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URBROJ: 355-01-14-6

10th March 2014

Based on Conclusion of the Accreditation Council to amend the document *Procedure for re-accreditation of public scientific institutes* at its 48th session held on the 10th March 2014, and regarding the Article 22 of the *Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education* („Official Gazette", 45/09), Article 7 of the *Ordinance on Conditions for Issuing License for Scientific Activity, Conditions for Re-Accreditation of Scientific Organizations and Content of License* (OG 83/2010), and based on Article 22 and Article 44, section 2, of the Agency for Science and Higher Education Statute, on the 10th March 2014 the Agency director adopted

PROCEDURE FOR RE-ACCREDITATION OF PUBLIC SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTES



1. INTRODUCTION

Procedure for re-accreditation of scientific organizations is carried out by the Agency for Science and Higher Education (hereinafter: Agency) on the basis of Article 22 of the *Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education* („Official Gazette", 45/09), *Ordinance on Conditions for Issuing License for Scientific Activity, Conditions for Re-Accreditation of Scientific Organizations and Content of License* (OG 83/2010, 5 July 2010), and in line with good European and international practice.

2. DOCUMENTS FOR RE-ACCREDITATION

Documents used in the re-accreditation procedure are the following:

- a) *Ordinance on Conditions for Issuing License for Scientific Activity, Conditions for Re-Accreditation of Scientific Organizations and Content of License;*
- b) *Principles and Criteria for the Evaluation of Scientific Organizations;*
- c) *Instructions for self-evaluation of Scientific Organizations;*
- d) This Procedure.

The documents are published on the Agency website (www.azvo.hr).

3. RE-ACCREDITATION PROCEDURE

3.1. Adopting plan of re-accreditation

By June 30th, the Agency creates a plan of re-accreditation for the next academic year, publishes it on its official website and informs all involved scientific organizations about it. Public scientific institute scheduled for re-accreditation by the annual plan may request the deferral of evaluation for the next academic year within 15 days, provided it has valid reasons. The Accreditation Council makes the final decision.

Outside the annual plan, the re-accreditation of public scientific institutes may be requested by the minister responsible for science and higher education or by the institute itself.



3.2. Appointment of the expert panel

Based on public call for experts published on the Agency website, the re-accreditation procedure is carried out by the expert panel, headed by panel chair, which is appointed by the Accreditation Council. The panel consists of up to 5 members (minimally 3), including panel chair. Exceptionally, the panel can include more members if an institute carries out research in more than one scientific field. One or more substitute members are also appointed in the case of unforeseen circumstances.

Composition of the expert panel:

Three to five researchers coming from similar research organizations, appointed into higher scientific or academic grades (Croatian classification of scientific grades: research associate, senior research associate, and scientific advisor; Croatian classification of academic grades: assistant professor, associate professor, and full professor), from the scientific field covered by the evaluated institute. At least two members of the panel shall come from international research organizations or higher education institutions. Instead of one peer researcher or university professor, there may be appointed one prominent expert from the industry or economic field closely related to the research field of the evaluated institute, or one junior researcher/assistant.

Criteria for selection of expert panel members

Members of the expert panel must have appropriate competences in the field covered by the activities of the evaluated institute and be internationally recognized for their research excellence.

Panel chair must be well-acquainted with the system of quality assurance in research and have experience in carrying out quality assurance procedures as well as appropriate experience at the management positions in a research institution.

Members of the expert panel must have a good knowledge of English, good oral and written communication skills and teamwork skills, and must respect all agreed protocols, procedures and deadlines.

Members of the expert panel are independent in the course of their work and do not represent their own institutions. During re-accreditation they will be led by principles of non-bias and objectivity. Members of the expert panel may not be in the conflict of interest nor have direct relations with the evaluated institute (members of the expert panel and their spouses and close relatives may not be employed at the moment or in the past 5 years either full-time or part-time at the evaluated institute; in that period, they may not cooperate with the evaluated institute as external associates, be involved in the projects carried out by that institute nor have personal ties with its management).

Direct communication between institute and members of the expert panel outside of site visit is forbidden, and reviewers have to inform Agency coordinator about such incidents.

Members of the expert panel must guarantee confidentiality of information received during the re-accreditation procedure.

Members of the panel sign statement of confidentiality and non-conflict of interest.

Objections of higher education institution to the composition of the expert panel

Agency will deliver decision on the appointment of the expert panel to the institute to be evaluated. The institute may give its opinion on the composition of the expert panel and object within 7* days from the receipt of the notification. If an institute objects to the composition of the expert panel, and the Accreditation Council finds the objection valid, the Council will appoint other expert panel within 30 days.

An objection to the members of the expert panel does not change the deadline for the delivery of self-evaluation and other materials.

3.3. Delivery of self-evaluation

Ninety (90*) days after receiving notification on re-accreditation, an institute shall make self-evaluation in line with Instructions for self-evaluation of scientific organization and according to legal provisions (Act and Ordinance).

An institute shall place on its notice board and its website homepage information about re-accreditation as well as instructions, delivered by the Agency, explaining the procedure for confidential communication about the issues concerning re-accreditation procedure. Only evaluation coordinator (Agency employee) and panel members, who are required to sign



confidentiality agreement, have access to confidential information provided by evaluated institution.

Self-evaluation must be adopted by the authorized body of the institute. Self-evaluation, signed by the head of the institution, is delivered in paper and electronic form (CD) to the Agency, in Croatian and English. The Agency shall check if the documentation is complete and ask for its changes and/or additions if necessary.

The Agency shall forward the self-evaluation report to all the members of the expert panel. They are obliged to examine the self-evaluation report and prepare comments about advantages and disadvantages of the institute to be evaluated, as well as possible unanswered issues that should be discussed during the site visit. If the organization was previously involved in thematic evaluation or another type of evaluation, the Agency shall deliver relevant reports to the expert panel. After delivery of the self-evaluation, Agency will define details about the visit, including the visit schedule, with the institute and members of the expert panel.

3.4. Preliminary report and training

Prior to the site-visit, all members of the expert panel have to undergo training which will provide them with information about their tasks, procedures and purpose of re-accreditation.

Members of the expert panel shall deliver prior to their visit a preliminary report in which evaluated institute will be assessed according to each criteria and based on the available proof (self-evaluation report and other documents provided by the evaluated institute). Members of the panel will note which additional material is needed for objective assessment. The coordinator shall collect the preliminary reports and deliver them to the panel for discussion before the site-visit.

The day before the visit to the institute, the expert panel shall meet in the room/area selected by the Agency. Agency staff will provide additional information to the members of the expert panel about their tasks and explain basic Croatian and European documents relevant for carrying out procedures for assuring quality in science and higher education. Main issues that should be discussed during the site visit are also defined.



Re-accreditation coordinator should prepare additional materials about the institute for the panel members, such as a report on complying with the minimum requirements for conducting scientific activity, and bibliometric report.

3.5. Site-visit

Visit of the expert panel to the institute may last 1-3 days, exceptionally longer, which is defined by the Agency in agreement with the members of the expert panel and institute. The visit is carried out according to the schedule delivered to institute and members of the expert panel at least 7 days prior to the site visit.

Members of the panel are accompanied by Agency coordinator and, if necessary, one representative of the Agency in the role of translator (only in exceptional cases may the role of translator be assigned to persons who are not Agency employees). In accordance with the Agency decision, impartial observers may also be involved in the visit.

Site-visit includes meetings with the management of the institute, representatives of research and non-research (support) staff, as well as tour of facilities (libraries, laboratories, external facilities etc.). During the meetings members of the expert panel shall make notes about their observations. The institute shall provide documents regulating its activities (e.g. internal ordinances, decisions and agreements). At the end of the site-visit, the panel will meet with the management during which the panel chair (or other member designated by the chair) will inform the management about their observations. There is no allocated time for discussion about these observations. It is prohibited to give gifts to members of the expert panel before, during, and after the visit.

3.6. Report

During the last day of the site-visit all panel members write the re-accreditation report. The chair of the expert panel delivers the final report to the Agency within 30 days after the site-visit, in accordance with the Instruction for Final Report. The report contains quality grade of the evaluated institute, based on materials and insights gained during the site-visit. Each panel member fills out a standard form on quality assessment. Finally, the panel reaches common



agreement about the grade for each criterion. The report also states recommendations for improvement.

Prior to passing an accreditation decision, the Agency will send the final report of the expert panel to the evaluated institute, which will then have 15 days* to reply and provide comments or necessary explanations related to possible formal or factual errors.

The Agency shall submit the final report of the expert panel and the reply of the scientific organization, if provided, to the Accreditation Council.

Re-accreditation coordinator (Agency employee) will also submit to the Accreditation Council a report on compliance with quantitative criteria.

3.7. Opinion of the Accreditation Council

On the basis of conducted re-accreditation procedure and final report of the expert panel, reply of the institute, and report on compliance with quantitative criteria, the Accreditation Council will pass independent opinion about:

- issuing confirmation on compliance with conditions for continued scientific activity or part of activity;
- denial of license for scientific activity or part of activity;
- issuing a letter of expectation with a deadline for resolving deficiencies of up to 3 years.

If the Accreditation Council passes opinion that an institute should be issued recommendation or a letter of expectation, the Accreditation Council will set a follow-up period, stating the deadline for institution to implement recommendations contained in the report. The deadline can be set for up to three years, depending on the deficiencies.

3.8. Appeal

If the Accreditation Council decides to pass opinion on denial of license, the institute will be informed of it. The institute then has the right to appeal or object to the Agency recommendation within 15 days* from the date when the Agency recommendation was submitted. After the appeal is received, Accreditation Council appeal committee shall make decision within 1 month* on the basis of all documentation from the re-accreditation procedure.



The appeal committee shall comprise of three members of the Accreditation Council elected by the Accreditation Council.

The Accreditation Council shall review the committee's appeal decision, pass an opinion, and send it to the Agency.

3.9. Accreditation recommendation of the Agency

Following re-accreditation procedure and with the previous opinion of the Accreditation Council, the Agency shall make accreditation recommendation, recommending to the minister responsible for science and higher education to:

- issue confirmation on compliance with conditions for continued scientific activity or part of activity;
- deny license for scientific activity or part of activity;
- issue a letter of expectation with the deadline for resolving deficiencies of up to 3 years.

Accreditation recommendation sent to the minister also contains quality assessment of the institute containing recommendation for quality improvement. Final quality assessment is public.

All documents originating from the re-accreditation procedure (report of the expert panel in Croatian and English, opinion of the Accreditation Council, and accreditation recommendation of the Agency) are public and are published on the Agency website.

3.10. Follow-up

After the follow-up deadline set by the Accreditation Council is passed, the institute shall submit report about the measures taken to the Agency. On the basis of this report, the Accreditation Council shall analyze to what extent has institute implemented recommendations for improvement, and will publish its report. If necessary, the Accreditation Council may schedule a second site visit by the same expert panel or by some of its members in order to determine the extent to which deficiencies have been resolved. If the institute was issued a letter of expectation, the Accreditation Council shall send its opinion to the Agency about:



- issuing confirmation on compliance with conditions for continued scientific activity or part of activity;
- denial of license for scientific activity or part of activity.

On the basis of the opinion of the Accreditation Council, the Agency will submit an accreditation recommendation on issuance or denial of license for carrying out activities or part of activities to the minister responsible for higher education. The accreditation recommendation is public and is published on the Agency website.

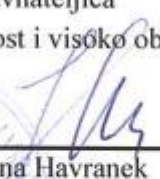
If the confirmation on compliance with conditions for continued scientific activity or part of activity is issued to the institute upon the completion of re-accreditation procedure, along with the recommendations for improving quality, follow-up shall include the following activities:

- re-accredited public research institute shall submit to the Agency a quality improvement action plan within six months* from the date the confirmation is received,
- re-accredited public research institute shall submit to the Agency an annual report on the implementation of said action plan.

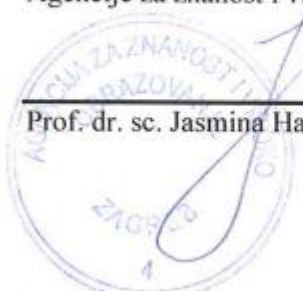
3.12. Feedback

At the end of every re-accreditation procedure, the Agency shall collect feedback from re-accredited institute and members of the expert panel. The information is collected for the purpose of improving own procedures.

ravnateljica
Agencije za znanost i visoko obrazovanje



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* Deadline schedule shall not include periods from 15.07-31.08, and 24.12-06.01.