

QUALITY MANUAL OF THE SLOVENIAN QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION



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Nacionalna agencija Republike Slovenije
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Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency
for Higher Education

**QUALITY MANUAL OF THE SLOVENIAN
QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY FOR HIGHER
EDUCATION**

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1 INTRODUCTION

According to the *Higher Education Act* (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia [Uradni list RS], Nos 32/12 – official consolidated version, 40/12 – ZUJF, 57/12 – ZPCP-2D, 109/12, 85/14, 75/16, 61/17 – ZUPŠ and 65/17; hereinafter: the ZViS), the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (hereinafter: the Agency) is responsible for the functioning of the external system of quality assurance in higher education and higher vocational education and for performing professional and development tasks in this field. This includes accreditation or external evaluation of higher educational institutions and study programmes and external evaluation of higher vocational colleges. The Agency performs statutory duties in the public interest, namely with the aim to provide for continuous, expert and independent assistance in constant improvement of quality in higher education and in developing internal systems of quality assurance in higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges (hereinafter: institutions/colleges). It works in accordance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area – ESG (hereinafter: the ESG standards) and other agreed criteria of international organisations of which it is a member; especially the recommendations of the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education – EQAR, European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education – ENQA, and code of good practice of the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education – ECA.

The Agency is independent and autonomous in its work. It is bound by the principles of professionalism, impartiality, legality and political neutrality. Its mission, strategic objectives and values are communicated to all internal and external stakeholders and made public. When necessary, it updates its mission and vision as well as strategy or strategic objectives, which are long-term and short-term.

The Agency assures the realisation of its tasks and objectives by the following:

- professionalism and ethical conduct of its management, Agency Council members, Agency employees and professionals;
- good human resources structure and efficient organisation of work;
- provision of quality working environment;
- constant efforts for objectivity and calibration of work;
- counselling and prompt notifications to stakeholders on the work of the Agency;
- annual planning of work;
- evaluation of all activities and procedures involving all stakeholders;
- good information support.

To accomplish its mission, objectives and tasks under the law, it must first ensure continuous development and improvement of its own system of quality assurance in transparent self-evaluation procedures – with the stress on the development of the culture of quality. This is why the Agency, with the agreement of all stakeholders, adopted a special document – **Quality Manual** (hereinafter: the Manual).

The Manual shows that the Agency assesses its operation with the closure of the quality loop:

- by prompt assessment of its work and identifying strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for improvement;
- by adopting measures for improvement;
- by appointing persons responsible for the implementation of measures or tasks adopted on their basis;
- by prompt monitoring of the performance of tasks;
- by identifying possible errors in the implementation of tasks, or uncompleted tasks, and effective measures taken on this basis;

- by monitoring of elimination of any errors, and implementing corrective measures.

The Manual defines in more detail in particular the following:

- method of work and responsibility of the Agency,
- areas of quality assurance, indicators of quality, measures and activities and standards of quality;
- organisation and implementation of self-evaluation procedures of the Agency;
- drafting of annual work plan, self-evaluation report and work report.

On the basis of self-evaluation findings, the Agency regularly reviews the Manual and updates or amends it when necessary.

2 METHOD OF WORK OF THE AGENCY

2.1 Bodies and organisation of the Agency

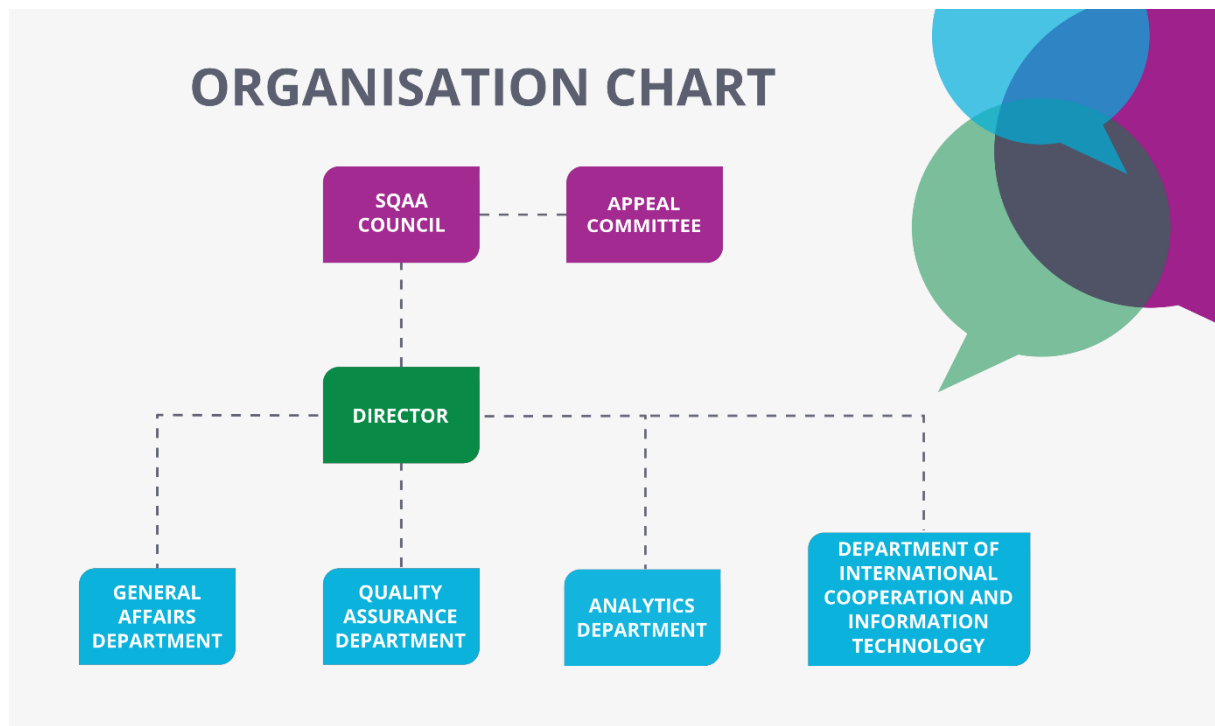
The Agency bodies are determined by the ZViS and the *Decision Establishing the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education* (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, Nos 114/09 and 75/15; hereinafter: Decision Establishing the Agency). These bodies are the following:

- Agency Council as the first-instance decision-making body,
- Appeal Committee as the second-instance decision-making body, and
- Director, who manages the Agency.

The Agency consists of the following four internal organisational units:

- Quality Assurance Department,
- General Affairs Department,
- International Cooperation and Information Technology Department, and
- Analytics Department.

Organisation chart of the Agency



Quality assurance is the responsibility of the management (Director, heads of departments and President of the Agency Council), but involves all Agency employees, Council members and Agency experts. They accept quality assurance as a common value and continuously improve it, which means that they co-create and develop the culture of quality based on the realisation of the mission, vision, strategic objectives and values of the Agency by:

- setting positive examples in the management and operation of the Agency;
- clearly delineating and transparently and responsibly implementing competences and tasks;
- communicating the orientations and values of the Agency concerning the improvement of the system of quality assurance;
- timely notifying all employees and stakeholders about decisions important for successful and coordinated work, and by respecting competences and decisions;
- showing willingness to accept agreements in the realisation of the common objectives of the Agency and implementation of accepted agreements;
- creating an environment conducive to active cooperation, professional and career development of employees as well as other Agency stakeholders;
- showing mutual respect and trust, cooperating and adapting;
- showing loyalty to the Agency and uniformly presenting its work to external stakeholders;
- participating in projects for improving quality;
- obtaining information about the quality of work of the Agency and proposals for its improvement;
- correctly cooperating with stakeholders in higher education and higher vocational education with the awareness of the importance of their demands and expectations;
- jointly forming the identity of the Agency and respecting the agreements on communication with the external stakeholders, media and other public;
- providing sources necessary for a smooth operation of the Agency;
- stressing the importance of the implementation of legislative provisions and other regulations.

The Agency Council (hereinafter: the Council) is the highest decision-making body in accreditation and evaluation procedures. Composition, tasks, decision-making method, rights and duties of the President of the Agency Council and their alternate and of the members of the Agency Council are defined in Article 51h of the ZViS, the Decision Establishing the Agency and the *Rules of Procedure of the Council of Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency*.

Members of the Agency Council shall act in a professional, independent, autonomous and politically neutral manner and shall not be bound by the decisions, positions and instructions of institutions that appointed them or of other institutions; in adopting their decisions, they shall respect the principles of prevention of conflict of interest and impartiality.

The Appeal Committee is the decision-making body at the second instance. Its composition, tasks and decision-making method are defined in Articles 51j and 51k of the ZViS, the Decision Establishing the Agency and the *Rules of Procedure of the Appeal Committee of Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency*.

The Director is appointed and dismissed by the Agency Council on the basis of a public call for applications. Their tasks are defined by Article 51i of the ZViS, the Decision Establishing the Agency and the *Job Classification Act*. They are responsible for the financial operation of the Agency, they manage and organise the Agency work; proper qualifications and professional competence of all employees for responsible, professional and efficient work is the fundamental principle of human resources policy.

Since the development and improvement of the system of quality assurance is one of the most important tasks of the Agency, the Director is entrusted to:

- assure quality in all areas of work;
- notify all employees about measures and enable them to actively participate in the development and improvement of quality.

Agency Staff

The staff of all four departments (hereinafter: the employees) carry out the tasks for all bodies of the Agency. Besides the tasks related to human resources and finance, the most important tasks are conducting accreditation and evaluation procedures, preparation of materials for decision-making at the Agency Council and the Appeal Committee session, preparation of accreditation and evaluation criteria and other acts, overseeing the Agency's computerisation, analytical and development work, cooperation with stakeholders, communication and counselling, international cooperation, and equal participation in the Agency's self-evaluation procedures, or the implementation of the tasks set out in the Action Plan.

Extremely important for the strengthening of the culture of quality, professionalism and transparency of work of the Agency is the concern for the satisfaction of employees and their professional and career development. This is provided especially by: suitable working environment and hours, distribution of tasks and organisation of work, proper methods of rewarding above-average work performance, promotion of continuous mutual cooperation, exchange of opinions, calibration of work, appropriate communication, use of eNakvis and iNakvis information systems, formal and informal professional education and training, and participation in the management.

2.2 Agency Experts

The objectivity and especially quality of accreditation and evaluation decisions of the Agency is also assured by appointing independent groups of experts in accreditation and evaluation procedures. The cooperation between the Agency and experts entered in the register of the Agency experts (hereinafter: the Register of Experts) is provided by Article 51u of the ZViS and the *Criteria for Experts of the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education* (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No 21/18).

Before the entry in the Register, experts are obliged to sign a special statement:

- binding them to observe the principle of preventing conflict of interests and the principle of impartiality,
- binding them to act professionally, autonomously and independently;
- about being aware of the rules on personal data protection.

The duty of experts already entered in the Register is to continuously advance their knowledge and skills at consultations or workshops organised for this purpose by the Agency. The Agency is meticulous in planning these events because they are of extreme importance for the quality of the Agency's work. The purpose of consultations is primarily the following:

- to discuss open issues related to the accreditation and external evaluation procedures;
- to resolve any problems and calibrate work;
- to exchange examples of good practice for improving internal systems of quality assurance of institutions/colleges and the Agency system of quality assurance, and for strengthening the culture of quality;
- to acquaint participants with the Agency activities at the international level;
- to connect experts.

The Agency's culture of quality is co-created and co-developed by experts, too.

2.3 Communication (cooperation, consultation)

The Agency continuously strives for active cooperation and communication at all levels. An emphasis is placed on responsibility, mutual respect, understanding, sincerity and trust. Relationship with a partner in dialogue is based on the respect of human dignity in all interactions, interpersonal skills and observance of general ethical norms. A special role is played by the openness and accessibility of the Agency management. Quality communication is important for the development of the culture of quality.

2.3.1 At the Agency and with experts

Efficient or open communication contributes to the creation of a stimulating, creative and pleasant working environment, fruitful cooperation and equality of all stakeholders. Timely and correct provision of information to employees and cooperation (among employees, between employees and management and Council members, between employees and Council members and experts, among experts, etc.) enables an efficient operation of the Agency and taking of appropriate actions necessary for continuous improvements.

Everybody strives for quality communication, but especially the Director, heads of departments and the President of the Council by:

- *regular coordination or providing regular information* about the agenda and preparation of materials for the Council sessions, minutes of the Agency Council sessions, about Agency work plans, work reports, self-evaluation reports and other documents and important news or developments from the area of work of the Agency;
- *thematic meetings or sessions of all internal stakeholders and experts:* mutual consultation and seeking optimal solutions, cooperation in common tasks, calibration of work;
- *weekly meetings between the Director and heads of departments* to monitor and coordinate work,
- meetings of heads of departments with department employees,
- *weekly meetings of the Director with employees* intended for presenting new developments and exchanging experience and opinions, consultation about tasks from the field of work and assistance in their implementation;
- *harmonisation meetings* intended for addressing certain issues and organised when necessary;
- *meetings of groups of employees* determined by the action plan and intended for the implementation of the tasks from the plan;
- *surveying of all Agency stakeholders;*
- different meetings with external stakeholders;
- internal communication channels (iNakvis, website, etc.);
- provision of information by sending monthly Agency newsletter;
- informal interviews.

It is important to systematically collect opinions and proposals for the improvement of the work of the Agency as a whole, as well as for the improvement of relationships with the Director, President and members of the Agency Council and among employees.

Communication with Agency experts is a special task of employees duly authorised by the Director or persons conducting accreditation and evaluation procedures. Timely communication among them is very important also because experts are not employed at the Agency and do not attend Council meetings. The Agency provides the following services to experts:

- prompt notification about accreditation decisions of the Council;
- prompt notification about innovations in the field of the Agency's activities;
- notification about the findings of self-evaluation analyses and about measures to improve the work of the Agency.

2.3.2 With external stakeholders

Uniform representation of the Agency, presentation of its operation, provision of correct, professional and timely information about accreditation and evaluation procedures, interpretation of criteria and procedures, counselling, etc. are of fundamental importance for the trust of stakeholders in the work of the Agency and their respect for its decisions.

The Agency cooperates especially with institutions/colleges, students, foreign higher education institutions and foreign agencies competent for quality in higher education. In the processes of amending legislation or system of quality assurance, establishing a uniform information system of higher education and similar, the Agency cooperates with the ministry responsible for higher education and higher vocational education, student organisations, institutions/colleges and other ministries and organisations (Rectors' Conference, trade unions, employer associations).

- a) It cooperates with higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges in the following way:

- advises them in accreditation and self-evaluation procedures;
- advises them in the establishment and development of their internal system of quality assurance;
- enables their cooperation in the preparation of criteria and other documents in the area of quality;
- enables a simple and efficient filing of applications for accreditation or external evaluation, access to applications or list of applications, access to the phases of procedure, etc.

The Agency organises special workshops to implement these tasks. These workshops are also intended for exchanging opinions and good practices, and for seeking agreed solutions.

- b) It cooperates with students in the following way:
- enables their membership and equal participation in groups of experts, the Council, Agency working groups, etc.;
 - enables cooperation in the organisation of workshops, consultations, round table discussions on the quality of education, etc.;
 - provides prompt information about accreditations and external evaluations and raises awareness about their importance for quality education.

c) It cooperates with international associations of agencies for quality assurance in higher education and other related foreign organisations in the following way:

- exchange of experts;
- joint projects;
- conferences, consultations, forums, workshops from its field of work and exchange of good practices.

The Agency appoints different working groups and convenes meetings intended for exchanging experience, information, opinions, etc. This is also one of the bases for improving its work and amending criteria, other regulations, manuals and guidelines for work.

2.4 Monitoring satisfaction on an ongoing basis

The Agency regularly monitors stakeholder satisfaction through various mechanisms (surveys, consultations, meetings, etc.).

Employee satisfaction is monitored at least once every two years through surveys, while the satisfaction of Council members, experts and external stakeholders (such as institutions and colleges) is monitored periodically through surveys when the self-evaluation report is prepared. The results of the analysis of the employee satisfaction surveys are taken into account in the preparation of the annual action plans (annual work plan, action plan, training plan, health promotion team plan, integrity team plan, etc.). The findings of stakeholder survey analysis are observed in the self-evaluation of the Agency and in the preparation of the action or work plan for the next calendar year. The Agency communicates the results to all stakeholders: the analyses of the surveys are part of the self-evaluation report (appendix), whose content is coordinated with the stakeholders in the self-evaluation team; at the same time, it makes the draft report publicly available on its website and offers its content to all stakeholders for discussion.

The survey procedure is detailed in special instructions with survey questionnaires as an integral part. Instructions and contents of survey questionnaires for individual stakeholder groups are defined by the self-evaluation group and confirmed by the Director. Filing of survey questionnaires is anonymous and voluntary and is performed electronically.

The aim of the survey is to obtain particularly opinions and proposals concerning the following:

- self-evaluation procedures;
- participation of stakeholders in self-evaluation procedures of the Agency;
- management and organisation of the Agency's work – work of the management;
- work of employees or conduct of procedures;
- work, decision-making and decisions of the Council;
- work and composition of groups of experts;
- visits to institutions/colleges;
- reports of groups of experts;
- possibilities for career development and motivation for work of employees;
- relationships inside and outside the Agency and general satisfaction with work;
- cooperation between internal and external Agency stakeholders;
- annual consultations, conferences and other important events;
- improvement of the Agency's work, programmes of expert training and criteria;
- applicability and soundness of accreditation and evaluation procedures;
- provision of information on the Agency activities to stakeholders;
- usability and operation of the Agency information system;
- impact of risk factors in performing work.

Besides conducting surveys of experts, the Agency promptly collects the opinions of employees, experts and institutions/colleges on site visits. The assessment concerns the following: professionalism, objectivity, adaptability, sense of others, ability to lead a group of experts, observing the timetable of visit, deadlines, etc.

Stakeholders may communicate their opinions and questions about the Agency's work also electronically, through a form on the Agency website (initiatives and recommendations for the Agency) and through social networks.

The management carries out annual individual interviews with all employees, makes a report thereof and presents it to employees and the Council.

The findings of the analyses of surveys and opinions are observed in the self-evaluation of the Agency or in the comparison of findings obtained in the previous self-evaluation period, in the planning of future work and drafting strategic documents of the Agency.

2.5 Provision of Information

By regularly communicating and providing regular information about its work to stakeholders and broader public, the Agency increases its visibility, importance and reputation and strengthens the confidence in its work. The communication with the public is within the competence of the President of the Council and the Director, each covering their field of work.

For the purpose of prompt provision of information to stakeholders, the Director appoints a contact person; the relevant information is published on the website. Information is typically provided in electronic form (via the list of e-mail addresses and publications on the Agency's website).

All of the criteria, legal acts important for stakeholders, annual reports on the Agency's work and operation, the Quality Manual, self-evaluation reports, analyses or reports and accreditation and evaluation reports of groups of experts, decisions of the Agency Council, and other documents and decisions relevant to the transparent functioning of the Agency are made public on the Agency's website. The lists of accredited higher educational institutions and study programmes and evaluated higher vocational colleges are published

as well. The Agency's website is accessible to users in Slovenian and English and adapted to people with different types of disabilities (blind, partially sighted, persons with reading disabilities, etc.). Criteria, Quality Manual, self-evaluation report of the Agency, work plans, work reports and other documents are translated into English and accessible on the English website of the Agency.

The Agency has a list of media and contact persons, which is regularly updated. It convenes and prepares:

- press conferences about important and interesting innovations in the field of work;
- monthly e-newsletter to inform stakeholders about the Council's decisions in accreditation and evaluation procedures summarises examples of good practice and keeps the public up-to-date on the developments at the Agency;
- different materials (publications) (e.g. reports, analyses, booklets about the Agency's work, about quality in higher education, about Bologna process, about accreditation and evaluation procedures, etc.).

The Agency's communication is regulated in more detail in the Communication Rules.

According to the *Public Information Access Act* (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, Nos 51/06 – official consolidated version, 117/06 – ZDavP-2, 23/14, 50/14, 19/15 – CC Decision, 102/15 and 7/18), the *Catalogue of Public Information* is published on the Agency website.

3 AREAS OF QUALITY ASSESSMENT AND INDICATORS OF QUALITY

Areas of quality, indicators of quality and related measures or activities, and standards that the Agency wants to achieve are determined to assess the performance of the Agency. The indicators are divided in quantitative (numeric) and qualitative (substantive), while the basic areas of quality assurance are the following:

- accreditations and external evaluations,
- external system of quality assurance of the Agency,
- internal system of quality assurance of the Agency,
- criteria and other provisions, and
- information system and provision of information.

| AREA OF QUALITY ASSESSMENT: ACCREDITATIONS AND EXTERNAL EVALUATIONS | |
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| SUBAREA: ACCREDITATIONS AND EVALUATIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION | |
| NUMERIC INDICATORS | measures/activities |
| Accreditation of study programmes (number of pending applications and number of decisions). | Planning the number of accreditations in the work plan. |
| Initial accreditation of higher education institutions (number of pending applications and number of decisions). | Comparison with previous self-evaluation periods. |
| Reaccreditation of higher education institutions (number of pending applications and number of decisions). | Prompt and high-quality conducting of accreditation and evaluation procedures. |

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| Accreditation of transformations of higher education institutions (number of applications). | |
| Evaluation of a sample of study programmes (number of procedures). | |
| Extraordinary evaluations of higher education institutions (number of pending applications and number of decisions). | Analysis of initiatives and reasons for extraordinary evaluations. |
| Extraordinary evaluations of study programmes (number of pending applications and number of decisions). | Analysis of initiatives and reasons for extraordinary evaluations. |
| Reaccreditation period of higher education institutions (by 5 years, 3 years or less; in percent). | Analysis of reasons for a shorter reaccreditation period |
| Period within which the institution must remedy the partial compliance of the implementation, modification and self-evaluation of study programmes (3 years or less) | Analysis of partial compliance of the implementation, modification and self-evaluation of study programmes |
| Appeals (number of appeals and number of decisions approved at the first instance). | Calibration of work and decision-making to reduce the number of complaints. |
| Average duration of procedures. | Activities for reduced duration of procedures. |
| SUBSTANTIVE INDICATORS | measures/activities |
| Improvement of study programmes; progress monitoring. | Assessment of whether programmes and their implementation have improved subject to the observance of recommendations of experts or the Council on the one hand and of self-evaluation findings of institutions on the other (follow-up). |
| Improved performance of institutions; progress monitoring. | Assessment of whether the performance of institutions has improved subject to the observance of recommendations of experts or the Council on the one hand and of self-evaluation findings of institutions on the other (follow-up). |
| Analysis of accreditation decisions (initial accreditations of HEIs and accreditations of study programmes). | Identification of recognised compliances, partial compliances and non-compliances. |
| Analysis of evaluation decisions (reaccreditation, extraordinary evaluations of HEIs and study programmes). | Identification of recognised strengths, opportunities for improvement and major deficiencies or non-compliances and examples of good practice (excellence?). |
| Analysis of appeals. | Identification of reasons for appeals and reduction of the number of appeals by consistent and responsible work. |
| Analysis of Administrative Court decisions. | |
| SUBAREA: EXTERNAL EVALUATIONS IN HIGHER VOCATIONAL EDUCATION | |
| NUMERIC INDICATORS | measures/activities |

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| External evaluations of higher vocational colleges (number of pending applications and number of decisions). | <p>Planning the number of external evaluations in the work plan.</p> <p>Comparison with previous self-evaluation periods.</p> <p>Prompt and high-quality conducting of evaluation procedures.</p> |
| SUBSTANTIVE INDICATORS | measures/activities |
| Improved performance of vocational colleges; progress monitoring. | Assessment of whether the performance of colleges has improved subject to the observance of recommendations of experts or the Council on the one hand and of self-evaluation findings of colleges on the other. |
| Analysis of opinions. | Identification of recognised strengths, opportunities for improvement and major deficiencies or non-compliances and examples of good practice. |
| SUBAREA: TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION (THE) | |
| NUMERIC INDICATORS | measures/activities |
| Number of THE contracts. | Comparison with previous self-evaluation periods. |
| Number of THE without contract. | |
| SUBSTANTIVE INDICATORS | measures/activities |
| Analysis of contracts. | Identifying examples of good practice. |
| <p>QUALITY STANDARD: Accreditation and evaluation decisions or assessment of THE contracts, monitoring of the implementation of recommendations for the improvement of work and elimination of any errors provide a continuous assistance to institutions/colleges in the development and improvement of quality in all areas of their work or in all areas of assessment determined in the accreditation and evaluation criteria.</p> | |

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| AREA OF ASSESSMENT: INTERNAL SYSTEM OF QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE AGENCY | |
| SUBAREA: MANAGEMENT OF THE AGENCY | |
| NUMERIC INDICATORS | measures/activities |
| Number of employees. | Comparison of the number of employees with that of the previous evaluation period, plan for any new jobs, assessment of the situation and substantiation of plan. |
| Relevant financial resources. | Annual or timely planning of resources foreseen for salaries and smooth implementation of all activities of the Agency, provision of these resources and justification of their use. |
| SUBSTANTIVE INDICATORS | measures/activities |

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| <p>Concern for quality and career development of employees.</p> | <p>Annual interviews of employees with the management aimed at the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - assessment and analysis of the completed work and work atmosphere at the Agency; - planning of work in the following year and expected results; - proposals for the improvement of work of an employee and the Agency as a whole; - education or training of an employee. <p>Human resource (employee) development plan.</p> <p>Coordination meetings and informal interviews.</p> |
| <p>Organisation of work.</p> | <p>Even and efficient distribution of tasks taking into account the jobs and competences of employees.</p> <p>Steering and monitoring of work and workloads of employees.</p> <p>Appropriate remuneration of work and actions taken for unfulfilled work duties.</p> |
| <p>Concern for the integrity of employees and NAKVIS Council members</p> | <p>Regular training and awareness-raising of employees and Council members on topics related to ethics and integrity, and the detection and resolution of outstanding issues at regular meetings or Council sessions.</p> |
| <p>QUALITY STANDARD: Continuous efforts for a responsible, efficient and objective management of the Agency comprise especially the following: provision of sufficient financial resources for the work of the Agency, correct organisation and monitoring of the work of employees and enabling their career development. Job satisfaction, responsible and efficient work are the foundation of a quality work of the Agency.</p> | |
| <p>SUBAREA: AGENCY COUNCIL</p> | |
| <p>NUMERIC INDICATORS</p> | |
| <p>Council sessions.</p> | <p>Annual planning of dates of sessions and adoption of timetable.</p> |
| <p>Number of cases (decisions).</p> | <p>Preparation of materials for decision-making at Council sessions.</p> <p>Analysis based on minutes of Council sessions and invitations.</p> |
| <p>Number of exclusions from procedures.</p> | <p>Analysis of exclusions of Council members in the cases of conflict of interest.</p> |
| <p>SUBSTANTIVE INDICATORS</p> | |
| <p>Calibrated decision-making.</p> | <p>Training or measures for accountable, objective, professional and transparent decision-making in all procedures.</p> |

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| Culture of quality. | Cooperation with all stakeholders, especially the Director and employees, calibration of work. |
| Independence and impartiality. | Autonomous professional work and decision-making. Signature of a statement on impartiality. |
| QUALITY STANDARD: Timely and impartial decision-making, consistent interpretation or application of criteria imply a close cooperation with all stakeholders in all cases. The trust of institutions/colleges in accreditation and evaluation decisions should be ensured. | |
| SUBAREA: HUMAN RESOURCES | |
| NUMERIC INDICATORS | measures/activities |
| Number of coordination (calibration) meetings. | Planning of meetings on the basis of prompt identification of needs. |
| Number of trainings (participations in different events). | Participation in conferences, consultations, seminars, workshops ... in Slovenia and abroad, important for the work of the Agency and career development. |
| Number of employees actively participating in events. | Regular reporting about events at joint meetings. |
| SUBSTANTIVE INDICATORS | measures/activities |
| Motivation for work and the sense of belonging to the Agency. | Active and committed cooperation of employees with all stakeholders, in the self-evaluation of the Agency and at joint meetings, respectively. Uniform representation of the Agency with observance of the decisions of the Council and management and joint agreements made at the Agency. Striving of employees for a good work atmosphere at the Agency. Striving of employees to advance their knowledge and improve the quality of their work. |
| Satisfaction of employees. | Proper distribution of tasks, accessibility of education or training for all, annual interviews with the management, equal participation in common tasks. Concern for good working conditions, timely provision of information about work-related matters. |
| Objectivity and professionalism. | Prompt calibration of work at different meetings. Education and training. Independence in conducting procedure. |

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| | <p>Preparation of quality materials for decision-making at Council sessions, and of other Agency documents.</p> <p>Preparation and participation in projects or programmes for improving systems of quality assurance (participation of employees, experts, Council members and external stakeholders).</p> |
| Participation in the management. | <p>Expression of opinions and making proposals at meetings by completing annual surveys and on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>Taking into account the proposals and opinions of employees.</p> <p>Participation in the preparation of the basic documents of the Agency.</p> <p>Participation in the preparation of the action plan.</p> |
| Workplace health promotion. | Monitoring the impact and results of activities organised by the employer and the workplace health promotion team. |

QUALITY STANDARD: Professional conduct of accreditation and evaluation procedures, calibrated work of employees, uniform representation of the Agency and strengthening of its public importance and reputation, which will contribute to enhancing trust of institutions/colleges and other stakeholders in its operation. Employees strive for raising the awareness of all stakeholders about the importance of the Agency's operation for the quality of higher vocational education and higher education.

SUBAREA: IMPROVEMENT OF INTERNAL SYSTEM OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

| SUBSTANTIVE INDICATORS | measures/activities |
|---|---|
| Self-evaluation report (SER) of the Agency. | <p>Implementation of the tasks set out in the Agency's work plans and strategic objectives in the period since the last self-evaluation. Assessment of satisfaction of all stakeholders with the work of the Agency, surveying, analysis of surveys and other findings.</p> <p>Compliance of the Agency's operation with the ESG standards.</p> <p>Identification of strengths, deficiencies and opportunities for improvement.</p> <p>Comparison with the previous self-evaluation period and SWOT analysis.</p> |
| Annual work and financial plan (AWP); action plan for the self-evaluation of the Agency as its integral part. | <p>Plan of accreditations and external evaluations.</p> <p>Planning tasks by Agency departments with observance of the findings and recommendations from the SER, and</p> |

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| | <p>preparation of an action plan for the self-evaluation of the Agency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identification of concrete activities, responsible persons and timeline of their implementation, - determination of monitoring of the implementation of activities or corrective measures. <p>Financial and human resource plan.</p> |
| Annual report on the work and operation of the Agency. | <p>Assessment of success in the implementation of the AWP or action plan.</p> <p>Analysis of performance and business success of the Agency, human resource and financial analysis.</p> |

QUALITY STANDARD: The preparation of the SER involves the Agency's internal and external stakeholders (employees, members of the Agency Council, the self-evaluation group and representatives of external stakeholders working with the Agency; the SER is made public and open for comments before adoption). The documents are adopted within the time limits set by provisions and this Manual, and made public in Slovenian and English languages.

SUBAREA: META-REPORTS, META-ANALYSES

| SUBSTANTIVE INDICATORS | measures/activities |
|---|--|
| Monitoring and improvement of systems of quality assurance – follow-up. | Preparation of meta-analyses in accordance with the document Methodology and Procedure for the Production and Dissemination of Thematic Analyses (every five years). |

QUALITY STANDARD: The systematic production of analyses or reports is a task of the Agency, which prepares and publishes them every five years in carefully selected areas of quality assurance, usually defined in agreement with external stakeholders.

AREA OF QUALITY: EXTERNAL SYSTEM OF QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE AGENCY

SUBAREA: AGENCY EXPERTS

| NUMERIC INDICATORS | measures/activities |
|---|--|
| Number of experts entered in the Agency register. | Public call and selection of candidates for experts. |
| Number of student experts entered in the Agency Register. | <p>Sending invitations to recognised or internationally renowned experts in quality in higher vocational and higher education.</p> <p>Training of candidates (practical part including a visit to an institution/college).</p> |

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| | <p>Entry in the Register of Experts.</p> <p>Analyses of experts in terms of the area of research (according to Isced or Klasius), of title (of a higher education teacher, etc.), of whether they are a representative of higher education, higher vocational education or employees, etc.</p> <p>Keeping and continuous updating of the Register of Experts.</p> |
| SUBSTANTIVE INDICATORS | measures/activities |
| Relevance and quality of the bases for experts (guidelines, manual, etc.). | <p>Publication of the guide to procedures for experts, visit protocol and other instruments for their work.</p> <p>Prompt updating or improvement of the instruments for their work.</p> |
| Quality of training (relevance of content, implementation). | Monitoring of experts' feedback (training of experts, annual consultations, calibration meetings, assistance of employees, signature of statement on impartiality and non-conflict of interests). |
| Reports of groups of experts. | <p>Improvement of quality of reports (uniform, precise, in-depth and professional reports: templates for reports, continuous monitoring of suitability of reports and assistance by staff, etc.).</p> <p>Analysis of reports of groups of experts, identification of examples of good practice and weaknesses, and adoption of measures for the improvement of reports.</p> |
| <p>QUALITY STANDARD: Independent, responsible, objective, professional and prudent assessment by experts with consistent observation of legal provisions, criteria and quality standards of the Agency enables the drafting of quality and uniform reports as the basis for making decisions about accreditations and external evaluations. The emphasis is mostly on the content and qualitative assessment.</p> | |
| <p>SUBAREA: COOPERATION WITH INSTITUTIONS/COLLEGES</p> | |
| NUMERIC INDICATORS | measures/activities |
| Number of visits to institutions/colleges. | Planning of visits in the AWP. |
| Number of meetings, consultations, workshops. | <p>Responses to invitations by institutions/colleges.</p> <p>Planning of consultations and workshops in the AWP.</p> |
| SUBSTANTIVE INDICATORS | measures/activities |
| Advisory role of the Agency. | Replies to different questions related to accreditation and evaluation procedures, interpretation of criteria, completion of application forms, etc. |

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| | Strengthening the advisory role in procedures of evaluations of samples of study programmes. |
| Assistance in the development of internal systems of quality assurance of institutions/colleges. | <p>Development of culture of quality in cooperation with institutions/colleges by counselling and exchange of good practice.</p> <p>Collection of self-evaluation reports of institutions/colleges and analysis of internal systems of quality assurance.</p> <p>Organisation of consultations and workshops with committees for quality assurance and representatives of institutions/colleges about the establishment of an efficient systems of quality assurance at institutions/colleges.</p> <p>Development of guidelines for the assessment of individual areas and/or standards of quality (guide to accreditations and evaluations), for example: monitoring and improvement of scientific and teaching excellence, establishment of appropriate environment, equipment, study materials for students with special needs, etc.</p> |
| <p>QUALITY STANDARD: Continuous monitoring of quality of institutions/colleges and counselling in the establishment and development of internal systems of quality assurance, and in drafting SER. SERs must become basic documents for the assessment of progress in the development of institutions/colleges and quality of their work.</p> | |
| <p>SUBAREA: INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES</p> | |
| NUMERIC INDICATORS | measures/activities |
| Number of associations of which the Agency is a full member. | Planning of and preparation for membership. |
| Number of international projects. | <p>Planning and acquisition of projects.</p> <p>Appointment of employees participating in projects.</p> |
| Number of international meetings, consultations, workshops. | Plan for international cooperation and prompt monitoring of current developments. |
| SUBSTANTIVE INDICATORS | measures/activities |
| Full membership in ENQA and entry in EQAR and membership in other international organisations. | Efforts for perfect conformity of the Agency's work with ESG standards and international agreements. |

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| <p>Active role in developing systems of quality assurance.</p> | <p>Integration at the institutional level with different Slovenian and foreign partners in order to cooperate in projects and programmes for the improvement of systems of quality assurance.</p> <p>Active and responsible work of employees appointed for individual projects, programmes, etc. and prompt reporting about it at joint meetings.</p> <p>Assessment of the role and importance of projects and the Slovenian share (contribution) in them.</p> <p>Comparative analyses of the Agency's work, comparison of procedures, identification of good practices.</p> <p>Organisation and implementation of different events related to the improvement of systems of quality assurance with the participation of external stakeholders. Council members and employees participate actively.</p> |
| <p>Exchange of experts for the assessment of quality.</p> | <p>Co-creation of common international registers of experts.</p> <p>Monitoring and analysis of the exchange of experts.</p> |
| <p>QUALITY STANDARD: Continuous participation in international projects or cooperation with foreign agencies is active, committed and intended for joint assessment of quality and operation in accordance with the ESG standards, development of comparable procedures and accreditation criteria, and exchange of good practices and experts. The Agency strives for an equal partnership in the European higher education area and for its continuous development.</p> | |
| <p>SUBAREA: COOPERATION IN THE AMENDMENTS TO HIGHER EDUCATION LEGISLATION, IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME AND OTHER SYSTEMIC CHANGES IN THIS FIELD</p> | |
| <p>NUMERIC INDICATORS</p> | <p>measures/activities</p> |
| <p>Number of joint meetings and consultations about amending legislation.</p> <p>Number of proposals for amendments or improvements to the higher education system and legislation submitted to the competent ministry or the National Assembly.</p> | <p>Coordination of opinions at joint meetings of all employees of the Agency.</p> <p>Participation in consultations convened by line ministries, etc.</p> |
| <p>SUBSTANTIVE INDICATORS</p> | <p>measures/activities</p> |
| <p>Participation in the process of amending legislation and regulations.</p> | <p>Analysis of the Agency's work in view of legal obstacles in deciding on accreditations and evaluations and accomplishment of its mission.</p> |

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| | <p>Preparation of proposals for the amendments to the relevant act and other provisions regulating or concerning the Agency's work.</p> <p>Work in interdepartmental working groups for the amendments to legislation or provisions.</p> <p>Information about foreseen amendments at regular meetings of employees and Council sessions.</p> <p>Representation of the Agency's positions at ministries, in the National Assembly, its committees, National Council, etc.</p> |
| <p>QUALITY STANDARD: Equal participation of the Agency in systemic changes, programmes of development of higher and higher vocational education, and active work in amending legislation and other regulations.</p> | |

| AREA OF QUALITY: CRITERIA AND OTHER PROVISIONS | |
|--|--|
| SUBSTANTIVE INDICATORS | measures/activities |
| Coordination of the criteria and standards of the Agency with those of all stakeholders. | Coordination of the Agency Council's draft acts with stakeholders. |
| Update of the criteria in accordance with self-evaluation findings and ESG standards and any legislative amendments. | <p>Analysis of the existing Criteria for the Accreditation and External Evaluation and other acts of the Agency or responses by the stakeholders.</p> <p>Preparation of widely accepted and clear criteria by coordination with all stakeholders, and their adoption by the Council.</p> |
| Uniform interpretation of the criteria. | <p>Preparation of a guide to accreditations and evaluations, or interpretation of the criteria in order to ensure uniform and impartial decision-making. Updating of the guide.</p> <p>Prompt counselling and answering the questions of stakeholders.</p> |
| Up-to-date strategic documents of the Agency. | <p>Updating of strategic documents (strategy of the Agency, mission, vision) in cooperation with internal and external stakeholders and in accordance with action plans.</p> <p>Draft amendments to strategic documents are first coordinated among internal stakeholders.</p> |

QUALITY STANDARD: Updating the systems of quality assurance and harmonisation of acts and rules of operation of the Agency with the ESG standards and other regulations with the participation of all stakeholders. The system is known and agreed in advance.

AREA: INFORMATION SYSTEM AND PROVISION OF INFORMATION

SUBAREA: INFORMATION SYSTEM (IS-NAKVIS)

| SUBSTANTIVE INDICATORS | measures/activities |
|---|--|
| Connection to the eVŠ system. | Establishment of eNakvis in cooperation with ministries, institutions/colleges and external contractors. |
| Efficient and "friendly" information system. | Continuous cooperation with stakeholders, observation of their needs and enabling simple and efficient work to stakeholders and employees of the Agency. |
| Integration of the system with procedures and activities of participants in them, and enabling prompt system analyses and periodic meta-analyses. | Training of employees for the use and counselling in the use of the information system. |
| Exchange of information with other information systems. | Updating and improvement of the information system while observing the needs of users. |
| Transparency and traceability. | |

SUBAREA: PROVISION OF INFORMATION

| SUBSTANTIVE INDICATORS | measures/activities |
|---|---|
| Websites of the Agency in Slovenian and English. | Presentation of the Agency, its organisation and work, vision, strategy and mission and statements about quality. |
| Keeping websites up-to-date and ensuring their usability and accessibility. | Care for prompt publication of all important information, decisions, reports, public records, statistics and (meta)analyses, (meta)reports, manuals, leaflets, Agency positions on current developments, etc. |
| | Prompt announcement of events and new features in the Agency's work. |
| | Keeping stakeholders informed about the Agency's activities, news and decisions of the Agency's Council on a monthly basis (by sending an e-newsletter). |
| | Making the Agency's websites accessible to all users. |

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| Agency communication via social networks (Twitter, Youtube, etc.). | Responses to current developments in higher education and other fields, networking, cooperation and establishment of contacts with related organisations and individuals in order to improve the operation of the Agency and strengthen its visibility in Slovenia and abroad. Creation of video guides to improve the user experience with eNakvis (for all users of the system). |
| Press conferences and media releases. | Keeping stakeholders informed about the Agency's work through press conferences and active participation of Council members in these events. Preparation of reports for media and answers to their questions. |
| QUALITY STANDARD: The Agency's work is public and transparent, which is ensured by prompt and efficient provision of information to all stakeholders. | |

4 SELF-EVALUATION – ASSESSMENT OF THE AGENCY SYSTEM OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PREPARATION OF PLANS AND REPORTS

The Agency assesses its work on the basis of indicators, considering all areas of quality; the consideration of individual indicators, however, depends on the type of document (self-evaluation report, work plan or work report).

SELF-EVALUATION GROUP

The self-evaluation group consists of at least four employees and one Council member. The employees are appointed to the self-evaluation group by the Director, and a Council member is appointed by the Agency Council. The self-evaluation group is appointed for each self-evaluation period. External stakeholders (representatives of students, the Rectors' Conference, the Association of Independent Higher Education Institutions, the Association of Higher Vocational Colleges) also cooperate with the group. The purpose of their cooperation is to ensure transparency and an external view on how to improve the quality of the Agency's work.

The self-evaluation group, which cooperates with external stakeholders, has the following objectives and tasks:

- assessment of improvement of internal system of quality assurance,
- transferring good practice and strengthening the culture of quality,
- participating in the design of mechanisms to monitor the satisfaction of internal and external stakeholders (surveys, consultations and other forms of monitoring),
- coordinating stakeholder suggestions and comments and participating in the drafting of the NAKVIS self-evaluation report,
- approving the final self-evaluation report before publication on the Agency's website.

The principal purpose of self-evaluation is:

- to improve the overall quality of the Agency's operation;

- to assess the implementation of tasks referred to in the work plan or action plan by evaluating the accomplishment of strategic objectives of the Agency, especially in comparison with the previous self-evaluation period;
- to improve the Agency's operation according to the second and third sections of ESG standards in compliance with the self-evaluation findings and recommendations of international groups of experts;
- to specify opportunities to improve the operation.

On the basis of self-evaluation results, measures for improvements are prepared and adopted, which must be evident from the work plan of the Agency, while specific tasks must be defined in the action plan as its essential integral part.

Self-evaluation is a permanent process and provides the basis for the professional decision-making and planning of development of the Agency:

- it starts with the assessment of self-evaluation findings in the previous self-evaluation period (with a typical duration of five years);
- it continues with the preparation of the Agency annual work plans or action plans, which take into account self-evaluation findings, assignment of tasks described in the plan, appointing persons responsible for them, prompt reporting about the implementation of tasks, analysis of the situation, obtaining opinions, surveying and analysing of findings, etc.

and ends with the preparation of the annual report on the work and operation of the Agency.



4.1 Work and financial plan of the Agency

The annual work and financial plan (hereinafter: the work plan) considers strategic objectives of the Agency and self-evaluation findings, especially proposals for the improvement of work. An action plan drawn up by the Agency's departments and the core areas of work for which they are responsible is important.

Quality Assurance Department:

- criteria and other provisions from the field of quality;

- accreditations and evaluations;
- modifications of study programmes;
- cooperation with stakeholders (institutions/colleges, experts);
- keeping and updating records (on accreditations, evaluations, modifications, THE, etc.);
- archiving applications and other documents.

Department of International Cooperation and Information Technology:

- international activities;
- organisation of annual international conference;
- eNakvis and links with databases (SICRIS, IZUM, etc.)
- iNakvis (automation of internal processes, management and keeping of records, support for the work of the Council, etc.)
- communication.

Analytics Department:

- plans and reports (annual work and financial plan and report on the work and operation of the Agency, strategy);
- analyses, documents, publications;
- self-evaluation of the Agency;
- manuals, guides;
- organisation and cooperation in different events (conferences, consultations, training courses, workshops).

General Affairs Department:

- legislation, preparation of internal Agency acts;
- assistance in the implementation of activities from the field of quality assurance;
- work for the Appeal Committee;
- financial and human resource affairs;
- access to public information;
- business and administrative tasks;
- keeping and updating human resource and other records within its powers.

The work plan is adopted by the Director no later than on 28 February of the current year; the Director shall obtain consent of the Agency Council to the work plan. The Director promptly monitors the implementation of the work plan.

The central chapters in the work plan are the following:

- internal organisation of the Agency;
- findings and recommendations for the Agency's work in the self-evaluation period;
- planning accreditations or evaluations of higher education institutions and study programmes and higher vocational colleges;
- action plan – determination of tasks by Agency departments of the Agency with consideration of self-evaluation findings, strategic objectives, Agency values and areas of assessment according to this Manual, and
- resources (human resource and financial plan).

The implementation of the tasks set in the action plan is precisely determined. The work plan determines responsible persons and employees for the implementation of individual tasks, time limits and obligatory reporting.

4.2 Self-evaluation report and progress report

As a rule, the self-evaluation report is prepared by the self-evaluation team one year before the expiration of membership in international associations (ENQA and EQAR), or at least once in a five-year period. All employees, Director and Council members take part in the

preparation of the final version of the self-evaluation report; proposals and comments by stakeholders collected during the public debate on the draft document on the website are also taken into account.

Self-evaluation is based on the annual work or action plan. Extremely important are also the analysis and comparison of responses of different stakeholders to survey questions (sub-chapter 2.4 –Surveying and obtaining opinions), information of the Agency's work obtained at meetings with different stakeholders, monthly Council sessions, conferences, from cooperation in national and international project and interdepartmental groups, etc., because they open a broader view of the quality and efficiency of the Agency's work and establish the quality loop in the monitoring of satisfaction of stakeholders with the work.

The self-evaluation report is subject to the approval of the Council and is adopted by the Director no later than by the end of February for the past self-evaluation period.

The self-evaluation report is published on the Agency's website in Slovenian and English, and all stakeholders are acquainted with it.

The self-evaluation report contains the assessment of the situation and critical analysis, analysis of strengths and deficiencies and proposals and recommendations for the elimination of shortcomings or improvement of the Agency's work. In addition, it shall contain draft measures for the improvement of the system of quality assurance or elimination of identified shortcomings. Measures shall be clear, unambiguous and feasible. Findings in the self-evaluation report shall be supported by documentation.

The analysis of survey questionnaires is a compulsory annex to the self-evaluation report.

Every year, the self-evaluation group prepares a progress report in which it verifies the observance of the recommendations on the compliance of the Agency's operation with ESG standards and publishes it in English and Slovenian on the Agency's website.

4.3 Report on the work and operation of the Agency

The report on the work and operation of the Agency (hereinafter: the work report) is primarily a report on the implementation of objectives set in the work plan. The structure is based on chapters from the work plan (implementation of the action plan, financial report and human resource report), with added chapters on the work of the Agency's decision-making bodies and on accreditations and evaluations in higher and higher vocational education. The latter contains especially the following:

- numeric data: number of accreditations and external evaluations, number of experts who participated in assessments, number of positive and negative decisions of the Council, number of extraordinary evaluations, number of appeals;
- comparison of the number of procedures with the number in the previous year or previous two years;
- brief analysis of the reasons for and initiators of extraordinary evaluations;
- brief analysis of the reasons for complaints;
- analysis of adopted decisions of the Agency Council and reasons for rejected accreditations or qualified opinions.

Self-evaluation elements are evident from the work report; in every chapter, the assessment of the success of accomplishment of set objectives considers the situation and adopted measures and indications of whether tasks have been completed. Insofar as tasks have not been completed, there is a brief analysis of reasons and measures for future actions detailed by the work plan.

The Director prepares the work report for the previous year by 28 February and submits it to the Agency Council for approval. In accordance with the ZViS, the work report for the previous year shall be sent to the founder by 31 May of the current year.

On the basis of the findings from the work report and self-evaluation report, the Agency's strategy is amended if necessary. All employees take part in this.

4.4 External evaluation of the Agency and comparison with related foreign agencies

An external evaluation of the Agency, where a group of international experts assesses its operation, shall be performed at least once in five years. The subject of assessment is the conformity of the Agency's work with ESG standards, code of good practice of the ECA and other international guidelines. All employees shall be present or shall participate in the preparation for the external evaluation, and especially during the visit of a group of foreign experts and discussions.

The Agency actively cooperates with foreign related agencies, compares itself to them and detects examples of good practices. This is one of the bases for the improvement of its work and amendment of its strategic documents, if necessary.

For the purpose of the external evaluation, the ENQA Agency prepares a self-evaluation report, which is drawn up in accordance with the ENQA guidelines for the preparation of self-evaluation reports and includes:

1. INTRODUCTION

2. DEVELOPMENT OF THE SELF-EVALUATION REPORT

3. HIGHER EDUCATION AND QA OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE AGENCY

3.1 Higher vocational education

3.2 Higher education

3. Higher vocational colleges and higher education institutions in more detail

4. HISTORY, PROFILE AND ACTIVITIES OF THE AGENCY

5. PROFILE, FUNCTIONING AND (EQA) ACTIVITIES OF THE AGENCY

5.1 Accreditations and external evaluations

5.2 Areas of assessment by types of accreditations or external evaluations

5.3 Groups of experts

5.4 Types of procedures in accordance with the criteria for international cooperation

6. INTERNAL QUALITY OF THE AGENCY (Agency management, Agency Council, human resources, meta-reports and meta-analyses)

7. INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE AGENCY

8. CONFORMITY WITH EUROPEAN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES (PART 3):

8.1 ESG Standard 3.1: Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance,

8.2 ESG Standard 3.2: Official status,

8.3 ESG Standard 3.3: Independence,

8.4 ESG Standard 3.4: Thematic analysis,

8.5 ESG Standard 3.5: Resources,

8.6 ESG Standard 3.6: Internal quality assurance and professional conduct,

8.7 ESG Standard 3.7: **Cyclical external review of the Agency**

9. CONFORMITY WITH EUROPEAN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES (PART 2):

- 9.1 ESG Standard 2.1: Consideration of internal quality assurance,
- 9.2 ESG Standard 2.2: Designing methodologies fit for purpose,
- 9.3 ESG Standard 2.3: Implementing processes,
- 9.4 ESG Standard 2.4: Experts,
- 9.5 ESG Standard 2.5: Criteria for outcomes,
- 9.6 ESG Standard 2.6: Reporting,
- 9.7 ESG Standard 2.7: Complaints and appeals,
- 10. SHAREHOLDER INFORMATION AND OPINIONS (including appeal procedures)
- 11. RECOMMENDATIONS AND MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE PREVIOUS EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE AGENCY
 - 11.1 Main findings of the previous ENQA review
 - 11.2 Results of monitoring
- 12. SWOT ANALYSIS
- 13. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE PREVIOUS SELF-EVALUATION PERIOD
- 14. CURRENT CHALLENGES AND AREAS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT
 - 14.1 Preparation of an action plan for the following self-evaluation period
- 15. Glossary of terms
- 16. ANNEXES

Chapter 11, which refers to the recommendations and findings from the previous external evaluation, may be included in the chapter on the assessment of compliance with ESG standards (Chapters 8 and 9), but the findings and recommendations from the previous assessment must be clearly visible, as well as the Agency's results and activities that followed the recommendations.

5 RISK MANAGEMENT, DOCUMENTATION AND DATA

The Agency develops the system for risk assessment and management:

- it uses external audit as an activity of independent and impartial verification and counselling intended primarily for the improvement of operation in the use of material and financial resources and in the human resource field;
- it operates in accordance with the *Integrity and Prevention of Corruption Act* (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No 45/10 and amendments), has a working group for the *integrity plan and an established electronic register of risks; the register of risks contains data on risk factors related to the Agency's work and measures to eliminate them;*
- in accordance with the Communication Rules, methods of communication, communication channels, responsibilities and crisis communication are defined.

The Agency prepares the assessment of supervision of public finances in accordance with the *Methodology for the Preparation of the Statement of the Assessment of Internal Supervision of Public Finances*, which is an annex to the *Instructions Amending the Instructions on Preparing the Annual Financial Statement of State and Municipalities Budgets and on Methodology for Preparing a Report on the Achieved Goals and Results of Direct and Indirect Budget Users* (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No 8/2007 and amendments).

An important factor of a quality work of the Agency is appropriate handling of applications and other documentation, or confidential information. This is facilitated by an efficient information system friendly to all stakeholders, which enables traceability, timeliness, correctness or precision, objectivity and transparency at work.

In accordance with the applicable General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the adopted Personal Data Protection Rules, the Agency ensures the protection and security of personal data at the Agency.

All employees must be acquainted with the legal acts and basic documents of the Agency. The documentation important for a smooth work of employees (such as e.g. legal acts of the Agency, minutes of employees' meetings, minutes of Council's meetings, etc.) is published in a special shared folder and thus constantly accessible to everybody.

The specific instructions of the Agency detail the following:

- form of printed and electronic documents (including unified form of a signature in the e-mail),
- reception, opening an examination of mail and applications and marking of documents;
- document signing;
- sending out and serving documents;
- classification, assignment and record of documents,
- keeping, archiving and elimination of documentary materials;
- handling of the documents created at the Agency, etc.

The documentation is archived in accordance with the *Protection of Documents and Archives and Archival Institutions Act* (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia no 30/06 and amendments). Traceability of documents, quick access to them and simple work with them (both in paper and electronic forms) are guaranteed. Documentation retention period is set out in the Rules determining the retention period for documents of public administration authorities (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No 49/19).

The Agency needs different information related to accreditations and external evaluations. This information is updated promptly. The Agency also collects and uses (manages) information referring to the financial, accounting and human resource field, information system and public procurement system in accordance with special provisions.

Any new or amended legislation concerning the Agency's work is monitored by the Agency, which promptly informs its stakeholders thereof. The Director oversees the harmonisation of internal legal acts of the Agency with legislation.

An important part of the Agency's work is the transparency and adequacy of the communication and provision of information, and communication with and provision of information to internal and external stakeholders, which is governed by the Communication Rules. All internal stakeholders respect the provisions of this document in the process.

6 SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Legislation

Higher Education Act

Decision establishing the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

Post-Secondary Vocational Education Act

Protection of Documents and Archives and Archival Institutions Act

Personal Data Protection Act

General Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation; GDPR).

Integrity and Prevention of Corruption Act

Criteria and rules

Criteria for the Accreditation and External Evaluation of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programmes

Criteria for External Evaluation of Higher Vocational Colleges

Criteria for Experts of the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

Minimum standards and other criteria

Communication Rules

Rules and other internal acts of the Agency

Rules of Procedure

Rules of Procedure of the Agency Council

Rules of Procedure of the Agency Appeal Committee

Statements

Statement on impartiality and non-conflict of interests

Statement of awareness of personal data protection

Plans

Annual Work Plans of the Agency

Integrity Plan

Education and training plan

Reports

Self-evaluation reports of the Agency

Annual reports on the work and operation of the Agency

Meta-analyses and meta-reports

Manuals, programmes, instructions, forms

Guide to procedures

Visit Protocol

Programme of Expert Training

Forms for Expert Reports
Forms for Agency Staff Reports
Information system (procedural schemes)
Instructions amending the Instructions on preparing the annual financial statement of state and municipalities budgets and on methodology for preparing a report on the achieved goals and results of direct and indirect budget users

Notifications

Overview of Accredited Higher Education Institutions and Study Programmes
Overview of Evaluated Higher Vocational Colleges
Publication of Council Decisions
Publication of Expert Reports
Catalogue of public information

The Quality Manual was adopted on 19 February 2015 and amended for the first time on 16 May 2019.

The latest amendment adapts the wording of the Quality Manual to the reorganisation of the Agency into four departments and changes the self-evaluation procedures (preparation of the self-evaluation report only before the external assessment, annual progress report assessing observance of the recommendations of the external assessment on compliance with ESG standards), the quality indicators have been slightly revised.

The amendments to the Quality Manual were drafted by Mateja Bajuk Malešič, Nataša Kramar, Martina Mravlja, Jernej Širok and Klemen Šubic, and other Agency employees were also involved in the amendment process.

The draft amendment was submitted for review to representatives of external stakeholders, who were appointed to the Agency's self-evaluation group by the Rectors' Conference of the Republic of Slovenia, the Union of Independent Institutions of Higher Education, the Association of Slovene Higher Vocational Colleges and Student Organisation of Slovenia.

The revised Quality Manual was approved by the Agency Council at its 165th session on 17 June 2021.

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