

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE FOR DRAFTING AND DISSEMINATING SYSTEM-WIDE AND THEMATIC ANALYSES



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Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency
for Higher Education

Methodology and procedure for drafting and disseminating system-wide and thematic analyses

PURPOSE OF ANALYSES

The Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (hereinafter: the Agency) regularly publishes system-wide and thematic reports on quality in Slovenian higher and vocational education area. These reports draw from the analysis of findings in expert reports in evaluation and accreditation procedures as well as from the analysis of self-evaluation reports of higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges (institutions and schools).

System-wide and thematic analyses provide information on the state of quality according to individual variables both for higher education institutions and their study programmes as well as for higher vocational colleges. In addition, they provide general and specific information on accreditation and evaluatory practices at higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges that are evident in their self-evaluation reports.

Apart from informing the public on quality, the system-wide and thematic analyses also serve as the basis for policy-making, development of regulations and guidelines on quality of tertiary education, as well as for planning of external evaluations. As a reference, they support the experts in evaluation and accreditation procedures.

They also enable higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges to compare the quality of their education, research and evaluatory practices against national averages and other results evident in the analyses. System-wide and thematic analyses serve as reliable basis for considering the quality of tertiary education, its assessment and enhancement.

Thematic analysis could present a basis for guidelines, recommendations and guides in the evaluation and accreditation procedures. These documents are adopted either by the director (recommendations) or by the Agency Council (guidelines and guides). They are published at the agency website as its official acts. Acts are binding for institutions, schools and experts in the evaluation procedures.

PROCEDURE FOR DRAFTING OF ANALYSIS AND COOPERATION OF STAKEHOLDERS IN DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS

Stakeholders may participate in the system-wide and thematic analyses as initiators and may comment findings and propose recommendations to the agency in regard to further measures from the field of quality and evaluation practices (for example an initiative for revision of the act). Initiatives to conduct specific thematic analysis can be proposed by students, higher education teachers and associates, graduates, employers, labour unions, ministries, The Agency Council and other interested parties according to individual variables related to characteristics of institutions and their study programmes.

Petitions are submitted verbally at the agency events or via the following email address of the agency: info@nakvis.si. They should include: basic information on petitioner, phone number or email address, a proposal of the specific research topic which includes selected quality variables related to characteristics of institutions and their programmes, explanation of petition. The department of analytics reviews submitted offers and assesses their feasibility. Feasible petitions are considered in work programmes of the agency for the following year; petitions are also evaluated by the Agency Council.

The department of analytics coordinates the preparation of system-wide and thematic analysis. These are prepared by agency employees or by external associates.

The analyses include a review of literature and sources. Author of the analysis is listed on its last page as one of the followings: department of analytics, holder of the analysis, agency employees or other institutions. The initiator is also listed. The main author can publish its analysis also in a scientific or professional publication; with an acknowledgment to the agency.

The Agency Council is acquainted with the analysis. Findings of the analysis are presented to institutions and schools, at consultations in Slovenia and abroad, meetings and conferences and other protentional events.

Analyses are published on the agency website and in some cases, they are also fully or partially published in a printed form. They are sent to initiators, institutions, schools, student councils, student organizations and to departmental ministry. In addition to expert reports and other relevant documents, databases provide a basis to create specific thematic analyses for the individual institution or school which could be compared with Slovenian average and other higher education and research institutions. Elaboration of such analyses is payable. The price is set according to the agency price list.

Admission point for petitions is info@nakvis.si. Methodology and research process are independent of stakeholders. The agency conducts research, analyses and reports autonomous.

SYSTEM-WIDE ANALYSES

The system-wide analysis is carried out every 5 years with the end of 5 years evaluation cycle. This is an umbrella document used for admission of petitions for thematic analyses. Research is done according to individual study areas, types of study programmes, types of institutions or individual areas of assessment and quality indicators.

The system-wide analysis is based on research of all accreditation and evaluation reports of expert groups from the past 5 years and on all

available self-evaluation reports of institutions and school from the past 2 years.

The general system-wide analysis examines general results according to generalised indicators which are consistently based on all standards of quality of all areas of assessment. The topic is always drafted and structured equally considering its universal characteristics. This is done in order to be able to compare the results of analyses from the different periods. Holistic approach to quality in higher and vocational education provides general information on operation of institutions and schools, their integration with the environment, higher education teachers and school lecturers, students, material conditions, content and structure of the study programmes, assessment, changes and update and delivery of the study programmes and self-evaluation of institution, school or study programmes.

Since it reveals the average and total, general state of this affairs regardless of the specifics of an educational institution or its study programme, its main message is: what, according to calculated averages and total values for individual quality indicators, is generally good or better and what is worse or could be better.

Its important message is also what or which quality indicators receive more attention in evaluation practices, what or which receive less attention and in what manner does this come true in external or internal evaluations.

Upon publishing the system-wide or thematic analysis and dissemination of their results, the Agency observes the responses and collects petitions. These are the basis for preparing the thematic analyses.

THEMATIC ANALYSES

Thematic analyses are more specific and address specific issues. Important material for thematic analyses are the expert reports related to evaluation of the study programmes. The Agency Council selects a new sample every year in such a way that a different topic is evaluated every

year (for example International Cooperation in 2018 and 2019, Regulated Professions in 2020).

In order to demonstrate the quality and characteristics of accreditation and evaluation practices the agency develops independently according to its profession, experience and understanding of the concept of quality in methodology of system-wide and thematic analyses.

With closed-ended questionnaires findings of reports are transformed to qualified and objectives values in system-wide and thematic analyses. Findings and characteristics of reports are qualified to a number of specific and **unambiguous** variables of quality (for each one a separate, unambiguous question is defined) from all areas of assessment which are carefully defined according to quality standards of the agency. They are qualified as: strengths, opportunities for improvement and major weaknesses or non-compliances. Even though written without qualifiers these classifications have a qualitative value. Percentages of emphasises on individual variables are used as a basis to determine which variables are assessed better or worse and how many times they were assessed.

With a closed-ended questionnaire the characteristics of self-evaluation reports are documented. On the basis for directed interpretations, identified contents are codified in responses to survey questions. The extend of self-evaluation is assessed: Is a specific variable in self-evaluation addressed, is it only presented or only related content is documented, are documented results also evaluated?

General questions at the end of the questionnaire are the following: is the examined report done according with areas of assessment, are measures from previous self-evaluation addressed, are strengths and weaknesses of institution or school assessed. The questionnaires include also some opinion questions on characteristics of the self-evaluation such as: extend of self-evaluation, balance of assessment on individual areas and variables of quality, probability, reliability and sanity of statements in self-evaluation report, methodological and analytical perfection of self-evaluation, its self-criticism.

Analyses of expert reports are based on the methodological framework of systematic analyses from 2014 to 2017. It defines survey questions and responses. Specific guidelines for classification and interpretation of contents of report are developed. Exception are also defined, as well the procedures in case the interpretation of data is not simple or unconditional. In order to harmonize the procedure survey questions are filled in by employees of the Sector for Analyses as long as required. This is particularly important when researching characteristics of self-evaluation reports. The analytical part of the methodological framework regulates qualitative and quantitative data management.

It sets a basis for statistical analysis which can be used to compare results. A boundary between comparable and non-comparable results and as well representative and non-representative results is defined. Data can be filtered in the analytical part according to individual indicators and characteristics of institutions, school and study programmes. Analytical and statistical reach of system-wide and thematic analyses depend from purpose and content of bases. For this reason, it can be changed. The methodological framework offers the explanation of meaning and reach of conducted research.

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