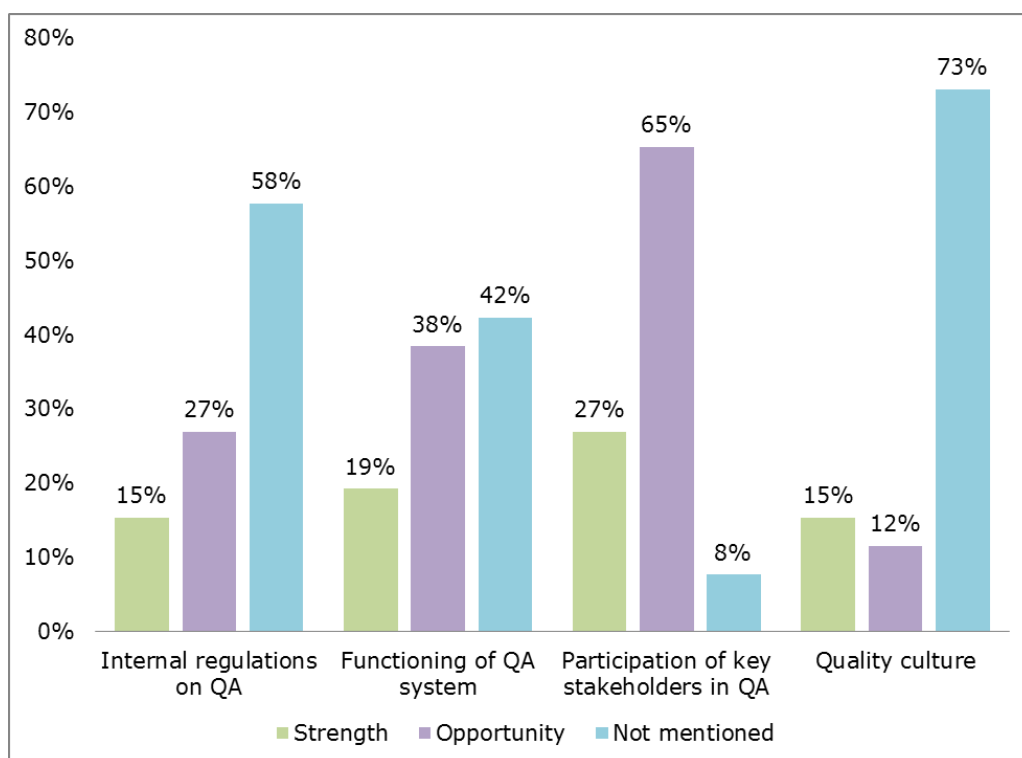


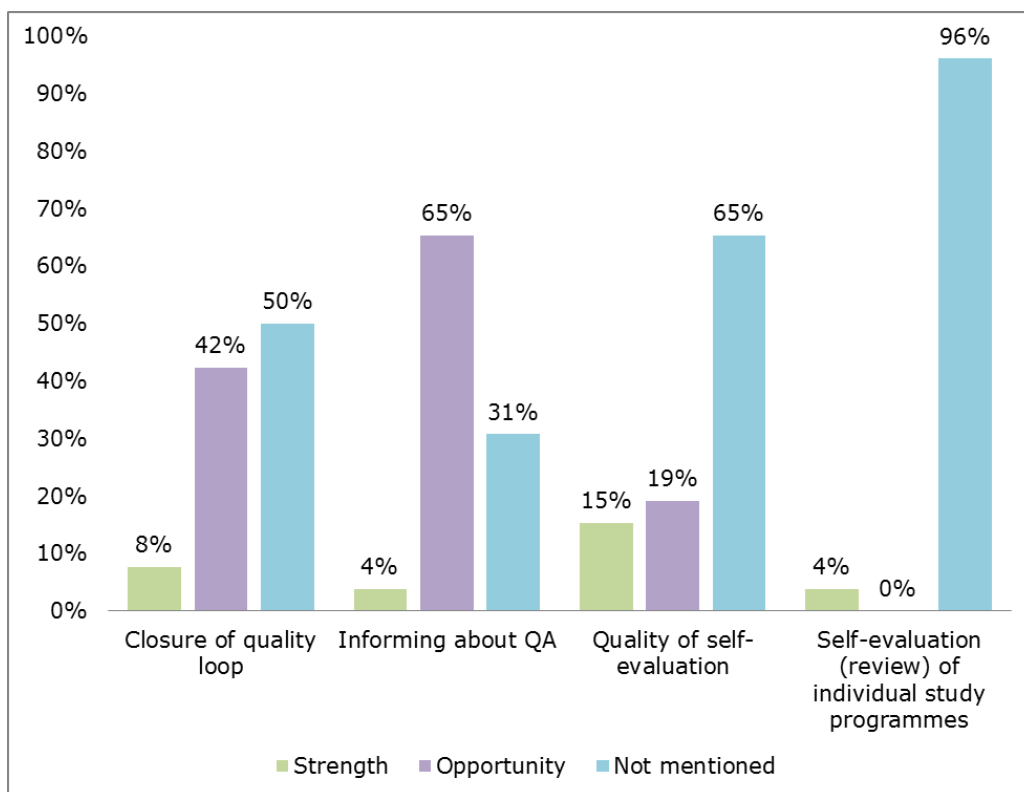
There is a strong excess of strengths over opportunities for improvement in case of premises (maximum share of strengths) and equipment. As in the case of external evaluation of higher education institutions, higher vocational colleges in general have quality spaces and equipment for education and professional or artistic work. Fairly comparable are also the results for quality indicators where opportunities for improvement surpass the

strengths. In higher vocational colleges, this also holds for library resources with a nearly maximal share of opportunities for improvement, as well as for library services, adjustments to students with special needs, and financial resources. When further comparing both analyses, it can be noticed that library services received a more positive evaluation in higher vocational colleges, whereas higher education institutions show signs of being somewhat better adapted to students with special needs. Also, no inconsistencies with regulations were observed in either analysis.

(6) Quality assurance as a special area for the assessment of internal quality assurance includes the following quality indicators:

- Internal regulations on quality assurance in terms of quality manuals or other adopted documents.
- Functioning of the internal quality assurance system in terms of its organisation, management and the efficiency and effectiveness of quality assurance processes.
- Participation of key stakeholders in internal quality assurance.
- Quality culture in terms of its state and development.
- Closure of quality loop in terms of completeness of quality assurance processes – i.e. completeness of PDCA or related quality assurance cycles including follow-up processes.
- Informing about quality assurance – about the quality assurance processes, their relevance and outcomes.
- Quality of self-evaluation in terms of consistency, completeness, methodological rigour and success of self-evaluation.
- Self-evaluation of individual study programmes – i.e. periodical review of study programmes especially with regard to their delivery.





Quality culture is the only considerable indicator with a slight excess of strengths over opportunities for improvement. With the additional exception of self-evaluation of study programmes, other quality indicators demonstrate an extensive to moderate prevalence of opportunities for improvement. The experts put more emphasis on participation of key stakeholders in quality assurance or on informing about quality assurance than on the self-evaluation of study programmes or on self-evaluation per se. Contrary to the results of the analysis on external evaluation of higher education institutions, no inconsistencies were observed in this analysis. However, both analyses show a strong prevalence of opportunities for improvement throughout this area of assessment. When considering individual indicators, quality culture at higher vocational colleges received a considerably better evaluation than in case of higher education institutions.

The results of this research are not comparable with those of the 2010–2013 analysis of the external evaluation of higher vocational colleges due to the differing methodology applied as well as difference in the criteria and instructions for reporting in external evaluations.

Methodological framework for the analysis of self-evaluations

The analyses of self-evaluation reports of higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges are focused on the assessment of self-evaluation reports in terms of the quality of reporting and evaluation per se, and not in terms of deriving any actual state of affairs at these educational institutions as portrayed by the reports.

For each analysis, a sample of pairs of all available older and newer reports was constructed, so that for each higher education institution or higher vocational college, the two latest available self-evaluation reports were collected and analysed in pairs. This allows to compare older reports against the newer ones, and identify possible progress or change in self-evaluatory practices on the one hand, or their comparability on the other. Although the majority of reports are from the academic years 2014/15 and 2015/16, few were also selected from earlier or later periods, but predominantly from the period during 2014 and 2017. Not all reports from this period were analysed because the size of such sample would surpass available analytic capabilities at the SQAA. In addition, self-evaluation reports of some education institutions were either not publically accessible or submitted on request for the purpose of this research.

Qualitative and quantitative analysis was based on closed question surveys specifically tailored to the structure of self-evaluation reports which is prescribed by the Accreditation Criteria and Evaluation Criteria. Due to the similarity of these prescriptions, the survey questions of both surveys were structured according to the same areas of assessment: (1) integration with the environment, (2) functioning of the institution, (3) human resources, (4) students, (5) material conditions and (6) quality assurance. In case of both surveys, an additional area of assessment covers (7) organisation and provision of study. The difference in some questions arises from the variations of specific quality standards in the Accreditation Criteria and Evaluation Criteria.

While the initial questions of each survey are reserved for filtering and comparing subgroups of data against other groups of comparable data according to the type or status of an education institution and the year of self-evaluation report, the remaining questions predominantly tackle the quantitative and qualitative extent of self-evaluation – i.e. its evaluatory depth or range. These questions address whether certain areas of assessment, quality standards or quality indicators are covered by the self-evaluation report, in what evaluatory manner or to what evaluatory extent or depth. As such, these single choice questions are aimed at investigating the following categories:

- *No* – meaning that a specific area of assessment, quality standard or quality indicator is not presented in the self-evaluation report. This means that the report does not mention or discuss a certain matter in more than at least one paragraph of text. A vague or very brief reference does not count. Thus, this matter is not sufficiently documented, analysed or evaluated. No measures for improvement are derived.
- *Yes, this is presented* – meaning that a specific area of assessment, quality standard or quality indicator is presented in the self-evaluation report. This means that the report mentions or discusses a certain matter in more than one brief paragraph of text. It is possible to confirm this category with certainty if the discussion is broader or even has its own chapter. This matter is thus documented. Data is collected and presented that sufficiently portrays the state of the matter. Its presentation is perhaps also supported by statistical or other analysis. However, the matter is not evaluated meaning that there is no qualitative judgement of the matter per se, or the



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matter is not assessed against set quality standards, indicators, organisational goals or plans or other prior expectations. Because of that, no reasonable measures for improvement can be derived. Even if they are, they have no evaluatory basis and are thus to be considered insufficient or null.

- *Yes, this is presented and evaluated* – meaning that a specific area of assessment, quality standard or quality indicator is presented in the self-evaluation report. This means that the report mentions or discusses a certain matter in more than one brief paragraph of text. It is possible to confirm this category with certainty if the discussion is broader or even has its own chapter. This matter is thus documented. Data is collected and presented that sufficiently portrays the state of the matter. It is analysed and interpreted – as such it is evaluated meaning that a qualitative judgement is passed on the matter per se, or the matter is assessed against set quality standards, indicators, organisational goals or plans or other prior expectations. Thus, reasonable measures for improvement are, or can be, derived since there exists an evaluatory basis to do so.

Survey questions in the area of assessment concerning internal quality assurance mostly have a different structure. As a group of single choice yes/no questions, they cover the following issues:

- Does the report conform to the areas of assessment according to the Accreditation Criteria or Evaluation Criteria?
- Does the report tackle the implementation of measures for improvement from the previous self-evaluation?
- Does the report derive strengths and opportunities for improvement? Does it thus propose new measures for improvement? Does it also lay out an action plan? (Note that some of these may be part of other documents of education institutions, such as annual financial or business reports. However, such other documents are excluded from these surveys.)

The next set of single choice questions in the area of assessment concerning organisation and provision of education addresses the levels at which certain self-evaluatory practices are ongoing – i.e. does the self-evaluation report cover a certain matter at the institutional level, the level of individual study programmes, both levels or none at all.

The last set of questions is aimed at identifying the professional opinion of respondents on specific qualities of the self-evaluation report as a whole, including:

- General evaluatory extent or depth of the self-evaluation report.
- Balance of the presentation and evaluation of individual areas of assessment.
- Verifiability, feasibility, reasonability and veracity of presented information.
- Methodological and analytical completeness of the self-evaluation report.
- The balance between the report's criticism and benevolence.¹²

¹² Throughout this document, the term 'benevolence' refers to an overly positive tone in self-evaluation reports which tends to favour portraying advantageous aspects of the evaluated matter considerably more than its less positive or more so negative aspects, while preferably omitting clarification whether eventual negative aspects actually exist.

In this latter set of predominantly slider-type questions, the respondent balanced his/her opinion between the affirmation and negation of a qualitative statement on a scale from 1 to 5, whereas 1 fully corresponded with affirmation and 5 with negation.

For each of the two surveys, the database of encoded professional assessments yields a cumulative quantitative or qualitative value for each question, thus offering a general assessment of the quality of self-evaluatory content for the entire sample of analysed reports, and enabling subsequent filtering and comparison of data. The encoding of the content of self-evaluation reports into the questionnaires required guided and professional subjective interpretation in:

- Searching for, selecting and assigning the properties of self-evaluation reports to categories of individual questions.
- Judging and assessing the properties of individual contents or entire self-evaluation reports according to the above guidelines.

Statistical analysis of survey results is supported by total and average ratios, average mean values and standard deviations. These serve as a reference when considering specific results on evaluatory extent or depth, as well as specific balances between affirmations and negations of qualitative statements in the last set of questions.

Apart from the above guidelines, the following measures were taken to coordinate and harmonize the interpretation of self-evaluation reports:

- The SQAA team for system-wide analyses jointly carried out pilot surveys for several self-evaluation reports in order to test and consolidate the survey methodology and questionnaires.
- While the survey on the self-evaluation reports of higher vocational colleges was carried out consistently by one respondent, the survey on the self-evaluation reports of higher education institutions began with several coordinating sessions of the working group so that the three respondents aligned their unwritten qualitative expectations and criteria for assessment. Afterwards, the respondents jointly analysed several pairs of self-evaluation reports of various higher education institutions before embarking on individual work.

All respondents are experienced employees of the SQAA. For each sampled self-evaluation report, a member of the SQAA team for system-wide analyses has filled in the questionnaire based on the guidelines above as well as his/her professional judgement as an administrative expert (1) who has participated in numerous and extensive procedures of accreditation, re-accreditation and external evaluation; (2) who has cooperated with numerous experts of the SQAA; (3) and is experienced in working with sectoral regulations, guidelines, criteria and quality standards. (4) He/she has thus studied and discussed numerous self-evaluation reports throughout his/her professional career at the SQAA.

Since the results rely on subjective and unofficial judgement, they cannot be directly linked with the actual state of self-evaluatory practices in tertiary education, nor are they derived from official or legally binding findings. They rather give a systematic professional assessment which is conditioned by the following:

- How the Accreditation Criteria and Evaluation Criteria together with the discourse at the SQAA steered the systematic assessment of self-evaluation reports (*selective instruction*).



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- How and with what motivation the education institutions selected and presented the contents in their self-evaluation reports (*selective presentation*). As mentioned above, some contents that the Accreditation Criteria for instance consider constituent to a self-evaluation report may be part of other documents – i.e. in annual financial or business reports. However, such other documents were excluded from these surveys.
- How and why the respondents interpreted their findings in a certain manner, as well as understood what they assessed as autonomous professionals from the field (*selective observation and judgement*).
- How strict and consistent the respondents were as assessors.
- Respondents may harbour views on different concepts of quality in tertiary education and therefore pass different judgements when considering the purpose and importance of self-evaluation reports or their contents.

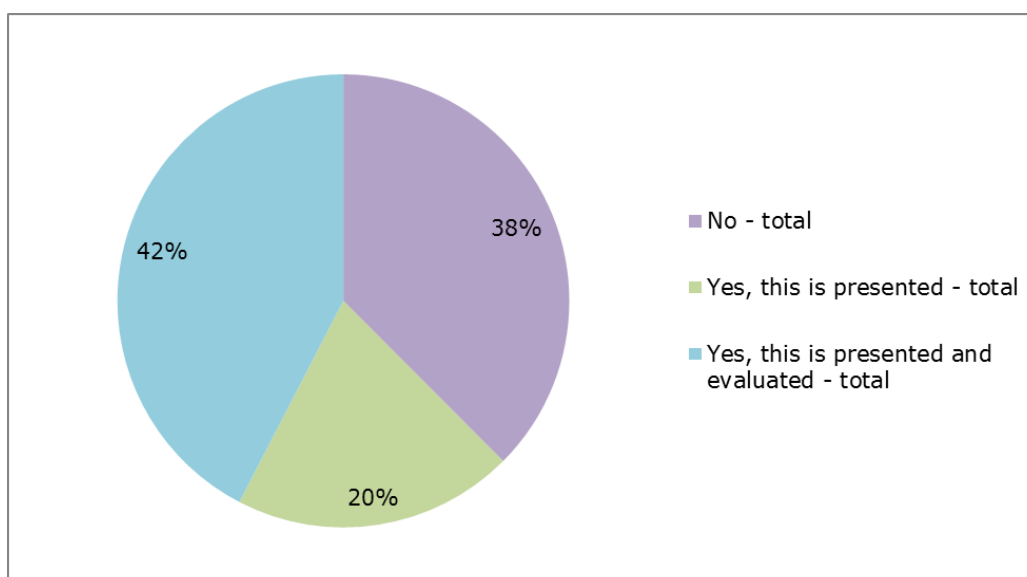
This lengthy caveat is necessary in order to distance the survey results from the complete reality of the situation which remains in the eye of the beholder and, to some extent lies beyond the reach of this research. However, the results shed specific light on the quality of self-evaluation in tertiary education from the expert viewpoint of SQAA employees.

Analysis of the self-evaluation reports of higher education institutions

The survey consisted of 46 questions and covered 188 self-evaluation reports (also referred to as: SER) by 97 higher education institutions, 59% of which are members of universities. 54% of analysed self-evaluation reports belong to public higher education institutions (2% to independent and 52% to members of a public university), whereas the remaining reports were drafted by private institutions (39% belong to independent and 7% to members of a private university). According to the type of higher education institution, 15% of analysed self-evaluation reports are of professional colleges, 87% of faculties, 6% of academies and 1% of doctoral or graduate schools.

The majority (47%) of analysed self-evaluation reports cover the academic year 2015/16 (newer). 46% cover the 2014/2015 academic year (older), and 3% cover 2016/17 (again newer), another 3% cover 2013/14 (older), 1% cover 2012/13 (older) and the last 1% again cover older reports from 2011/12. When considering the sample as 91 pairs of 182 reports, the ratio between older and newer self-evaluation reports is balanced – 50%/50%. 6 reports did not have their newer or older counterpart. These initial questions will be used in subsequent analyses to focus on looking either for possible development in self-evaluatory practices of higher education institutions, or to filter and compare individual subgroups of data against any other groups of comparable data.

The remaining questions first cover six areas of assessment in terms of how the respondents categorized the evaluatory extent or depth according to the three categories: (1) No, (2) Yes, this is presented, and (3) Yes, this is presented and evaluated. Another variation of such a question regards the student survey (a quality indicator in the area of assessment termed students) where the following categories are used: (1) No, (2) Yes, student survey is presented, and (3) Yes, student survey is analysed and evaluated. As explained above, the respondents assessed whether certain areas of assessment, quality standards or quality indicators are covered by the self-evaluation report, in what evaluatory manner or to what evaluatory extent or depth. The overall distribution of the three categories and the additional corresponding categories on student survey for all responses to these types of questions (4,688; 0 missed entries) is as follows:





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The joint result shows that the analysed self-evaluation reports on average did not observe 38% of selected quality indicators integral to the Accreditation Criteria. While 20% of quality indicators were mostly descriptively presented and the documentation or results were left to speak for themselves, as many as 42% were also evaluated. Although the self-evaluation reports therefore omit to address a considerable share of quality indicators, they do, however, include likewise qualitative assessment of the state of affairs in relation to pre-existing standards, specifications, objectives, expectations or ideals. It is necessary to add that 6 observed quality indicators (i.e. tutorship, employee satisfaction, students with special needs) were more specific than the remaining 20, meaning that any deficit of presenting and evaluating is more likely to occur in more specific rather than in broader quality indicators. This then weighs on the cumulative ratio between the three categories, as well as on the mean and extreme values presented in the following paragraph.

Maximum and minimal occurrences for individual categories in six areas of assessment were calculated as well. For example, this calculation shows that the greatest share of self-evaluation reports that both present and evaluate a certain quality indicator is 72%, and the smallest is 6%, meaning that for one particular quality indicator only 6% of the reports offered any documentation, analysis and evaluation of results. Average maximum share for this particular category (yes, this is presented and evaluated) when considering average extremes for six areas of assessment individually is 61%, whereas average minimum share is 30%. Specific calculations of maximums, minimums and their averages for individual categories can be referenced here:

Category	Absolute maximum	Average maximum	Absolute minimum	Average minimum
No	83%	55%	10%	18%
Yes, this is presented	48%	27%	10%	14%
Yes, this is presented and evaluated	72%	61%	6%	30%

(1) The analysis below offers the distributions of the three main categories for quality indicators in individual areas of assessment. First up is the integration with the environment where self-evaluation was observed according to the following indicators:

- Cooperation of higher education institutions with the business and non-business sector in terms of partnerships, applicative projects for industry, involving professionals or representatives from the business sector in teaching, as well as public services, meeting the requirements of the public sector, intellectual and cultural integration with the environment.
- Competences and employability of graduates in terms of education and skills, as well as employability and competences on the labour market.

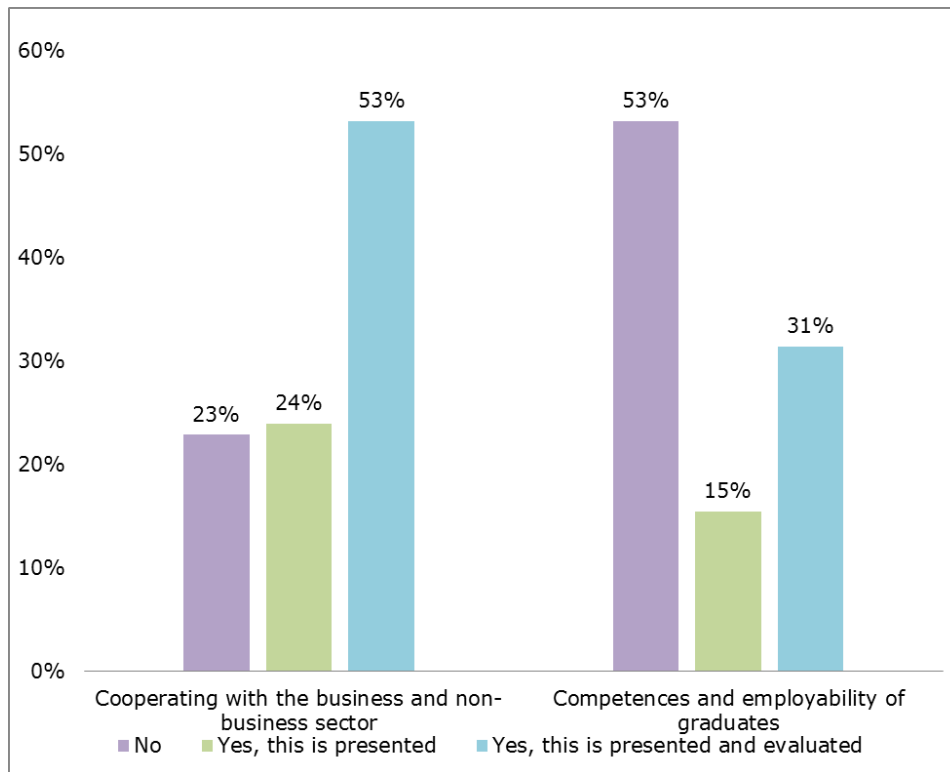


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Integration with the environment comprises two broad quality indicators. Although the self-evaluation reports often document and even more so also evaluate cooperation with the business and non-business sector, the share of reports with no documentation or evaluation of competences and employability of graduates nears the average maximum value. Thus, during 2014 and 2017, the majority of higher education institutions included in this survey still did not manage to close their quality loop when it comes to this indicator despite the persistent encouragements to improve in this venue that the institutions received through external evaluation of study programmes or through external institutional evaluations.¹³

(2) In the next area of assessment, functioning of the higher education institution, self-evaluation was observed according to the following quality indicators:

- Mission, vision and strategy in terms of the realisation of organisational goals and plans.
- Management of the higher education institution including the participation of key stakeholders therein, i.e. governance and participation therein.
- Research or artistic work in terms of scientific and professional research or artistic work, achievements and awards at the institutional level.
- Practical training in terms of its organisation and provision.

¹³ See the results of the analysis on the external evaluation of study programmes above, especially for the following quality indicators: employability, informing the students and closure of quality loop. See also the results of [Quality in the Slovenian Higher Education and Higher Vocational Education Area in the Period from 2010 to 2013](#) (i.e. page 9–10).

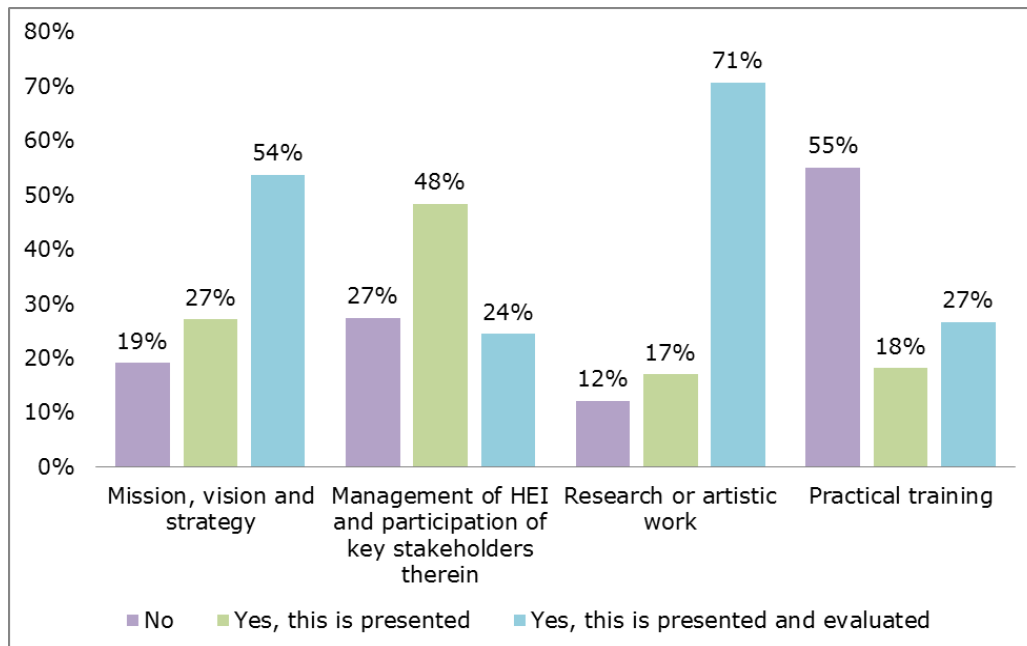


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In this area of assessment, the higher education institutions give most evaluatory emphasis on professional or artistic work (71% is 1% short of the absolute maximum value) as well as on the realisation of organisational goals and plans. On the other hand, practical training receives least attention, even though the self-evaluation reports of 12 higher education institutions that do not provide higher professional study programmes (1st cycle) or organize practical training were excluded from this question. With this exception, other quality indicators in this area of assessment are better documented on total average but reporting on them varies in evaluatory extent or depth.

(3) In the analysis of self-evaluation of human resources, the following quality indicators were observed:

- Employee satisfaction in terms of surveys or interviews on employee satisfaction.
- Mobility in terms of teacher, staff as well as student mobility, its organisation and the actual exchanges.
- Pedagogical work of teachers.
- Research or artistic work of teachers – at the individual, not institutional level.
- HR structure in terms of stability and the nature of employment of teachers at the higher education institution – i.e. full-time equivalence, employed vs. external co-workers.

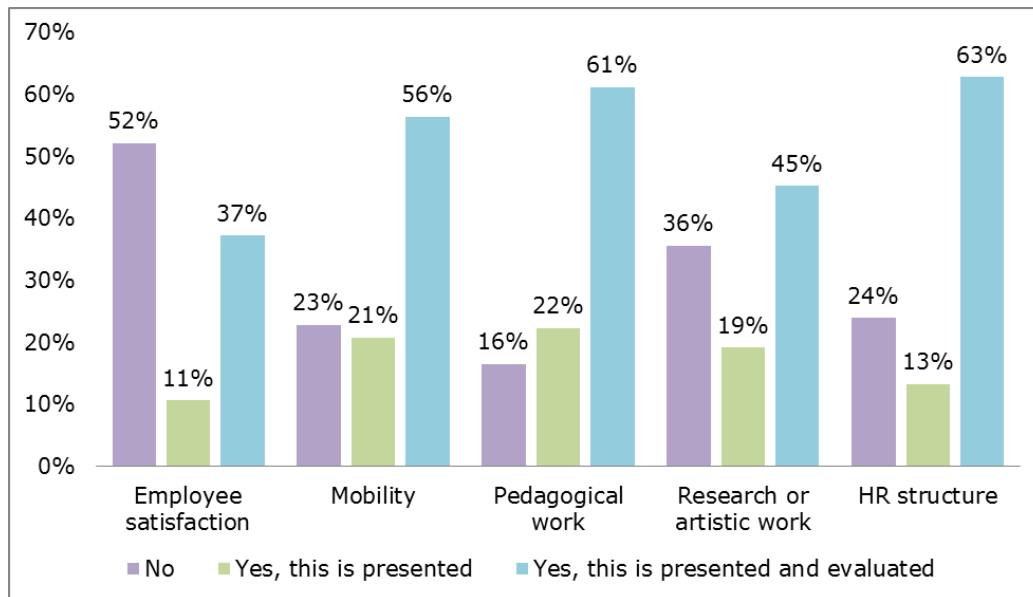


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Since employee satisfaction is a rather specific quality indicator not directly pertinent to Accreditation Criteria, it is not surprising that 52% of self-evaluation reports do not document any related outcomes. All other indicators are documented and presented to the extent that exceeds the total average result. Pedagogical work as well as stability and the nature of employment of teachers are both well documented and evaluated. While mobility follows close by, research or artistic work at the individual level reflects the total average result. And since research or artistic work is well documented and evaluated at the institutional level, this result does not raise any concerns.

(4) In students, being a hybrid area of assessment drawing from all other areas, self-evaluation was observed according to the following quality indicators:

- Career counselling in terms of the activities and services of career centres or other organisational units.
- Tutorship in terms of its organisation and activities.
- Graduate related activities, including the organisation and activities of alumni clubs or other organisational units which foster dialogue with graduates and employers.
- Students with special needs in terms of special adaptations of facilities, special equipment, as well as rules (rights and responsibilities) and support.
- Student survey in terms of the results and implications of student survey.
- Participation in research or artistic work in terms of the actual participation of students in scientific and professional research or artistic work or the possibility to do so.
- Informing the students and student support refers to the information services of the higher education institution and the state to which students are informed about the matters regarding education, employability, self-evaluation, as well as to the general administrative support in study, i.e. the services of the enrolment office, study affairs office, international affairs office.
- Student workload according to ECTS in terms of the results of monitoring student workload and the corresponding implications.
- Participation in the review of study programmes refers to student involvement in evaluating the study programmes and adopting changes thereto.

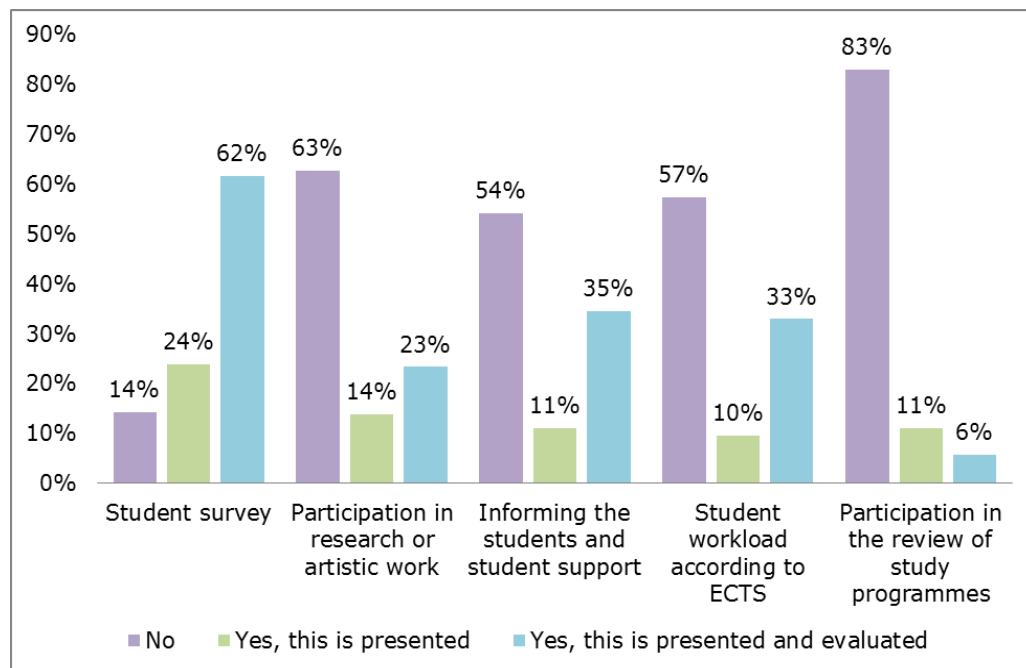
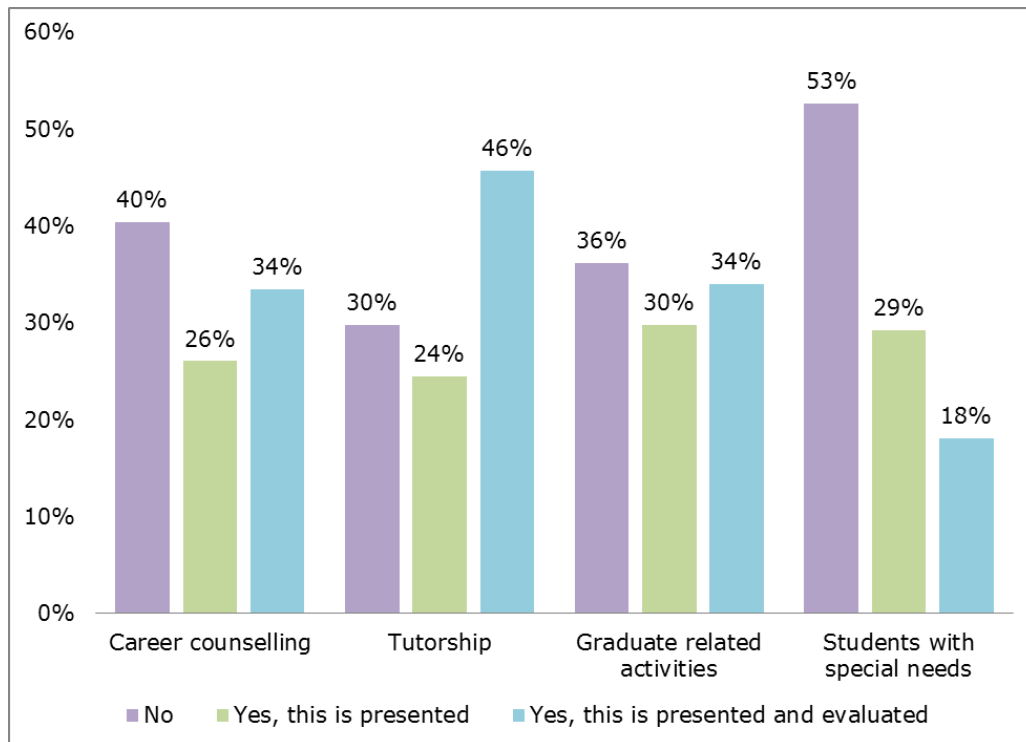


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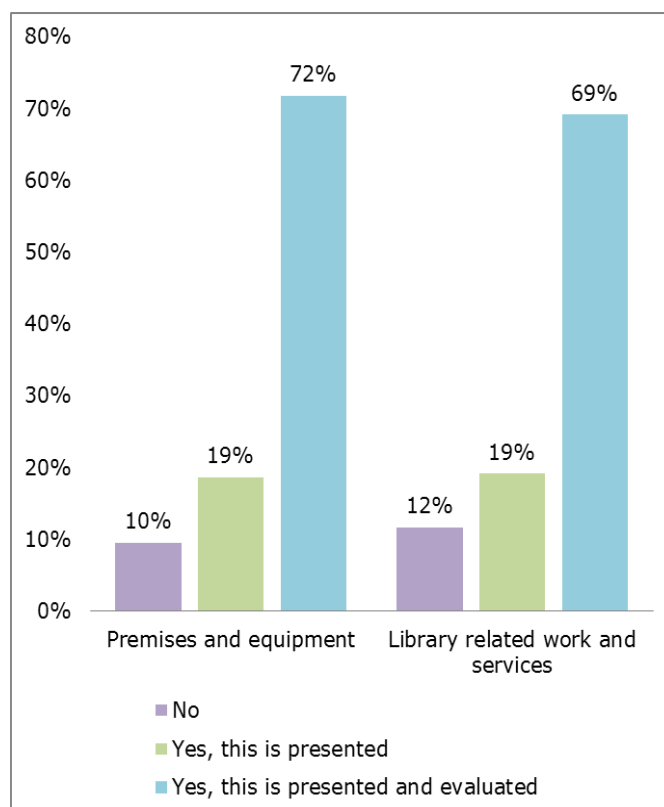
Among all quality indicators, the student survey has received most evaluatory attention and is also well documented. Apart from tutorship and graduate related activities, other quality indicators are considerably less emphasized. In particular, participation of students in the review of study programmes is hardly documented or evaluated and has received least mention compared to other quality indicators included in this survey, and is also least evaluated. Student participation in research or artistic work is also overshadowed by reportage on other quality indicators, such as tutorship or graduate related activities. Even



though this area of assessment encompasses a greater number of more specific quality indicators that may also relate to other areas of assessment, all quality indicators lagging behind, have direct grounds in the Accreditation Criteria or the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area meaning that their self-evaluation is mandatory.

(5) In the analysis of self-evaluation of material conditions, the following quality indicators were observed:

- Premises and equipment in terms of facilities for education, research or artistic work, as well as equipment for these activities.
- Library-related work and services in terms of professional support to students, teachers and researchers, as well as library resources – hard copies of study and research literature, and access to databases.



Both quality indicators are very well presented and evaluated. In fact, the extent of evaluation is at absolute maximum for premises and equipment, whereas library-related work and services are near to it. Self-evaluation reports of higher education institutions thus give fair and above average attention to material resources.

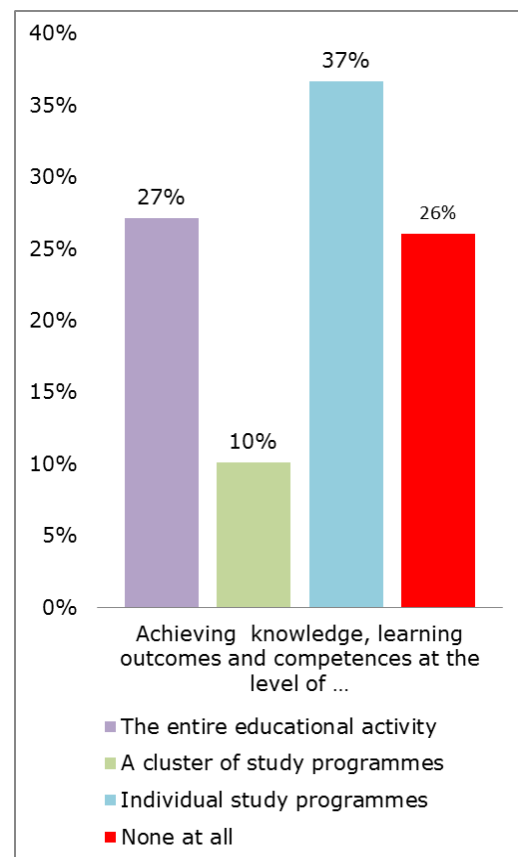
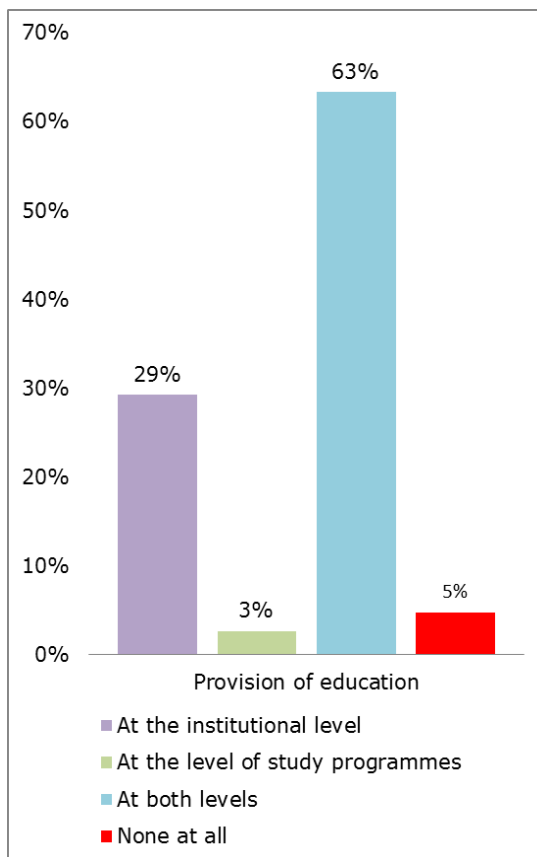
(6) In the next area of assessment, organisation and provision of education, self-evaluation was observed according to the following quality indicators:

- Provision of education in terms of self-evaluation of education and study with focus on enrolment, progression, transfers and graduation.

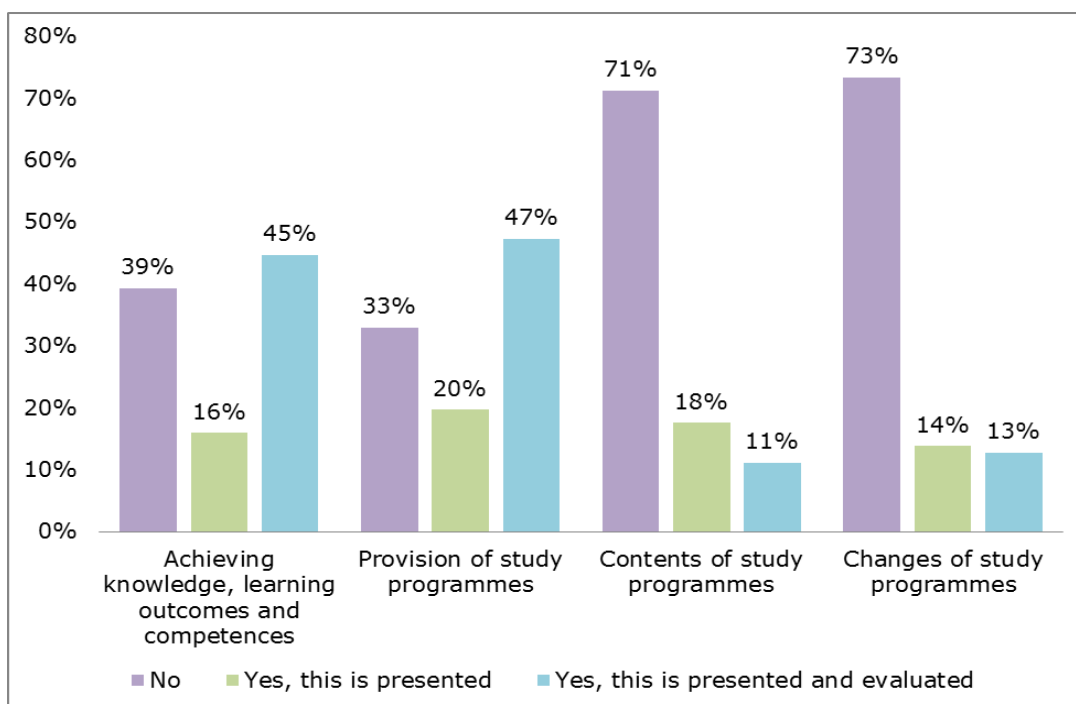
- Achieving knowledge, learning outcomes and competences in terms of examination performance, quality of theses, student achievements, stakeholder opinion on the acquired knowledge.
- Provision of study programmes in relation to another quality indicator *provision of education*, but with specific focus on the delivery of study programmes according to the approved curriculum, on the mode of provision and stakeholder satisfaction with the delivery of study programmes.
- Contents of study programmes in terms of curricula and syllabi, the structure and consistency of the contents, as well as their correspondence with the field of study or scientific discipline.
- Changes of study programmes in terms of content development (changes of curricula and syllabi), changing study literature, replacement of teachers and changing compulsory provisions such as enrolment criteria.

Additional categories were introduced in order to further explore evaluatory extent or depth of self-evaluation according to these quality indicators, in particular, the distinction between institutional and programme self-evaluation. The respondents thus observed whether self-evaluation takes place:

- At the institutional level or level of the entire educational activity?
- At the level of study programmes (individual or a cluster thereof)?
- At both levels?
- Or none at all?



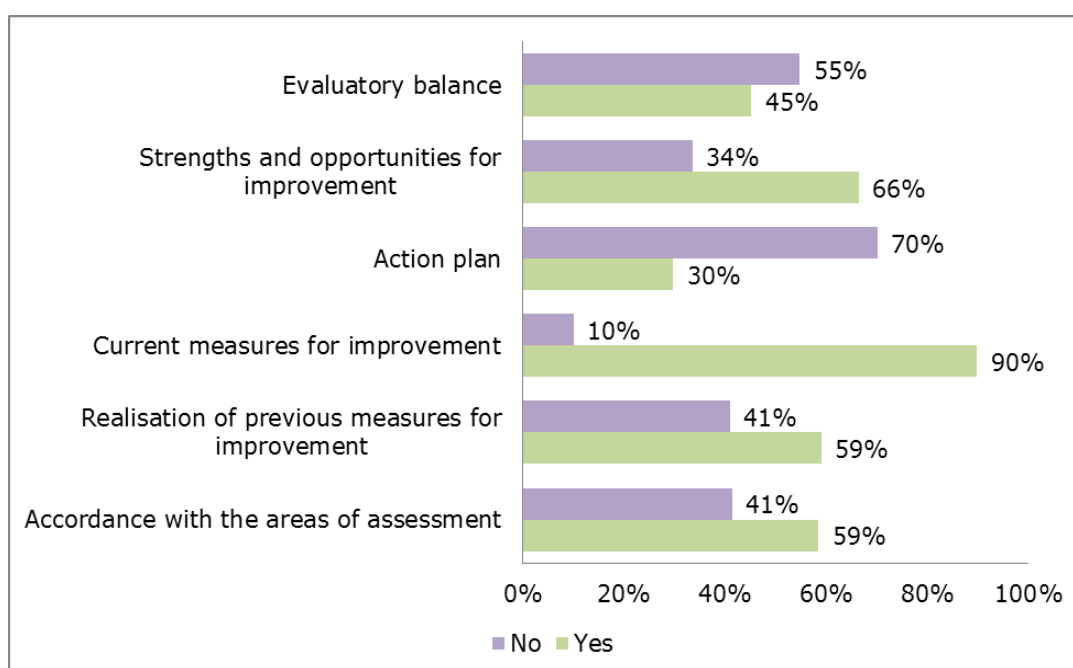
63% of analysed self-evaluation reports approach the issues of enrolment, progression, transfers and graduation of students at the level of individual study programmes. While less than a third tackle general results at the institutional level, only 5% of reports leave this out. The results are slightly different when we delve into a more challenging quality indicator, namely the issue of self-evaluating student knowledge, learning outcomes and competences. In 27% of cases, the reporting on this quality indicator takes place at the institutional level alone and provides common information for the entire educational activity. While almost a half of self-evaluation reports offer information on this quality indicator for each study programme separately or at least for a cluster of study programmes, a quarter of reports offer no relevant information. It may seem perhaps that self-evaluatory practices prefer to rely on data collected for instance by enrolment or study affairs offices and probably lack additional academic evaluation of the quality of education and study. However, the below chart shows that the analysed self-evaluation reports treat the two quality indicators in a very comparable manner:



According to this result, both provision of study programmes as well as student knowledge, learning outcomes and competences are documented and mostly are also evaluated in roughly two thirds of self-evaluation reports which is a little better than the above calculated total average. However, the remaining two quality indicators are poorly documented and evaluated in comparison to other indicators, both reaching nearly extreme values of omission in reporting. This raises concerns about the transition from programme to institutional external evaluation which has already entered into force with the amendment to the Higher Education Act at the end of 2016 (ZViS-K). When considering the results of the survey on the external evaluation of higher education institutions as well as those of the survey on the external evaluation of study programmes (in particular for the quality indicator: self-evaluation (review) of individual study programmes), the question is in place, whether higher education institutions have already fully prepared to take on the burden of partially abolished external evaluation of study programmes now, and equivalently evaluate the quality of study programmes on their own, through self-evaluation.

(7) In the last area of assessment, quality assurance, the following objective properties of self-evaluation reports were observed:

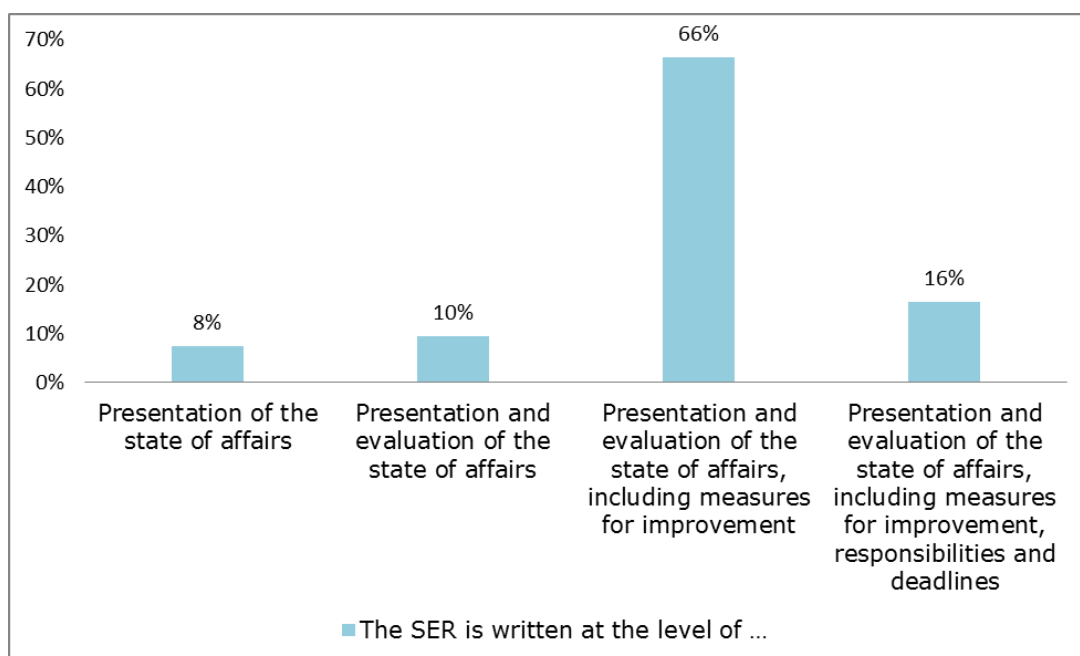
- Evaluatory balance: Is the presentation and evaluation of the areas of assessment individually and with respect to each other balanced in extent as well as depth of self-evaluation?
- Strengths and opportunities for improvement: Does the self-evaluation report based on its evaluatory findings derive strengths and opportunities for improvement or a SWOT or similar analysis?
- Action plan: Does the self-evaluation report derive an action plan which lays out specific responsibilities, their holders and the corresponding deadlines?
- Current measures for improvement: Does the self-evaluation report based on its evaluatory findings derive new measures for improvement?
- Realisation of previous measures for improvement: Does the self-evaluation report document or evaluate the realisation of measures for improvement that resulted from the previous self-evaluation?
- Accordance with the areas of assessment: Does the self-evaluation report include all the areas of assessment pertaining to the Accreditation Criteria?



The responses to single choice yes/no questions show that 59% of analysed self-evaluation reports are structured according to the areas of assessment of the Accreditation Criteria. In a slightly inverted proportion, the reports also exhibit a balanced extent and depth of self-evaluation in individual areas of assessment. In other words, roughly half of analysed reports show signs of structural deficits. As regards the closure of quality loop, 66% of reports propose strengths and opportunities for improvement, and fewer (59%) also document or evaluate the realisation of measures for improvement that resulted from the previous self-evaluation. Because action plans may be part of other documentation, it is not surprising that relatively few reports (30%) include such a plan; however, as many as 90% of reports accompany the self-evaluation with a proposal of measures to be taken.

In conclusion, we present the results of professional assessment of selected common objective and qualitative properties of self-evaluation reports. In the first question, the respondents encoded their general opinion on evaluatory extent or depth of self-evaluation in one of the following categories:

- The report is written at the level of presenting the state of affairs.
- The report is written at the level of presenting and evaluating the state of affairs.
- The report is written at the level of presenting and evaluating the state of affairs. It also includes measures for improvement.
- The report is written at the level of presenting and evaluating the state of affairs. It also includes measures for improvement, responsibilities and deadlines.



If we tie the results to the above overall distribution of the three categories (No/Yes, this is presented/Yes, this is presented and evaluated) for all responses to the questions of similar type addressing particular quality indicators, and consider that the question at hand did not allow for the option to identify exclusion of a certain quality indicator from reporting, the results show that the analysed self-evaluation reports demonstrate a notable degree of evaluation and anticipation of measures for improvement.

The remainder of the survey collected general opinion on degrees of verifiability, veracity, methodological and analytical completeness, criticism and benevolence of self-evaluation reports. In the slider-type questions, the respondents balanced their opinion between the affirmation and negation of a qualitative statement on a scale from 1 to 5, whereas 1 fully corresponded with affirmation and 5 with negation. The results for each qualitative statement are expressed as mean values and standard deviations:

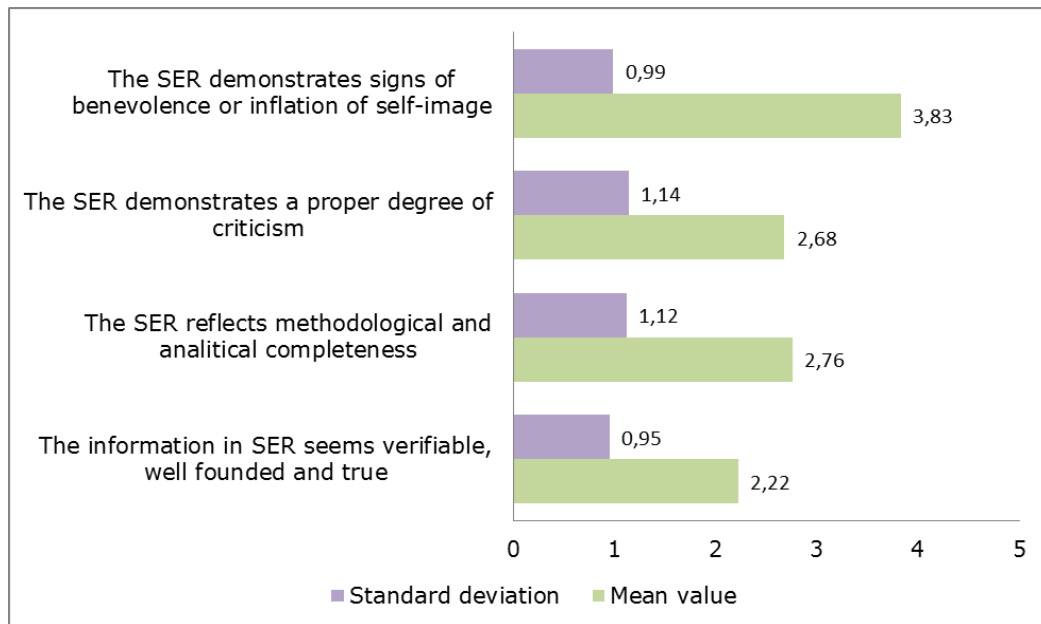


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The results imply a tendency towards proper degree of criticism, methodological and analytical completeness and especially verifiability and veracity of self-evaluation reports. On the other hand, the degree of benevolence in reports tends to be subdued. Standard deviations are comparable despite the relative differences in the results for individual qualitative statements. When considering individual results for the property that received the most positive opinion, the extreme values show that 43 self-evaluation reports (23%) received a 1, representing a complete affirmation of verifiability and veracity of self-evaluation. In case of another statement, 11 reports (6%) received a 5, representing a complete negation of their methodological and analytical completeness. Cumulatively for all qualitative statements with the exception of the issue of benevolence or inflation of self-image, 105 self-evaluation reports in total received a 1 (affirmation) and 27 in total received a 5 (negation). As regards the averages of these extreme values, 35 self-evaluation reports per statement received a 1 (affirmation), and 9 per statement received a 5 (negation). In case of benevolence or inflation of self-image, only 6 self-evaluation reports (3%) received a 1 (affirmation).

To remind of the results from the previous [system-wide analysis for 2010–2013](#), the survey then comprised several similar survey questions with identical or comparable categories. However, it is not possible to compare all of the results due to considerable methodological differences. The results on the extent or depth of self-evaluation are similar or unchanged with regard to the following:

- Competences and employability of graduates. There are signs of slight improvement in the self-evaluation reports of the 2014–2017 period.
- Practical training. However, the results are less comparable due to difference in the design of the survey question.
- Although the share of self-evaluation reports that omit presenting or evaluating the issue of stability and the nature of employment of teachers at the higher education institution remains comparable, the evaluatory extent or depth has improved in reports that do include this quality indicator.



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- Changes of study programmes and the underlying reasons for such changes are still poorly reported on and evaluated. In the period during 2014 and 2017, they are still overshadowed by other quality indicators observed in this and the previous survey.
- A comparable share of self-evaluation reports include all the areas of assessment pertaining to the Accreditation Criteria (41%).

The extent or depth of presentation and evaluation of some quality indicators has improved when comparing the 2010–2013 period with the 2014–2017 period. Differences arise in the following indicators:

- Integration with the environment, in particular in case of cooperation with the business and non-business sector.
- The presentation and evaluation of research or artistic work at the institutional as well as individual level.
- Presenting and documenting of student participation in professional or artistic work.
- Material conditions including premises and equipment at the level of presentation and especially evaluation.

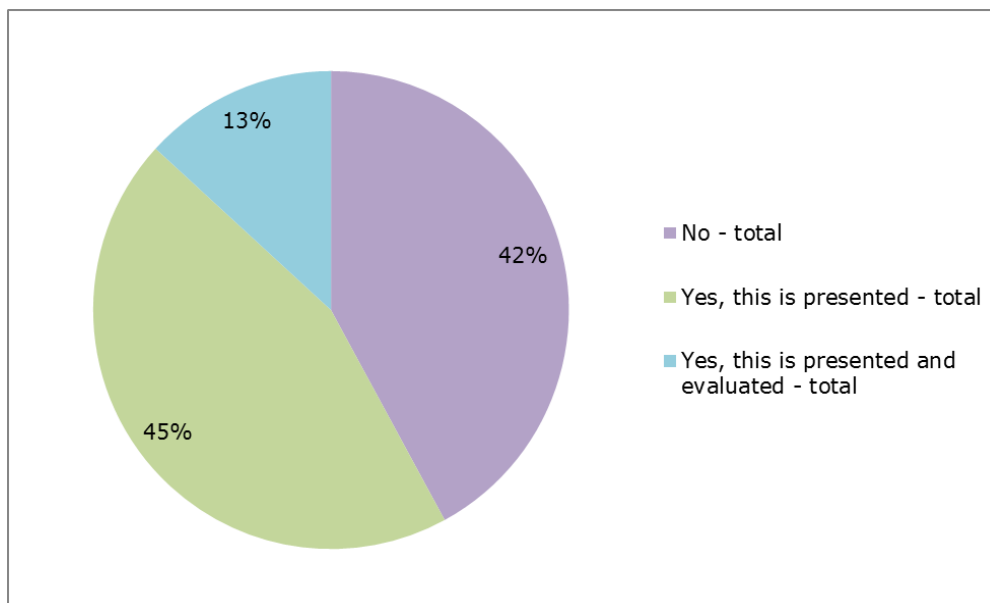
Analysis of the self-evaluation reports of higher vocational colleges

The survey consisted of 42 questions and covered 65 self-evaluation reports (also referred to as: SER) by 34 higher vocational colleges which is short of 76% of all (45 (28 public and 17 private)) higher vocational colleges in Slovenia. 65% of analysed self-evaluation reports belong to public higher vocational colleges, whereas the remaining reports were drafted by private colleges.

The majority (51%) of analysed self-evaluation reports cover the academic year 2015/16 (newer reports). 48% cover the 2014/2015 academic year (older reports), and 2% cover 2016/17 (again newer reports). When considering the sample as 31 pairs of 62 reports, the ratio between older and newer self-evaluation reports is balanced – 50%/50%. 3 reports did not have their newer or older counterpart. And when observing the relation between the academic year that the reports cover and the dates of the SQAA Council's final decisions on the external evaluation of corresponding higher vocational colleges, 28% of reports cover the academic year two years or one year after the last external evaluation, while the remaining reports either cover a period which coincides with the year of the last external evaluation or a period of three or more years after it.¹⁴ These questions will be tackled by subsequent analyses that will focus on looking either for possible development in self-evaluatory practices of higher vocational colleges or for possible influence of external evaluations on these practices.

The remaining questions first cover six areas of assessment in terms of how the respondents categorized the evaluatory extent or depth according to the three categories: (1) No, (2) Yes, this is presented, and (3) Yes, this is presented and evaluated. Another variation of such a question regards the student survey where the following categories are used: (1) No, (2) Yes, student survey is presented, and (3) Yes, student survey is analysed and evaluated. As explained above, the respondent assessed whether certain areas of assessment, quality standards or quality indicators are covered by the self-evaluation report, in what evaluatory manner or to what evaluatory extent or depth. The overall distribution of the three categories and the additional corresponding categories on student survey for all responses to these types of questions (1,500; 0 missed entries) is as follows:

¹⁴ This question was introduced only in the survey of the self-evaluation reports of higher vocational colleges. The period of one and two years after the SQAA Council's decision was selected as the period of possible maximum influence of external evaluation on the self-evaluatory practices. The assumption was that if the self-evaluation reports cover the academic year in which the SQAA Council adopted its corresponding decisions, the effects of external evaluation could not yet have taken hold. And if the self-evaluation reports cover the period of three or more years after the external evaluation, the effects of the latter might have faded.



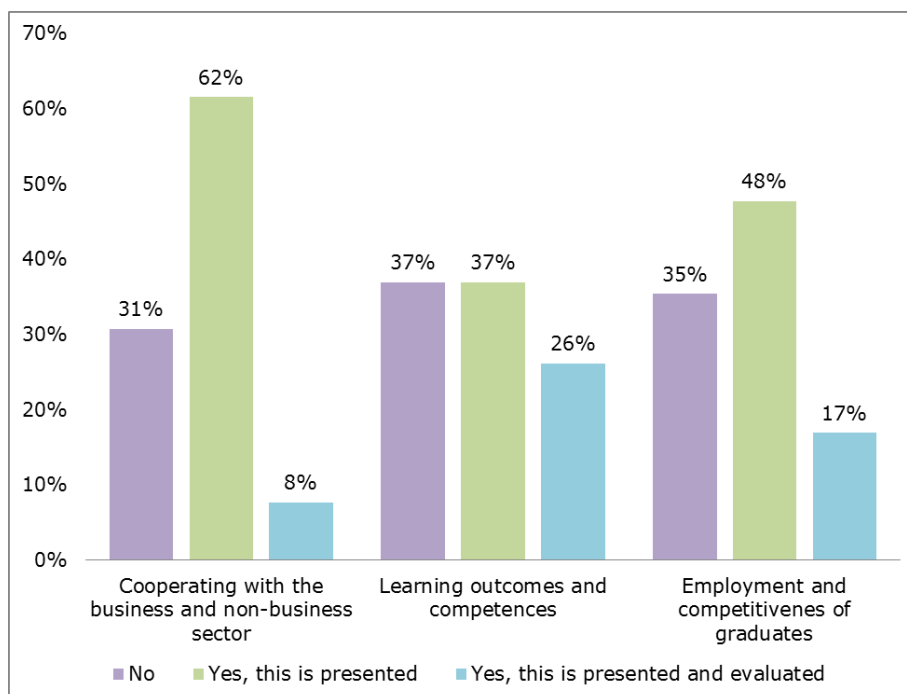
The joint result shows that the analysed self-evaluation reports on average did not observe 42% of selected quality indicators integral to the Evaluation Criteria. While 45% of quality indicators were mostly descriptively presented and the documentation or results were left to speak for themselves, only 13% were also evaluated. This general lack of qualitative judgement as well as considerable deficits in documenting the selected quality indicators in the analysed reports speak in favour of reconsideration or even revision of self-evaluatory practices in higher vocational education. It is necessary to add that 5 observed quality indicators (i.e. tutorship, employee satisfaction, students with special needs) were more specific than the remaining 18, meaning that any deficit of presenting and evaluating is more likely to occur in more specific rather than in broader quality indicators. This then weighs on the cumulative ratio between the three categories, as well as on the mean and extreme values presented in the following paragraph.

Maximum and minimal occurrences for individual categories in six areas of assessment were calculated as well. For example, this calculation shows that the greatest share of self-evaluation reports that both present and evaluate a certain quality indicator is only 38%, and the smallest is 0%, meaning that for at least one particular quality indicator, none of the reports offered any documentation, analysis or evaluation of results. Average maximum share for this particular category (yes, this is presented and evaluated) when considering average extremes for six areas of assessment individually is 26%, whereas average minimum share is 4%. Specific calculations of maximums, minimums and their averages for individual categories can be referenced here:

Category	Absolute maximum	Average maximum	Absolute minimum	Average minimum
No	80%	57%	3%	15%
Yes, this is presented	82%	66%	15%	33%
Yes, this is presented and evaluated	38%	26%	0%	4%

(1) The analysis below offers the distributions of the three main categories for quality indicators in individual areas of assessment. First up is the integration with the environment where self-evaluation was observed according to the following indicators:

- Cooperation of higher vocational colleges with the business and non-business sector in terms of partnerships, applicative projects for industry, involving professionals or representatives from the business sector in teaching, as well as public services, meeting the requirements of the public sector, intellectual and cultural integration with the environment.
- Learning outcomes and competences in terms of education and skills.
- Employment and competitiveness of graduates in terms of their employability and competences on the labour market.



Integration with the environment is better documented and evaluated as some other areas of assessment, exceeding the total average results and nearing average maximum values. Higher vocational colleges thus relatively often document their cooperation with the business and non-business sector, as well as evaluate the performance of their students and graduates when it comes to learning outcomes, competences and employment-related issues.

(2) In the next area of assessment, functioning of the higher vocational college, self-evaluation was observed according to the following quality indicators:

- Mission, vision and strategy in terms of the realisation of organisational goals and plans.
- Management of the higher vocational college including the participation of key stakeholders therein, i.e. governance and participation therein.
- Professional or artistic work in terms of professional research or artistic work, achievements and awards at the institutional level.
- Practical training in terms of its organisation and provision.

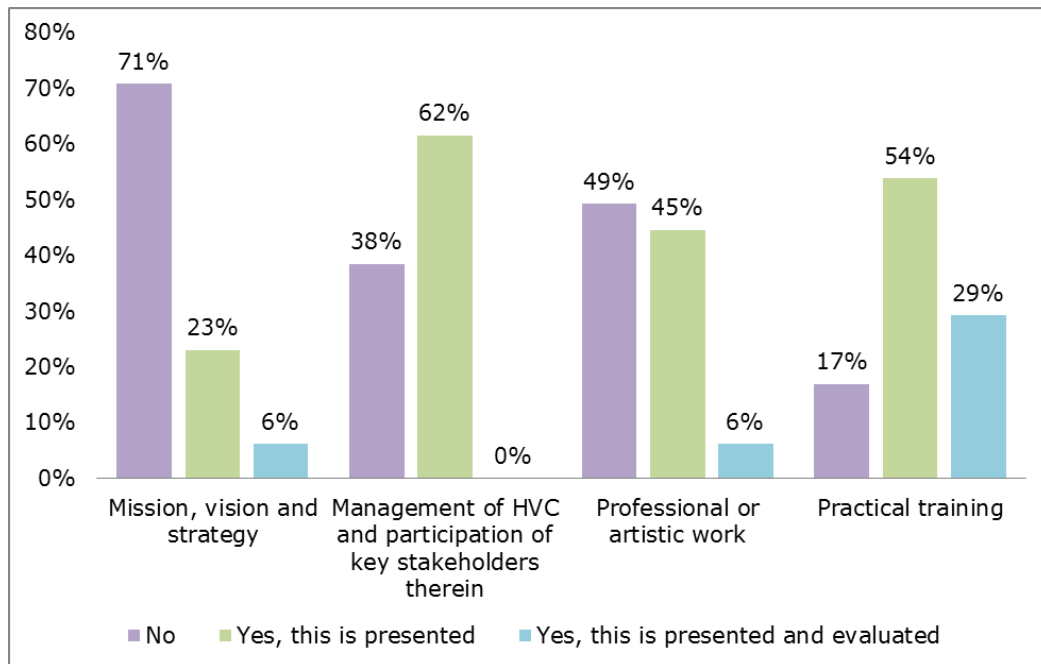


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In this area of assessment, the results for individual quality indicators differ considerably. While the higher vocational colleges mostly just present the existing organisational goals and plans as such or omit even this, much fewer self-evaluation reports document and fewer still also evaluate the realisation of such goals and plans. On the other hand, practical training as a key property of higher vocational education is paid considerable evaluatory attention. The remaining quality indicators exceed the total average values at the level of presentation and documentation, but not at the level of evaluation which, to the contrary, reaches towards minimum values. With this in mind, it is worth emphasizing that professional or artistic work at the institutional level as an important quality indicator, could be better presented and evaluated.

(3) In the analysis of self-evaluation of human resources, the following quality indicators were observed:

- Employee satisfaction in terms of surveys or interviews on employee satisfaction.
- Mobility in terms of teacher, staff as well as student mobility, its organisation and the actual exchanges.
- Pedagogical work of teachers.
- Professional or artistic work of teachers – at the individual, not institutional level.
- HR structure in terms of stability and the nature of employment of teachers at the higher vocational college – i.e. full-time equivalence, employed vs. external co-workers.

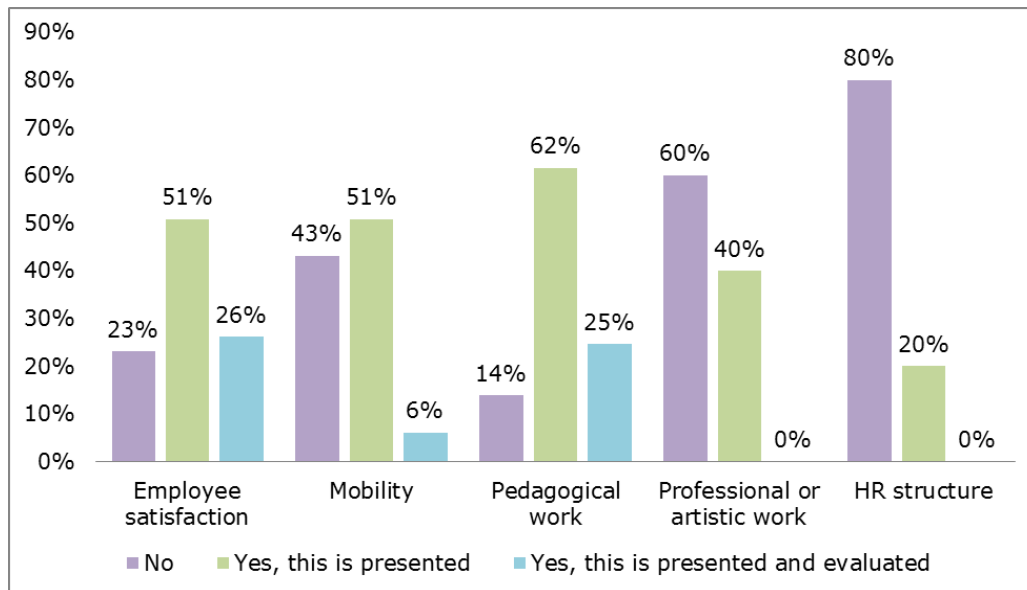


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While employee satisfaction (even though this is a specific quality indicator) and especially pedagogical work, both exhibit a more extensive and above average presentation and evaluation in the observed self-evaluation reports, especially HR structure and less so professional or artistic work relatively rarely get presented and documented. They also never get evaluated. Thus, professional or artistic work receives poor evaluatory attention not only at the institutional but also at the individual level – at the level of teachers. Together with HR structure these quality indicators appear to be less important than for instance employee satisfaction.

(4) In students, being a hybrid area of assessment drawing from all other areas, self-evaluation was observed according to the following quality indicators:

- Career counselling in terms of the activities and services of career centres or other organisational units.
- Tutorship in terms of its organisation and activities.
- Graduate related activities, including the organisation and activities of alumni clubs or other organisational units which foster dialogue with graduates and employers.
- Students with special needs in terms of special adaptations of facilities, special equipment, as well as rules (rights and responsibilities) and support.
- Student survey in terms of the results and implications of student survey.
- Participation in professional or artistic work in terms of the actual participation of students in professional, research or artistic work or the possibility to do so.
- Informing the students and student support refers to the information services of the higher vocational college and the state to which students are informed about the matters regarding education, employability, self-evaluation, as well as to the general administrative support in study, i.e. the services of the enrolment office, study affairs office, international affairs office.

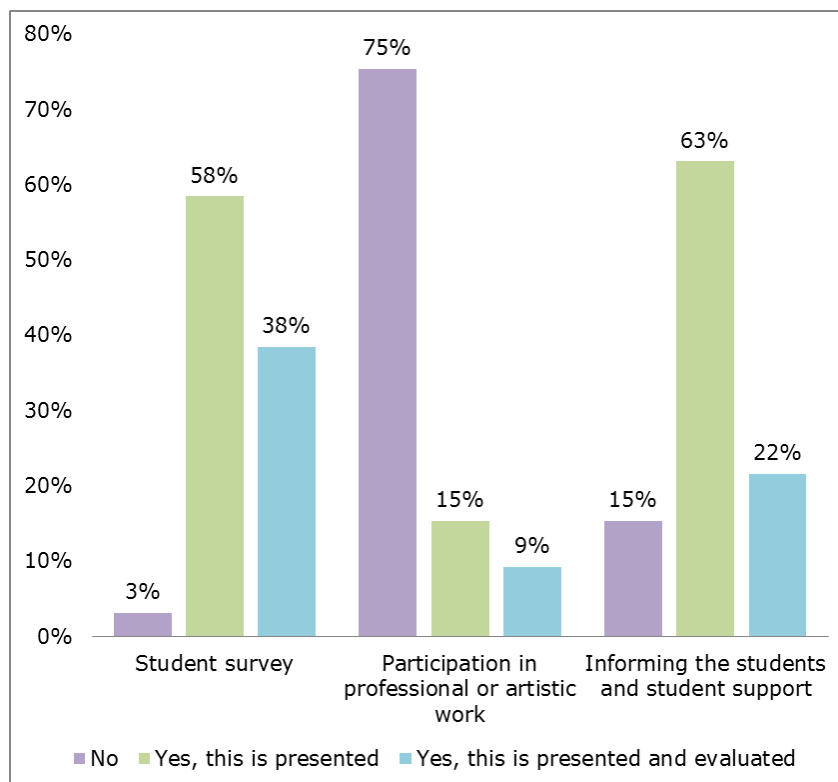
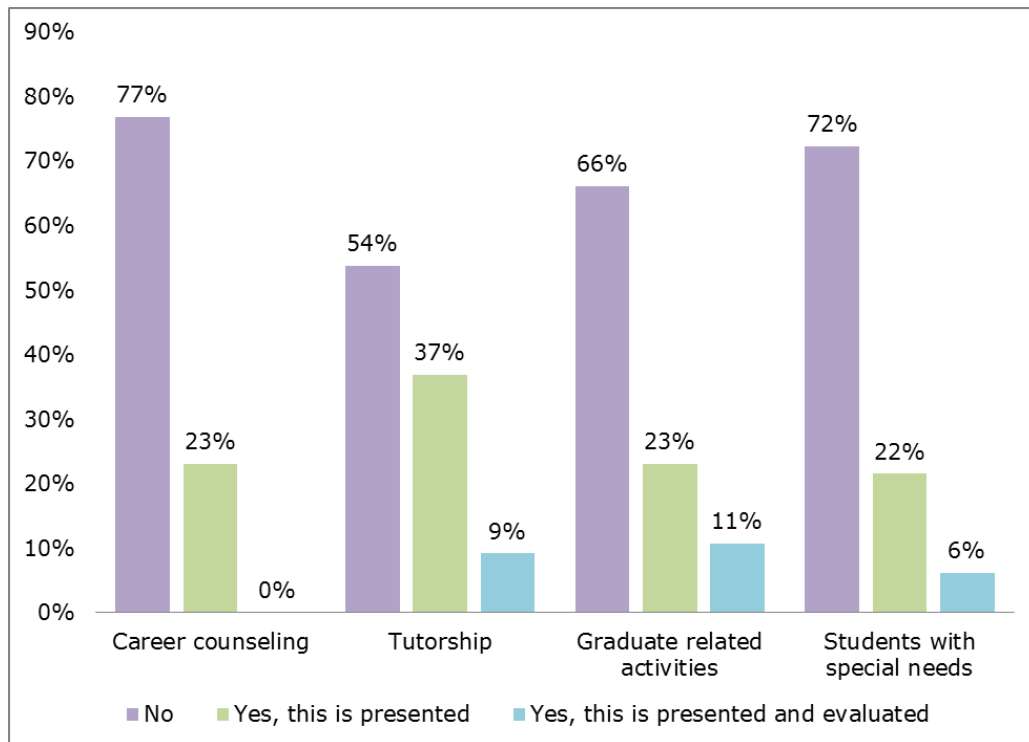


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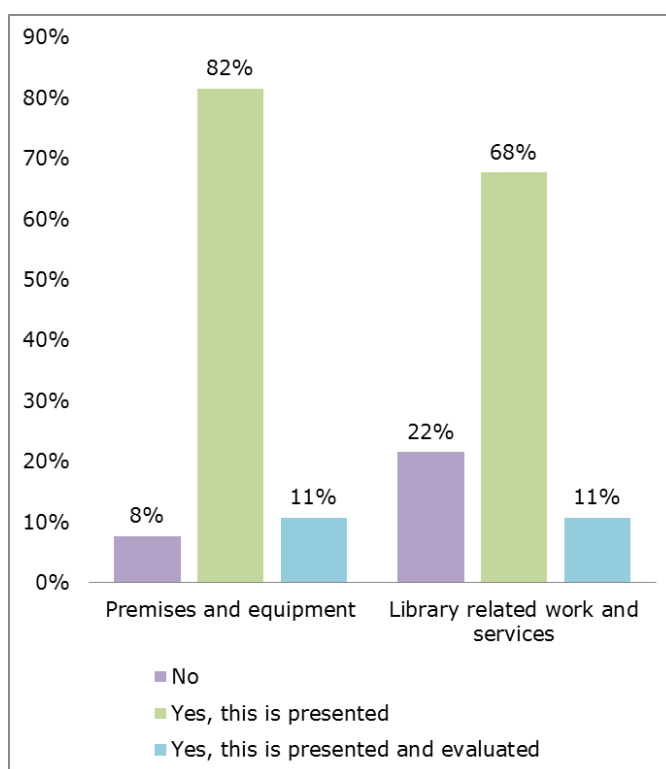
Among all quality indicators, student survey has received most evaluatory attention and is also well documented. So too are informing the students and student support. However, all



other quality indicators have received above average minimum attention – they are less documented and even less evaluated. And to conclude the issue of self-evaluation of professional or artistic work at higher vocational colleges, the observed reports also give little attention to the actual participation of students in professional, research or artistic work or the possibility to do so.

(5) In the analysis of self-evaluation of material conditions, the following quality indicators were observed:

- Premises and equipment in terms of facilities for education and professional or artistic work, as well as equipment for these activities.
- Library-related work and services in terms of professional support to students, teachers and researchers, as well as library resources – hard copies of study and research literature, and access to databases.



Both quality indicators are very well presented but rather poorly evaluated. Self-evaluation reports of higher vocational colleges thus give fair and above average attention to material resources. In comparison with all other comparable quality indicators, premises and equipment (although being a broad quality indicator) are most presented and documented in the self-evaluation reports of higher vocational colleges.

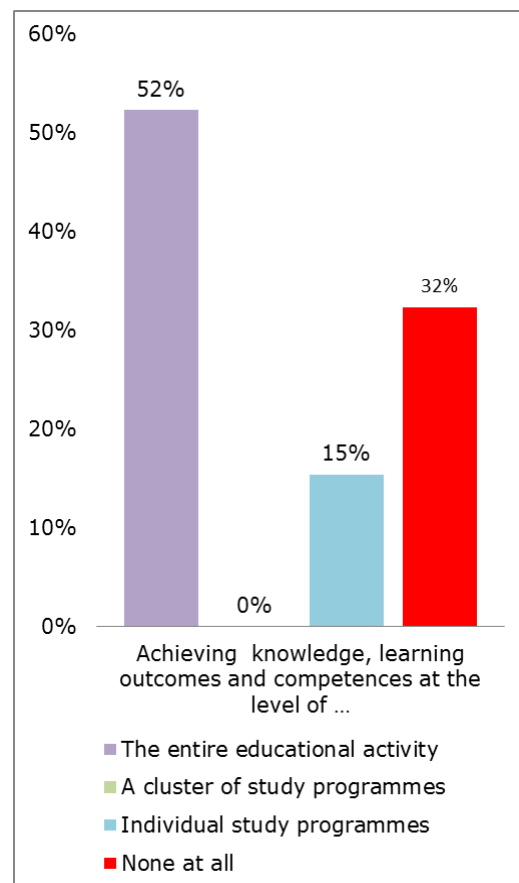
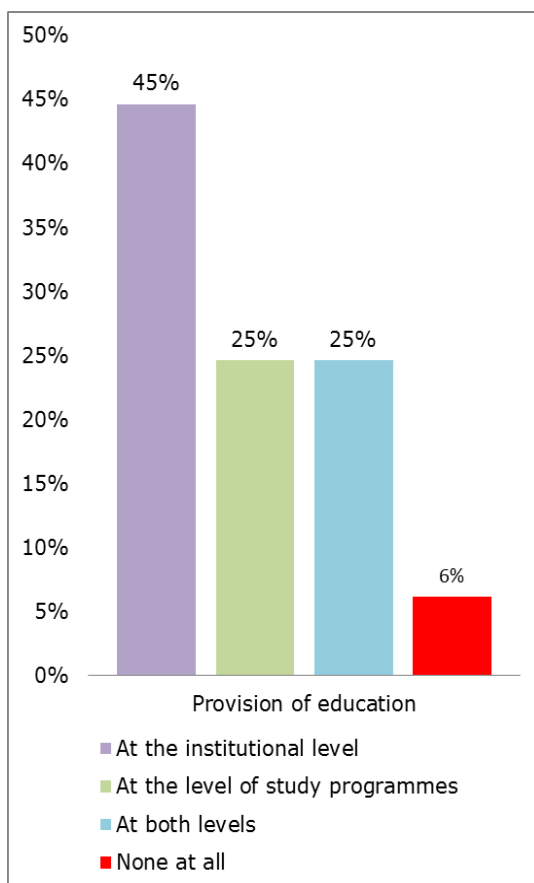
(6) In the next area of assessment, organisation and provision of education, self-evaluation was observed according to the following quality indicators:

- Provision of education in terms of self-evaluation of education and study with focus on enrolment, progression, transfers and graduation.

- Achieving knowledge, learning outcomes and competences in terms of examination performance, quality of theses, student achievements, stakeholder opinion on the acquired knowledge.
- Provision of study programmes in relation another quality indicator *provision of education*, but with specific focus on the delivery of study programmes according to the approved curriculum, on the mode of provision and stakeholder satisfaction with the delivery of study programmes.

Additional categories were introduced in order to further explore evaluatory extent or depth of self-evaluation according to these quality indicators; in particular a distinction between institutional and programme self-evaluation. The respondent thus observed whether self-evaluation takes place:

- At the institutional level or level of the entire educational activity?
- At the level of study programmes (individual or a cluster thereof)?
- At both levels?
- Or none at all?



Half of the analysed self-evaluation reports approach the issues of enrolment, progression, transfers and graduation of students at the level of individual study programmes. While 45% tackle general results at the institutional level, only 6% of reports leave this out. The results are slightly different when we delve into a more challenging quality indicator, namely the issue of self-evaluating student knowledge, learning outcomes and competences. In more than half of cases, the reporting on this quality indicator takes place at the institutional level



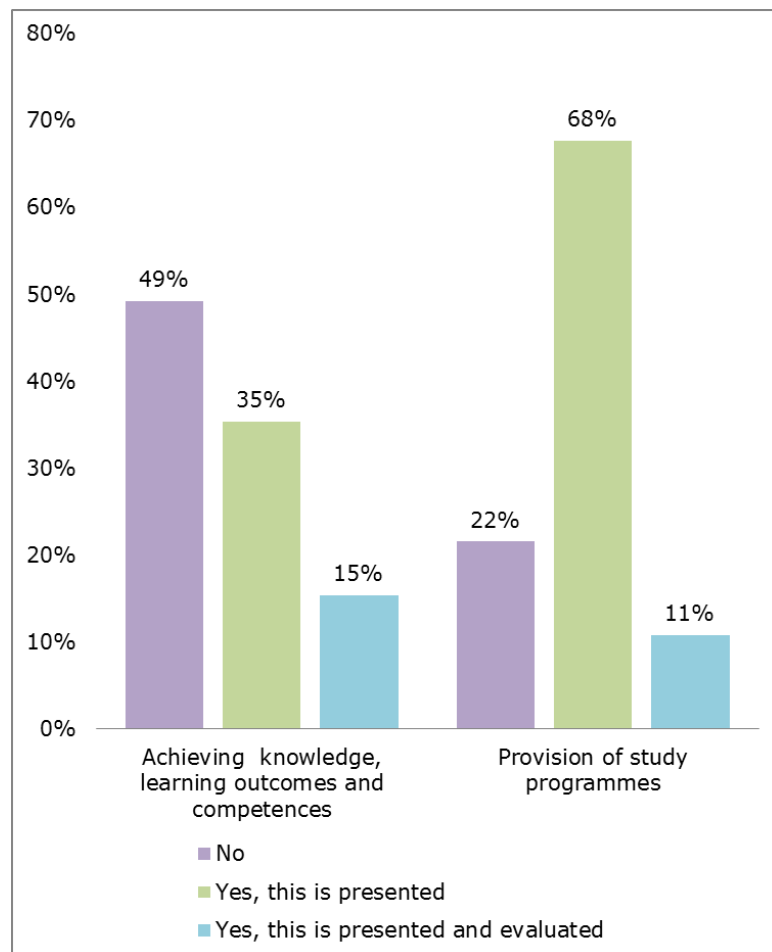
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alone and provides common information for the entire educational activity. While 15% of self-evaluation reports offer information on this quality indicator for each study programme separately, as many as 32% of reports offer no relevant information. This goes to show that self-evaluatory practices prefer to rely on data collected for instance by enrolment or study affairs offices and probably lack additional academic evaluation of the quality of education and study. In support of this argument, the chart below illustrates the following, although somewhat incongruent result:



According to this result, student knowledge, learning outcomes and competences are presented and documented in half (51%) of self-evaluation reports, which is even less than the above result (68%). Only 15% of reports also provide an evaluation for this quality indicator. However, the reports more extensively (above average maximum) present and document the delivery of study programmes according to the approved curriculum, the mode of provision and stakeholder satisfaction with the delivery of study programmes. Even though, the depth of evaluation lags behind as is the case for numerous other quality indicators.

(7) In the last area of assessment, quality assurance, the following objective properties of self-evaluation reports were observed:



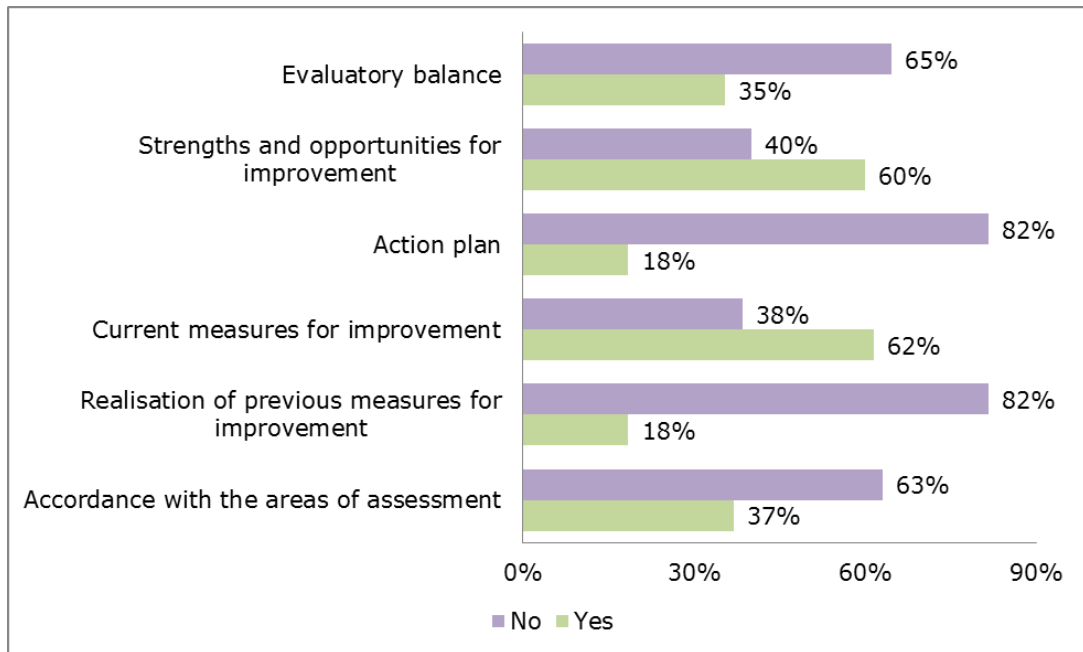
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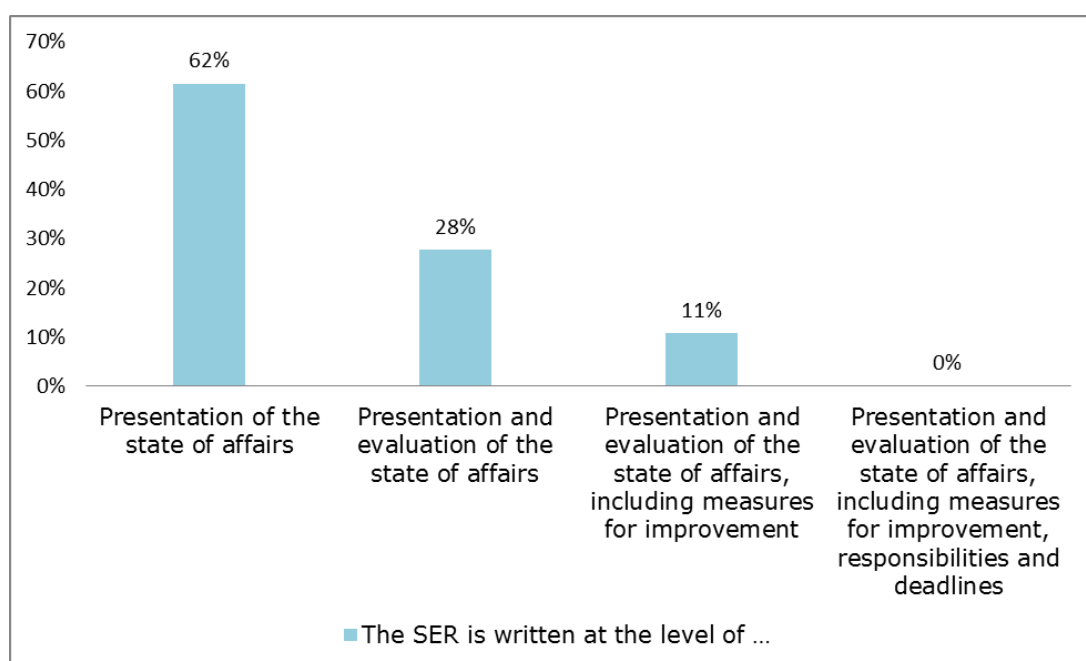
- **Evaluatory balance:** Is the presentation and evaluation of the areas of assessment individually and with respect to each other balanced in extent as well as depth of self-evaluation?
- **Strengths and opportunities for improvement:** Does the self-evaluation report based on its evaluatory findings derive strengths and opportunities for improvement or a SWOT or similar analysis?
- **Action plan:** Does the self-evaluation report derive an action plan which lays out specific responsibilities, their holders and the corresponding deadlines?
- **Current measures for improvement:** Does the self-evaluation report based on its evaluatory findings derive new measures for improvement?
- **Realisation of previous measures for improvement:** Does the self-evaluation report document or evaluate the realisation of measures for improvement that resulted from the previous self-evaluation?
- **Accordance with the areas of assessment:** Does the self-evaluation report include all the areas of assessment pertaining to the Evaluation Criteria?



The responses to single choice yes/no questions show that only a good third of analysed self-evaluation reports are structured according to the areas of assessment of the Evaluation Criteria. In about the same proportion, the reports also exhibit a balanced extent and depth of self-evaluation in individual areas of assessment. In other words, almost two thirds of analysed reports show signs of structural deficits. As regards the closure of quality loop, 60% of reports propose strengths and opportunities for improvement, but only 18% also document or evaluate the realisation of measures for improvement that resulted from the previous self-evaluation. Because action plans may be part of other documentation, it is not surprising that relatively few reports include such a plan; however, about the same favourable share of reports (62%) propose not only strengths and opportunities for improvement, but also accompany this assessment with a proposal of measures to be taken.

In conclusion, we present the results of professional assessment of selected common objective and qualitative properties of self-evaluation reports. In the first question, the respondent encoded her general opinion on evaluatory extent or depth of self-evaluation in one of the following categories:

- The report is written at the level of presenting the state of affairs.
- The report is written at the level of presenting and evaluating the state of affairs.
- The report is written at the level of presenting and evaluating the state of affairs. It also includes measures for improvement.
- The report is written at the level of presenting and evaluating the state of affairs. It also includes measures for improvement, responsibilities and deadlines.



If we tie the results to the above overall distribution of the three categories (No/Yes, this is presented/Yes, this is presented and evaluated) for all responses to the questions of similar type addressing particular quality indicators, and consider that the question at hand did not allow for the option to identify exclusion of a certain quality indicator from reporting, the results show that there is indeed a considerable deficit in the extent and depth of evaluation. As many as 62% of reports are thus written only at the level of presentation and documentation. Only a few reports accompany their evaluation with measures for improvement, and none with responsibilities and deadlines.

The remainder of the survey collected general opinion on degrees of verifiability, veracity, methodological and analytical completeness, criticism and benevolence of self-evaluation reports. In the slider-type questions, the respondent balanced her opinion between the affirmation and negation of a qualitative statement on a scale from 1 to 5, whereas 1 fully corresponded with affirmation and 5 with negation. The results for each qualitative statement are expressed as mean values and standard deviations:

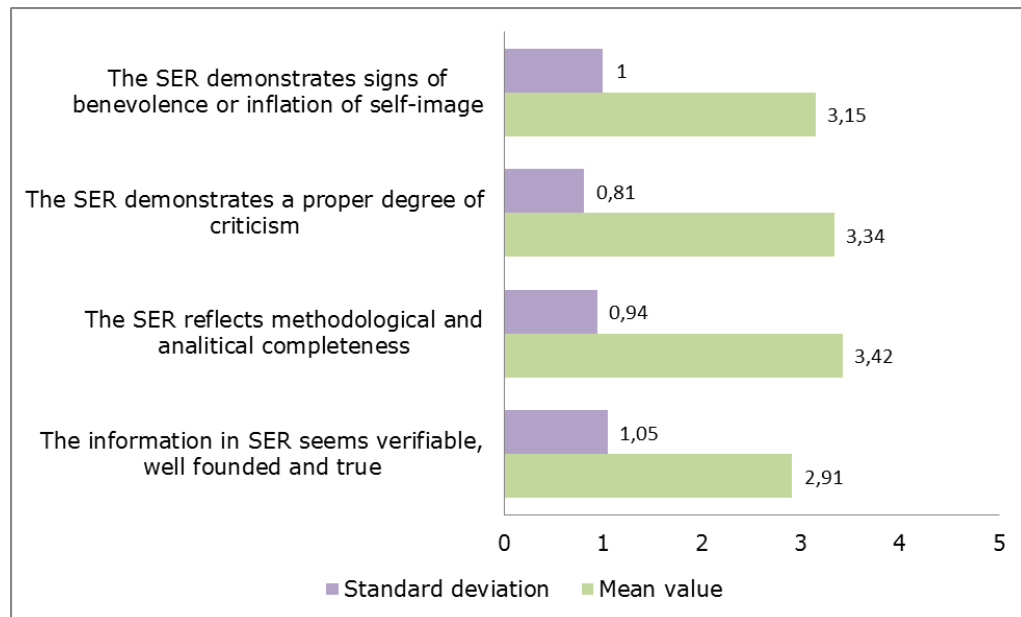


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The results imply a slight tendency towards the lack of verifiability, veracity, proper degree of criticism and especially methodological and analytical completeness of self-evaluation reports. On the other hand, the degree of benevolence in reports tends to be somewhat subdued. Apart from relatively small differences in the results for individual qualitative statements, standard deviations are comparable as well. When considering individual results for perhaps the most problematic qualitative statement, the extreme values show that 7 reports received a 5, representing a complete negation of their methodological and analytical completeness, and none received a 1 (affirmation). Cumulatively for all qualitative statements with the exception of the issue of benevolence or inflation of self-image, only 8 self-evaluation reports in total received a 1 (affirmation), while 17 received a 5 (negation).

To remind readers of the results from the previous [system-wide analysis for 2010–2013](#), the survey then comprised several similar survey questions with identical or comparable categories. However, it is not possible to compare all of the results due to considerable methodological differences. The results on the extent or depth of self-evaluation are similar or unchanged with regard to the following:

- Integration with the environment, in particular in case of cooperation with the business and non-business sector, as well as employability of graduates. There are signs of slight improvement in the self-evaluation reports of the 2014–2017 period.
- Professional or artistic work at the institutional as well as individual level shows a slight improvement in the self-evaluation reports of the 2014–2017 period.
- Participation of key stakeholders in management of the higher vocational college shows a slight improvement in the self-evaluation reports of the 2014–2017 period.
- Practical training. However, the results are less comparable due to the difference in the design of the survey question.
- Material conditions including premises and equipment.
- The same but nevertheless a relatively small share of self-evaluation reports include all the areas of assessment pertaining to the Evaluation Criteria (36%).



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The extent or depth of presentation and evaluation of some quality indicators has improved when comparing the 2010–2013 period with the 2014–2017 period. Differences arise in the following indicators:

- Learning outcomes and competences of students or graduates are considerably better presented and documented in the self-evaluation reports of the 2014–2017 period.
- Presenting and documenting of student participation in professional or artistic work has also improved in the 2014–2017 period.

Conclusion

This research has tried to touch the horizon of quality in higher education and higher vocational education in Slovenia by carefully examining the outcomes of quality assurance during 2014 and 2017, both at the level of external evaluations by the SQAA and at the level of self-evaluations produced by higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges. It has tried to at least partially answer the questions of what is good, what could be better and what is not good, as well as the questions of what is there at all, how much of it is there and whether that is being reproduced.

This research has also tried to depict the nature of evaluatory practices by disclosing which quality indicators receive more attention or emphasis and which less or none at all, as well as what is the manner of this attention or to what evaluatory extent or depth does this attention reach.

The results have diverse implications for the state of quality in tertiary education as well as for evaluatory practices of SQAA experts and education institutions. As such, they cannot be summed up in one coherent thought or a single clear message to bear in mind during this period of changed regulations and practices in quality assurance.

Apart from recapitulating how particular properties have surfaced, for example the confirmation of excessive pedagogical workload of teachers; shortcoming of scientific and professional research or artistic work at a certain group of education institutions; that both premises and equipment for teaching and research have in general received a very positive evaluation; that internal quality assurance at education institutions has predominantly been found to have more opportunities for improvement than strengths, we should also look towards the underlying circumstances, that led to such results. This line of thought should continue in approaching the results on evaluatory practices: how the experts prefer to address quality indicators, such as student mobility, organisational goals and planning, administrative support or participation in governance more than the correspondence of teaching and research or artistic work with the field/discipline of a study programme; the extent or depth of self-evaluation; or achieving and monitoring of learning outcomes and competences. Why is it that the experts and sometimes also the self-evaluation committees tend to put greater emphasis on quality in organisation, management, extracurricular activities or cooperation with external stakeholders, rather than directly on quality of education and research? Why does it sometimes seem that the procedure, the process of everlasting planning, measurement, reporting and dissemination could be more important than the question of the ideal that we strive for, or the fact that this ideal has at least in part already materialized, because of which we could take a pause for once in a while and think about it rather than constantly improve and change?

In approaching the underlying circumstances, it is important also to account for the changes in the regulations, in particular the amendment to the Higher Education Act at the end of 2016 (ZViS-K) which has transferred a considerable amount of responsibility for the quality of education and research from the SQAA to education institutions. In other words, the high time has come for the education institutions to seize the newly gained degree of autonomy and demonstrate that they can assure good education and research with less state oversight, whether they have prepared for it in advance or not, and that they can bear the burden of providing reliable evidence or recognition of quality that matches or, better yet, surpasses that of external oversight. This is especially important for the quality of study programmes at higher education institutions.



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That said, good education and research rely not so much on due processes of quality assurance than on quality financial and material resources, and foremost on quality academic capital and students, all of which lie outside the reach of the SQAA.

Lastly, any compensation for the lack of qualitative judgement, or for deficits in documenting, analysing and evaluating quality require from evaluatory practices to anchor themselves to a structured system of values and to a clearer concept of what quality in higher education is. It is pivotal that we do not get lost in contradicting ideas of what is good or not, as well as in the sea of quality standards, organisational goals and quality indicators, or further so in perennial processes of measurement and reporting, as if these were the embodiment of quality and as if quality was something we can objectively judge or measure.