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Zagreb, 17 July 2019

On the basis of the Agency for Science and Higher Education Accreditation Council's Conclusion on the adoption of the amendments to the Procedure of re-accreditation of higher education institutions, adopted at the Accreditation Council's 107th session held on 16 July 2019, in accordance with Article 22 and Article 26, Paragraph 3 of the Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education (Official Gazette, 45/09), Article 17 of the Ordinance on the Content of a Licence and Conditions for Issuing a Licence for Performing Higher Education Activity, Carrying out a Study Programme and Re-Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (Official Gazette, 24/10) and Article 7 of the Ordinance on the Content of a Licence and Conditions for Issuing a Licence for Performing Scientific Activity and Re-Accreditation of Scientific Institutions (Official Gazette, 83/10), and Article 22 and Article 44, Paragraph 2 of the Statute of the Agency for Science and Higher Education, the Acting Director of the Agency, Prof. Jasmina Havranek, PhD, adopted on 17 July 2019 the following

THE PROCEDURE FOR THE RE-ACCREDITATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS **(consolidated text)**

I. INTRODUCTION

Re-accreditation of higher education institutions (universities, with their constituent units – faculties and art academies; polytechnics and colleges) is a procedure carried out by the Agency for Science and Higher Education (hereinafter referred to as the Agency or ASHE) pursuant to Article 22 of the Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education (Official Gazette, 45/09), the Ordinance on the Content of a Licence and Conditions for Issuing a Licence for Performing Higher Education Activity, Delivering a Study Programme and Re-Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (Official Gazette, 24/10) and the Ordinance on Conditions for Issuing Licence for Scientific Activity, Conditions for Re-Accreditation of Scientific Organisations and Content of Licence (Official Gazette 83/10), in line with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015) and good international practice.

II. DOCUMENTS IN THE RE-ACCREDITATION PROCEDURE

The following documents are used in the re-accreditation procedure:

- a) Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education;
- b) Ordinance on the Content of a Licence and Conditions for Issuing a Licence for Performing Higher Education Activity, Carrying out a Study Programme and Re-Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (Official Gazette, 24/10)
- c) Ordinance on the Content of a Licence and Conditions for Issuing a Licence for Performing Scientific Activity Re-Accreditation of Scientific Institutions (Official Gazette, 83/10)
- d) Standards for the evaluation of quality of universities and university constituents in the procedure of re-accreditation of higher education institutions or Standards for the evaluation of quality of polytechnics and colleges in the procedure of re-accreditation of higher education institutions (hereinafter: Standards for the evaluation of quality)
- e) Principles and criteria for the re-accreditation of postgraduate university study programmes in the Republic of Croatia, in case of re-accreditation of postgraduate university (doctoral) studies, or parts of activities of higher education institutions carrying out these studies.

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

III. RE-ACCREDITATION PROCEDURE

1. Plan of re-accreditation

By **30 June*** of each year, the Agency defines an annual plan of re-accreditation for the following year, publishes it on ASHE website and informs the included higher education institutions. A higher education institution included in the annual plan of re-accreditation may, **within a period of 15 days***, request a postponement for the next academic year, providing a valid reason is given. The final decision on the postponement is issued by the Accreditation Council.

Apart from the annual plan, the re-accreditation of a higher education institution can be conducted at the request of the minister of science and higher education (hereinafter: the minister), or at the request of a higher education institution.

2. Expert panel and selection criteria

Expert panel members are selected:

- On the basis of a public call, published on the Agency website;
- From the database of experts, maintained by the Agency;
- On the basis of recommendations from other agencies for quality assurance of science and higher education;
- By directly contacting potential reviewers.

Re-accreditation of a higher education institution is carried out by an expert panel, headed by a panel chair; expert panel is appointed by the Accreditation Council at its regular session or by an electronic vote.

An expert panel consists of five members (including the panel chair); however, a larger panel can be appointed if e.g. the evaluated HEI carries out study programmes in multiple fields.

Composition of an expert panel

- In re-accreditation of a university or a university constituent, expert panel comprises four (4) university teachers appointed to a scientific-teaching or artistic-teaching grade (assistant professor, associate professor, full professor), or researchers from scientific institutes. In re-accreditation of a polytechnic or a college, the panel includes at least two (2) college professors appointed to a grade in scientific fields in which the evaluated HEI delivers its study programmes, or persons appointed to the grade of senior lecturer and holding the academic title or degree of Doctor of Science / PhD, or Master of Science.
- At least one, but generally two of the above mentioned university teachers / researchers, or college professors / senior lecturers, should be employed at a higher education institution / research institute outside the Republic of Croatia. Alternatively, one expert from the business sector or a professional field closely related to the field in which the evaluated institution delivers study programmes, may be included in the expert panel in place of one university teacher / researcher, or college professor / senior lecturer.
- An expert panel includes one student from the field in which the evaluated institution delivers study programmes.

Expert panel members should possess appropriate competencies in relevant areas in which the evaluated institution carries out its activities, be recognised for their teaching/research excellence, and have a good international visibility.

A panel chair should have a good knowledge of higher education quality assurance, be experienced

in conducting quality assurance procedures and have an appropriate managerial experience in higher education. A student member of the expert panel should be recognized for his/her academic excellence (high GPA) and the continuity of studies, and have the fundamental knowledge in the area of higher education quality assurance.

The panel members are expected to have good command of the English language, good oral and written communication skills, be able to work in a team environment and agree to all set protocols, procedures and deadlines.

The panel members are independent in their work and do not represent their respective institutions. During the re-accreditation procedure, the panel members shall adhere to the principles of impartiality and objectivity.

The panel members should not be in conflict of interest.

A **conflict of interest** exists if:

- a) A panel member is/was under an employment contract, or any other type of contract or agreement on cooperation with the evaluated higher education institution **at the time of the re-accreditation procedure, or in the last 3 years;**
- b) A panel member participates, in any capacity, in a project carried out or involving the evaluated higher education institution;
- c) A panel member is/has **in the last 3 years** been a member of management, professional or advisory bodies of the evaluated higher education institution;
- d) A panel member is personally associated with the management/dean of the evaluated higher education institution;
- e) A panel member is a student or a graduate of the evaluated HEI.

A conflict of interest is also present if the above mentioned association relates to panel member's immediate family (spouse, first-degree relative, adoptive parent).

During a re-accreditation procedure (before and after the site visit), there shall be no direct communication between panel members and the evaluated HEI; panel members shall inform the coordinator on possible violations of this provision.

The coordinator is an Agency employee. The panel members shall maintain the confidentiality of information obtained during the re-accreditation procedure. For the reasons listed above, the panel members shall sign a **Confidentiality and Non-conflict of Interest Statement**.

Panel members **may not accept any gifts** from the evaluated HEI, before, during or after the site visit.

3. HEI's complaint about the composition of an expert panel

After the members of the expert panel have been appointed, the Agency submits the Decision on the Appointment of Members of the Expert Panel to the higher education institution undergoing re-accreditation. HEI has the right to object to the composition of the expert panel, in which case it shall submit the objection **within 7 days*** from the date of receipt of the Decision.

If HEI submits its objection to the composition of the expert panel, and the Accreditation Council decides that the objection is reasonable, new panel members shall be appointed **within 30 days***.

Objection to the composition of an expert panel does not affect set deadlines for the submission of the self-evaluation report and other documents.

4. The role and obligations of members of the expert panel, panel chair, coordinator, translator and copy-editor/proof-editor

Expert panel members are required to:

- Examine all documents submitted by the coordinator;
- Having read the self-evaluation report, and before the site-visit to the higher education institution, send to the coordinator a list of questions that should be addressed during the site visit and, if necessary, submit a list of additional documents the panel would like to examine during the site visit;
- Participate in the training sessions organised by the Agency;
- Participate in all expert panel meetings;
- Take notes during the meetings with stakeholders at the higher education institution;
- Participate in the drafting of the report and grading of individual quality standards and assessment areas;
- Ensure the consistency of grades and analyses of individual quality standards / assessment areas, as well as of recommendations for improvement;
- At the request of the Accreditation Council, provide feedback on the higher education institution's comments related exclusively to the factual inaccuracies or obvious errors in the report (HEI's official statement on the report), and correct and/or amend the final version of the report accordingly;
- Meet all the set deadlines;

In addition, the panel chair is required to:

- Coordinate the work of all panel members;
- Lead discussions and chair the meetings during the site visit;
- Chair the exit meeting with the HEI's management;
- Ensure the consistency of the final report, i.e. grades and analyses of individual quality standards / assessment areas;
- Finalise the report of the expert panel and submit it to the Agency;
- At the request of the Accreditation Council, provide feedback on the higher education institution's comments, related exclusively to the factual inaccuracies or obvious errors in the report (HEI's official statement on the report), and correct and/or amend the final version of the report accordingly;

Time frame of expert panel's contractual obligations:**

- 1-2 days for preparation: examining the self-evaluation report and other supporting documents, preparing questions;
- 1-5 days for the site visit to the higher education institution: training of the expert panel, site visit proper, work on the final report and Standards for the evaluation of quality;
- 1-2 days for finalising the final report.

** Minor alterations are allowed if an expert panel conducts two or more re-accreditation procedures.

Panel members shall receive remuneration for their work, in accordance with general acts of the Agency, and the Agency shall cover their travel and accommodation expenses. All other expenses are covered by the panel member.

Details on travel and accommodation expenses are defined in the Annex I of this Procedure, which forms an integral part thereof.

A coordinator is not a member of an expert panel.

A coordinator is ASHE employee tasked with providing administrative and professional support to the expert panel.

Coordinator is required to:

- Examine all relevant documents in the re-accreditation procedure;
- Attend all meetings;

- Check if the submitted self-evaluation report and accompanying documents are valid and complete, and - if necessary - request for the amendment of documents from the HEI;
- Communicate with expert panel members and the higher education institution;
- Organise and conduct the training of expert panel members;
- Draw up a site visit protocol and organise a site visit to the evaluated higher education institution;
- Ensure the factual accuracy of the expert panel's final report (Croatian and English version), and the consistency of provided grades and analyses of individual quality standards / assessment areas, as well as of recommendations for improvement;
- Ensure that the report is drafted on a standardised form;
- Ensure that the expert panel's final report and all supporting evidence are prepared for the Accreditation Council session, and, if necessary, participate in the Accreditation Council session in which that report is discussed;
- Coordinate a follow-up procedure, procedures regarding action plans etc.

Translator and copy-editor/proof-editor are not members of the expert panel.

Translator is required to:

- Provide simultaneous or consecutive interpretation during the site visit;
- Provide translation of relevant documents from English into Croatian, and vice versa;
- Ensure that the translation of the report is factually correct, and written on a standardised form.

Copy-editor / proof-editor is required to:

- Copy-edit / proofread the final report on a standardised form.

5. Self-evaluation and data entry into the information system (hereinafter: MOZVAG)

The Agency organises a one-day workshop on drafting a self-evaluation report for HEIs included in the plan of re-accreditation. When drafting the self-evaluation report, higher education institutions can ask questions at the QA Forum on the website of the Agency.

After the workshop on drafting a self-evaluation report is held, the Agency shall, in writing, notify each higher education institution included in the plan of re-accreditation on the deadline by which it shall submit the self-evaluation report. The period between the day of receipt of the said

notification and the day of delivery of the self-evaluation report shall not be **shorter than 60 days***. The self-evaluation report is drafted in line with the Standards for the evaluation of quality, as stipulated by the Act on Quality Assurance, Ordinance on the Content of a Licence and Conditions for Issuing a Licence for Performing Higher Education Activity, Carrying out a Study Programme and Re-Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (Official Gazette, 24/10) and the Ordinance on Conditions for Issuing Licence for Scientific Activity, Conditions for Re-Accreditation of Scientific Organisations and Content of Licence (Official Gazette 83/10).

The higher education institution is obliged to respect the set deadline for the submission of the self-evaluation report; in case the deadline is exceeded, HEI shall in part assume the responsibility for the level of preparation of the expert panel, with regard to the information contained in the self-evaluation report.

The change of data in the MOZVAG database shall not be possible after the self-evaluation report is submitted.

The higher education institution is obliged to place the notification of the re-accreditation procedure and instructions from the Agency on their notice board and homepage of their website; the instructions contain information regarding confidential communication on issues related to the evaluated higher education institution. Only the coordinator has access to data; the coordinator provides the information to the members of the expert panel who signed a Confidentiality and Non-conflict of Interest Statement.

The self-evaluation report of the higher education institution is drafted in accordance with the Standards for the evaluation of quality and it should contain clear, consistent and verifiable information.

The self-evaluation report is drafted in Croatian and English, and has a maximum of 100 pages.

The Self-evaluation report contains the following obligatory elements:

- A short description of the higher education institution (history, organization - organisational chart, mission and vision);
- The information on whether the higher education institution is listed in the Register of Scientific Organisations (if so, scientific area and field should be stated);
- The name of the study programme, professional or academic degree/qualification obtained upon the completion of the study programme, type of study programme (university or professional), study cycle, area and field, the institution delivering the study programme, the institution providing the study programme, duration of the study programme, ECTS credits, mode of study (part-time or full-time), place of delivery, the year in which the study

programme was accredited, i.e. the information from the MOZVAG database or the Directory of study programmes and the level of the Croatian Qualifications Framework;

- The description of the self-evaluation drafting process;
- The outcomes of all previous evaluations, the summary of the follow-up activities;
- All quantitative data the higher education institutions need to prepare in accordance with the self-evaluation report in the procedure of re-accreditation, which is entered in the MOZVAG database (the analytics from the MOZVAG database, which is an integral part of the self-evaluation report, is prepared on the basis of this data).

Higher education institutions shall once a year, and not later than 1 November of the current year, update the data on teachers, students and study programmes in the MOZVAG database, which forms an integral part of the analytics. Tables related to assessment areas 2, 3 and partly 4 (the part related to teachers) are mostly reporting tables that are generated based on data entered in the MOZVAG database for each academic year. Tables related to the assessment area 5 and partly the assessment area 4 (the part related to resources and finances) are completed only in the procedure of re-accreditation, during the drafting of the self-evaluation report.

The MOZVAG database is locked on the day the self-evaluation report, which contains tables from the analytics, is submitted. If any new evidence and information is presented to the expert panel during the site visit, the expert panel shall take them into account in grading the standards and drafting the final report. The MOZVAG database shall remain locked until the final decision is reached by the Accreditation Council.

Annexes to the self-evaluation report are not included in the total page count.

The self-evaluation report should be adopted by a competent body of the evaluated higher education institution. The self-evaluation report of a HEI is signed by the dean of the institution, and submitted to the Agency, in Croatian and English, in both printed and electronic form (on a CD). The coordinator ensures that the documentation is complete; if necessary, the Agency shall ask for amendments to the documents. A higher education institution shall submit the amended/completed documentation **within 14 days*** from the day of receipt of the Agency's request.

The Agency shall submit the self-evaluation report to all members of the expert panel. The expert panel shall examine the self-evaluation report and all additional documentation, draft comments on the identified advantages and disadvantages of the evaluated higher education institution, and

possible outstanding issues to be addressed during the site visit. If the higher education institution underwent any type of evaluation in the past, the Agency shall submit a report thereon to the expert panel.

After the self-evaluation report is submitted, the Agency shall agree on the details of the site visit, including the site-visit protocol, with the higher education institution and expert panel members.

The higher education institution shall appoint a site-visit coordinator for a direct communication with the Agency coordinator. The site-visit coordinator is in charge of the organizational details of the visit and following of the site-visit protocol.

6. Training of expert panels

Before the site-visit, all members of expert panels shall undergo training where they are informed on tasks, procedure and purpose of re-accreditation.

Expert panel members are required to submit a preliminary report that will briefly review each standard according to the available evidence (self-evaluation report and other documents of the higher education institution) **at least 3 days prior** to the training, or write down what further evidence is needed for an objective opinion to be delivered. The coordinator gathers the preliminary reports that the expert panels shall discuss during the site visit.

One day before the site visit, the expert panel shall meet at a location specified by the Agency. At that meeting, the coordinator shall outline the tasks and duties of each member of the expert panel and present the Croatian and European documents relevant for the quality assurance procedures in science and higher education. The main issues that should be discussed during the site-visit shall also be identified.

On the day of training, members of the expert panel shall elect a panel chair.

7. Site visit to higher education institution

A site visit to a higher education institution may last **from 1 to 3 days**, or - exceptionally - longer, which is determined by the Agency, in agreement with the members of the expert panel and the higher education institution. The site visit is carried out according to a predefined protocol that is submitted to the higher education institution and members of the expert panel no later than one week prior to the site visit.

In addition to expert panel members, coordinator, interpreter, and if necessary, assistant coordinators participate in the site visit to a higher education institution. Upon approval of the

Director of the Agency and the evaluated higher education institution, independent observers may also participate in the site visit, provided that they sign a Confidentiality and Non-conflict of Interest Statement.

The obligatory part of every site visit protocol are meetings with HEI management, representatives of the teaching and non-teaching staff, students, representatives of employers, business sector and partner institutions, as well as a tour of the facilities (lecture halls, libraries, laboratories, student administration office, IT classrooms, facilities for practical work, etc.). If needed, a meeting with representatives of professional and/or civil society organizations can also be organized during the site visit.

A higher education institution shall ensure adequate premises for the meetings planned in the protocol, internet access (*Wi-Fi*) and a separate room for the expert panel's meetings, breaks etc.

During the meetings, the panel members shall take notes on their observations. The higher education institution shall provide the expert panel with the documents regulating their activities (e.g. the founding act, regulations, rules of procedure, contracts, decisions, agreements, reports, analyses etc.) and examples of exams, seminar papers, final and graduation theses, dissertations, certificates, degree certificates and diploma supplements. In addition, the higher education institution shall provide the expert panel with syllabi including the learning outcomes (in Croatian and English), at the latest on the first day of the site visit.

During the site visit, the expert panel may pay special attention to those study programmes for which modification/amendment of the proposal of the study programme was requested in the initial accreditation.

A site visit to a higher education institution ends with an exit meeting with HEI's management, in which the panel chair or a person appointed by the chair (a member of the expert panel) informs the participants of the panel's observations during the site visit. Panel's observations and findings shall not be discussed during the exit meeting.

8. Report and Standards for quality assurance

Standards for the evaluation of quality are an integral part of each report, which is aligned with the final report form. The report is based on the information submitted by a higher education institution and the findings obtained during the site visit. The report should also include recommendations for improvement. The report is prefaced by a summary. The report shall have a maximum of 50 pages (not including the annexes).

On the last day of the site visit, all members of the expert panel participate in the drafting of the preliminary report, which contains a grade of each standard / assessment area, passed jointly by all panel members.

The expert panel agrees on the final version of the report by e-mail.

The panel chair submits the final report to the Agency **within 30 days** from the site visit. If an expert panel conducts two or more successive re-accreditation visits, the deadline for the submission of the final report can be extended to **60 days**.

ASHE coordinator reviews the final report and ensures that all the quality standards have been assessed. If the coordinator determines that amendments/corrections are needed to the report, in particular regarding the obvious factual inaccuracies or inconsistencies between the grades and analyses of individual standards or assessment areas, he/she shall return the final report via e-mail to the chair and all members of the expert panel, with a request for amendments. The panel chair shall submit the finalised version of the report **within 7 days**.

The expert panel may in its final report recommend to the Accreditation Council the implementation of a re-accreditation of part of activities related to specific study programmes.

9. The manner of passing a grade according to the Standards for the evaluation of quality

The standards are described as a certain level of quality, organized into five assessment areas and aligned with the ESG. Taking into account the descriptions of individual standards, the expert panel will grade each standard on the basis of examination of the gathered evidence and available indicators. Grades at the level of the standard: *Unsatisfactory level of quality; minimum level of quality; satisfactory level of quality and high level of quality*.

The expert panel shall grade each assessment area based on the grade of the standards within an assessment area. Grades at the level of the assessment area: *Unsatisfactory level of quality; minimum level of quality; satisfactory level of quality and high level of quality*.

In grading the assessment areas, the expert panel shall adhere to the following rules:

- If any of the key standards (1.1; 2.2; 3.1; 4.1; 4.4* or 4.5**; 5.1) within an assessment area is assessed as *unsatisfactory level of quality*, the grade of the assessment area cannot be higher than the *minimum level of quality*;
- If any of the key standards (1.1; 2.2; 3.1; 4.1; 4.4* or 4.5**; 5.1) within an assessment area is assessed as *minimum level of quality*, the grade of the assessment area cannot be higher than the *satisfactory level of quality*;
- The assessment area can be graded *high level of quality* if most of the standards within that assessment area have been assessed as *high level of quality*, and none have been assessed as *unsatisfactory level of quality* or *minimum level of quality*.

*** key standard 4.4. is applied in the re-accreditation of universities and university constituents**

***** key standard 4.5. is applied in the re-accreditation of polytechnics and colleges***

The grades of standards and assessment areas should be based on consensus-based decisions. If a consensus is not reached, the grade is passed by majority vote of expert panel members. If the votes are divided, i.e. if a decision was not adopted by a majority vote, the panel chair shall take the final decision.

If a panel member, even after a grade has been passed for a particular standard or assessment area, opposes the grade or the reasoning/analysis of a particular standard or assessment area, he/she may provide a reasoned separate opinion. The panel member providing a separate opinion shall submit to the coordinator a signed rationale. The reasoned separate opinion shall be annexed to the expert panel's final report, and shall be an integral part thereof.

10. HEI's comments on the expert panel's final report

The Agency shall submit a Croatian and English version of expert panel's final report to the evaluated higher education institution. A higher education institution may submit an official statement/comments to the final report **within 15 days*** from the day of its receipt, stating objections and/or providing clarifications exclusively with regard to factual errors or formal inaccuracies contained therein. A higher education institution shall submit to the Agency its official statement commenting the expert panel's final report in Croatian and English, in both printed and electronic form (on a CD).

The Agency shall submit the expert panel's final report and HEI's comments (if any) to the Accreditation Council.

11. The opinion and the opinion-making process of the Accreditation Council

Based on the re-accreditation procedure carried out, expert panel's final report and the official statement/comments of the higher education institution (if submitted), the Accreditation Council shall provide its independent opinion on:

- Issuing a confirmation on the fulfilment of conditions for performing higher education and/or scientific activities, or parts of activities;
- Denying a license for performing higher education and/or scientific activities, or parts of activities;

- Issuing a letter of expectation for the period up to three years in which period the higher education institution should make the necessary improvements.

If the Accreditation Council concludes that HEI's comments are valid, and that - for an independent opinion to be issued - the expert panel's final report needs to be corrected and/or amended in accordance with HEI's official statement, the Accreditation Council may decide that members of the expert panel are to be informed thereof, with a request to make corrections and/or amendments the final report. In this case, the coordinator shall send HEI's official statement to all members of the expert panel by e-mail, and chair of the panel shall, **within 7 days**, submit to the Agency by e-mail a corrected and/or amended final version of the final report.

If further clarifications are deemed necessary regarding the final report, the Accreditation Council may request additional statements from members of the expert panel.

The Accreditation Council shall render an opinion on the outcome of the re-accreditation procedure based on the expert panel's report, which includes the quality grade, and the comments from higher education institution, taking into account the following rules:

- If any of the assessment areas is graded as *unsatisfactory level of quality*, the outcome of the re-accreditation procedure may be the issuance of a letter of expectation*** or denial of the licence;
- If any of the assessment areas is graded as *minimum level of quality*, the outcome of the procedure may be the issuance of a letter of expectation***;
- If all assessment areas are graded as *satisfactory level of quality* or *high level of quality*, the outcome of the procedure is the issuance of the licence. In exceptional cases, if one or more key standards are graded as minimum level of quality or lower, the outcome of the procedure may be the issuance of a letter of expectation.

If the Accreditation Council determines that a letter of expectation should be issued to higher education institution, it shall define a deadline for the implementation of improvements (follow-up). The maximum deadline for the implementation of improvements is three years, depending on the type of deficiencies. If significant deficiencies are identified, which seriously put at risk the quality of study programme delivery, a letter of expectation with a deadline of up to one year shall be issued. If a longer period is required for resolving the identified deficiencies, and deficiencies in question are not so significant as to put at risk the quality of delivery of study programmes, a letter of expectation with a deadline of two or three years shall be issued, depending on the opinion of

the Accreditation Council. A letter of expectation can include the suspension of student enrolment within a set period, especially in cases when significant deficiencies are identified in the delivery of study programmes, which put at risk the achievement of the intended learning outcomes, or if the learning outcomes have not been appropriately defined.

12. Objection of the higher education institution to the opinion of the Accreditation Council and the Complaints Committee

After the opinion of the Accreditation Council is submitted to the higher education institution, the institution has a right to file a written objection to the Accreditation Council's opinion **within 15 days*** from the date of its receipt.

An objection can be filed for substantial violations of the accreditation rules, which have or could have rendered inaccurate the opinion of the Accreditation Council.

New facts or evidence that was not presented during the site visit of the expert panel cannot be presented in the objection procedure.

The Complaints Committee (hereinafter: the Committee), comprising three (3) members, at least one being a legal expert, shall decide on the objection. Two (2) alternate members are also appointed.

The members of the Committee shall be appointed for a term of **three years**.

Members of the Committee shall be appointed by the Agency's Management Board following a proposal of the Rectors' Conference and the Council of Polytechnics and Colleges under the following conditions:

- Experience in internal quality assurance in science and higher education;
- Experience in external quality assurance in science and higher education (e.g. as a member of an expert panel for external evaluation) and/or managerial experience in higher education and science;
- Experience in higher education and science in an international context (e.g. work on international research projects, participation in evaluation procedures abroad, study or work abroad);
- Excellence in respective professional field (publications, awards, appointment into managerial and representative bodies);
- High ethical standards and adhering to the principles of academic integrity;
- Excellent knowledge of Croatian and European legal framework and the context of quality assurance in higher education and science;
- Excellent knowledge of English language;

- Knowledge of the methods of evaluation of higher education institutions and scientific organisations.

Experience in cooperation with European representative bodies in higher education (E4 group), work experience in or cooperation with other complaints committees will be considered an advantage.

The Committee members are independent in their work and do not represent their respective institutions. When taking part in decision-making, they are guided by the principles of impartiality and objectivity.

The Committee members shall not be in any conflict of interest and shall sign a Confidentiality and non-conflict of interest statement.

The composition of the Committee, members' term of office, work and decision-making procedures, and all other issues relevant to the work of the Committee are defined in detail by the **Rules of Procedure of the Committee**.

The Committee shall reach decisions on the basis of the re-accreditation procedure documentation, and shall adhere to the principle of independence.

The Committee shall pass an opinion on the objection **within 30 days*** from the day of its receipt.

The Committee may request additional explanations from the coordinator and/or the chair of the expert panel, if needed to render an opinion on the objection.

The Committee's opinion shall include a rationale.

The Committee's opinion shall be submitted to the Accreditation Council.

The Accreditation Council shall discuss the opinion of the Committee, reach a decision and submit it to the Agency for the purpose of adopting an accreditation recommendation. In such a case the Accreditation Council's opinion is final, and the higher education institution is not allowed to submit another objection.

13. Accreditation recommendation of the Agency

On the basis of the re-accreditation procedure conducted and the opinion of the Accreditation Council, the Agency shall provide an accreditation recommendation to the minister to:

- Issue a confirmation on the fulfilment of conditions for performing higher education and/or scientific activities, or parts of activities
- Deny the license for performing higher education and/or scientific activities, or parts of activities
- Issue a letter of expectation with the deadline for resolving deficiencies of up to three years.

The accreditation recommendation also includes a quality assessment of a higher education institution, and recommendations for quality improvement.

14. Follow-up in case of issuance of a letter of expectation

If a higher education institution was issued a letter of expectation, it shall:

- Adopt an action plan for improvement - in line with expert panel's recommendations - within 6 months from the day of receipt of the letter of expectation, and submit it to the Agency,
- Submit annual progress reports to the Agency on the implementation of the action plan, and update the conditions of the study programme delivery in the MOZVAG database accordingly, up until the submission of the final follow-up report confirming that deficiencies have been resolved.

An action plan is defined for a period set by the letter of expectation.

The action plan and the report on its implementation shall be submitted to the Agency, in Croatian and English, in both printed and electronic form (on a CD).

A higher education institution shall keep account of the deadline for removing deficiencies, as set in the letter of expectation. No later than three months prior to deadline for removing deficiencies, as set in the letter of expectation, a higher education institution shall submit to the Agency a report on the improvements that have been made, in Croatian and English, in both printed and electronic form (on a CD). Analytics from the MOZVAG database is an integral part of the report on the implementation of the action plan. MOZVAG database is locked on the day of submission of the follow-up report. The Accreditation Council shall examine the report, and decide to what extent has the higher education institution implemented recommendations for improvement and resolved deficiencies identified in the re-accreditation procedure.

If necessary, the Accreditation Council may instruct the panel or part of the panel to re-visit the higher education institution, in order to establish the extent to which the deficiencies were resolved. The expert panel's report is submitted to the higher education institution, which has the

right to file a statement on the report, in accordance with Item 10.

The panel's report and HEI's statement on the report, if any, shall be submitted to the Accreditation Council, which - taking into consideration all documents arising from the re-accreditation procedure - renders an opinion on the following:

- Issuing a confirmation on the fulfilment of conditions for performing higher education and/or scientific activities, or parts of activities;
- Denying a license for performing higher education and/or scientific activities, or parts of activities.

After the three-year deadline has expired, the Accreditation Council cannot adopt another opinion on the issuance of a letter of expectation.

On the basis of the Accreditation Council's opinion, the Agency shall issue an accreditation recommendation, as per Item 13.

15. Action plan and recommendations for improvement

In case a certificate on the fulfilment of conditions for carrying out activities of higher education and/or scientific activity or part of activity was issued to a higher education institution following the re-accreditation procedure, the higher education institution shall:

- Adopt a five-year action plan for quality improvement - in line with expert panel's recommendations - **within 6 months*** from the day of submission of the certificate, and submit it to the Agency;
- Report on the implementation of the action plan to the Agency **two years after the adoption of an action plan***, and update the conditions of the study programme delivery in the MOZVAG database accordingly.

The report on the implementation of the action plan should describe the manner and the extent to which the recommendations for improvement, as outlined in the expert panel's report, have been implemented. The action plan and the report on its implementation shall be submitted to the Agency, in Croatian and English, in both printed and electronic form (on a CD). The analytics from the MOZVAG database is an integral part of the report on the implementation of the action plan.

The Agency shall submit HEI's action plan and the report on its implementation to the Follow-up Committee, which shall - after reviewing the documentation - submit its opinion to the Accreditation Council. The opinion of the Committee shall be discussed by the Accreditation Council, and after the adoption, sent to the higher education institution.

16. Public information

The final report of an expert panel in Croatian and English, official statement of a higher education institution on the final report, and the accreditation recommendation of the Agency are public documents, and published on the Agency's website after the completion of the re-accreditation procedure.

17. Feedback

After the re-accreditation procedure ends, the Agency gathers feedback from higher education institution and members of expert panels. The data is collected for the purpose of improving the work of the Agency.

18. Directory of study programmes of higher education institutions

The Agency maintains the Directory of study programmes of higher education institutions. The Agency shall update the information in the Directory of study programmes in accordance with the outcome of re-accreditation of a higher education institution. The Directory of study programmes of higher education institutions is public and accessible via Agency website.

IV. TRANSITIONAL AND FINAL PROVISIONS

The procedures of re-accreditation of activity or parts of activities of higher education institutions from the first cycle, and the procedures of re-accreditation of higher education institutions, which were carried out in accordance with the Plan of Pilot Re-accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (CLASS: 602-04/17-04/0052; FILE N°: 355-02-04-17-0001, of 25 April 2017), shall be completed in accordance with the provisions of the Procedures that were relevant at the time.

Upon the entry into force of this Procedure, the Procedure of Re-accreditation of Higher Education Institutions - consolidated text (CLASS: 602-04/17-04/0051, FILE N°: 355-01-17-0003, of 23 June 2017) shall cease to have effect.

This consolidated text of the Procedure shall supersede the Procedure of Re-accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (CLASS: 602-04/18-04/0025, FILE N°: 355 355-04-18-0001, of 23 May 2018).

This consolidated text of the Procedure shall enter into force on the date of its adoption, and shall be published on the Agency's website.

* The timescales within this document do not include periods from 15 July to 31 August and 24 December to 6 January.

ANNEX I

The Agency shall directly cover or reimburse the following expenses to the members of the expert panels:

- Airline tickets (economy class), with reservations and purchase made exclusively by the Agency (in agreement with the members of the expert panel), **or** train/bus tickets, **or** transport by personal car (free parking space provided in front of the Agency building);
- Hotel accommodation (half board), with reservations and purchase made exclusively by the Agency;
- Lunch during the site visit, organized and paid exclusively by the Agency;
- Non-alcoholic refreshments during the drafting of the report and work on the Standards for the evaluation of quality;
- Public transport:
 - - From home address to the airport (and back), from the airport to the hotel (and back);
 - - From home address to the railway station (and back), from the railway station to the hotel (and back);
 - - From home address to the bus station (and back), from the bus station to the hotel (and back).

Where there is a choice of transport, panel members should use the means of public transport that are more practical and convenient.

The Agency shall reimburse only those expenses for which the original receipts have been submitted. The panel members shall deliver the original receipts to the coordinator.

The Agency shall not cover or reimburse the following expenses:

- Airline tickets purchased by the panel members;

- Extra nights at hotels;
- Hotel mini-bar;
- Alcoholic beverages;
- Additional expenses incurred during the procedure that are not listed under expenses covered by the Agency (refreshments bought at gas stations or rest areas, expenses incurred in airport restaurants and cafes etc.)