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Zagreb, 14 September 2023

Pursuant to the provisions of Article 24, Paragraph 9 of the Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Science (Official Gazette, 151/22) and the provisions of Article 32, Paragraph 1, Item 11 of the Statute of the Agency for Science and Higher Education (CLASS: 003-05/13-01/0001; FILE NUMBER: 355-01-23-29), and at the proposal of the Director of the Agency for Science and Higher Education, Prof. Danijela Horvatek Tomić, PhD, at its 4th session held on 6 July 2023, the Accreditation Council adopted the following

ORDINANCE ON CONDUCTING THE PROCEDURE OF RE-ACCREDITATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Article 1

- (1) This Ordinance on Conducting the Procedure of Re-accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (hereinafter: the Ordinance) shall regulate the conducting of the procedure of re-accreditation of higher education institutions.
- (2) This Ordinance comprises provisions which are aligned with the following acts:
 - Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Science (Official Gazette, 151/22) (hereinafter: the Act) and
 - **Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)** (hereinafter: ESG), adopted by the ministers of the European Higher Education Area at the conference held in Yerevan on 14 and 15 May 2015.
- (3) The re-accreditation of higher education institutions shall be carried out every five years.
- (4) In the procedure of re-accreditation of higher education institutions, the **Quality Standards** in the Procedure of Re-accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (hereinafter: Quality Standards) shall apply. Quality Standards shall be determined by the Accreditation Council and published on the Agency website.
- (5) In the procedure of re-accreditation of higher education institutions, the evaluation of accredited study programmes shall also be conducted pursuant to the provisions of Article 15 of the Act.
- (6) Croatian and English shall be used in the procedure of re-accreditation of higher education institutions.



Article 2

Gendered terms used in this Ordinance are used neutrally and refer equally to male and female gender.

II. THE PROCEDURE OF RE-ACCREDITATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

1. Annual higher education institution re-accreditation plan

Article 3

(1) The Agency shall carry out the re-accreditation of higher education institutions pursuant to an annual re-accreditation plan.

(2) The Agency shall adopt the annual re-accreditation plan at the proposal of the Accreditation Council.

(3) In the annual re-accreditation plan, the Agency may include a higher education institution *ex officio*, at the proposal of the minister responsible for the area of higher education and science (hereinafter: the minister) or at the request of the higher education institution.

(4) The annual re-accreditation plan shall be published on the Agency website and all higher education institutions included in the plan shall be notified of this.

Article 4

A higher education institution which has been included in the annual plan may request that the re-accreditation procedure be postponed until the following year, which shall be decided upon by the Accreditation Council.

2. Self-evaluation report (ESG 2.3.)

Article 5

(1) The higher education institution shall produce a self-evaluation report in Croatian and in English for the purpose of the re-accreditation procedure, and shall submit the necessary information.

(2) The self-evaluation report for the purpose of conducting the re-accreditation procedure of the higher education institution shall be produced using the **standardised form** in **Annex 1**, and the information shall be submitted using the standardised form in **Annex 2** of this Ordinance, which form an integral part thereof.

(3) In the self-evaluation report, the higher education institution shall provide evidence of meeting each quality standard so that the expert panel may have sufficient information to formulate an opinion, i.e. the higher education institution shall provide evidence of compliance



with each quality standard and shall submit evidence to that effect along with the self-evaluation report.

Article 6

(1) The Agency shall notify each higher education institution of the date by which the higher education institution is obliged to submit the self-evaluation report to the Agency.

(2) The self-evaluation report shall be adopted by the competent body of the higher education institution and signed by the head of the higher education institution. The head of the higher education institution guarantees that the information contained in the self-evaluation report is true and accurate by signing it.

3. Composition of the expert panel and conditions for the election of expert panel members (ESG 2.4.)

Article 7

(1) In the procedure of re-accreditation of higher education institutions, the Accreditation Council shall appoint an expert panel composed of **at least five members**, i.e. at least four teachers and one student.

(2) If the re-accreditation is being conducted at a university, a faculty, or an arts academy, the expert panel members shall be appointed from among Croatian and foreign teachers holding a scientific-teaching or artistic-teaching position.

(3) If the re-accreditation is being conducted at a polytechnic (university of applied sciences), the expert panel members shall be appointed from among Croatian and foreign teachers holding the position of professor of professional studies, or tenured professor of professional studies, or from among teachers holding scientific-teaching positions with experience in teaching at professional studies.

(4) The expert panel shall not be composed of members who are Croatian teachers employed at a higher education institution which delivers the same study programme as the higher education institution undergoing the evaluation procedure.

(5) The student may not be the chair of the expert panel.

(6) At least one member of the expert panel who is a teacher shall be in the area and field of activity of the higher education institution.

(7) The members of the expert panel shall draw lots to choose the president of the expert panel.

(8) The expert panel members from among teachers must also meet the following conditions:

- they must be recognised for excellence in teaching at their home higher education institution, i.e. be recognised for excellence in scientific or artistic and professional activities, as well as internationally recognised;
- they must be familiar with quality assurance in higher education;



- at least one panel member must possess excellent knowledge of the quality assurance system and be actively involved in internal quality assurance processes at their home higher education institution.

(9) The student on the expert panel must meet the following conditions:

- they must be recognised for their excellence in studying at a study programme in the same area and field as the higher education institution which is undergoing re-accreditation;
- they must be a full-time student for a continuous period of time;
- they must be familiar with quality assurance in higher education.

(10) All expert panel members must:

- have a good command of English;
- have good oral and written communication skills;
- be able to work in a team.

4. Conflict of interest and confidentiality of information (ESG 2.4.)

Article 8

(1) The panel members shall not be in conflict of interest.

(2) A conflict of interest exists if:

1. they have signed an employment or other cooperation contract with the higher education institution which is undergoing re-accreditation, or have had an employment or other cooperation contract with the higher education institution which is undergoing re-accreditation in the last three years;
2. they have participated in publications with employees of the higher education institution which is undergoing re-accreditation and/or projects which this higher education institution is participating in or carrying out, or if they have participated in publications and/or such projects in the last three years;
3. they are participating in governing, expert or advisory bodies of the higher education institution which is undergoing re-accreditation, or have participated in these bodies in the last three years;
4. they have a personal connection to the head, i.e. the persons performing management duties at the higher education institution which is undergoing re-accreditation;
5. they are studying at the higher education institution which is undergoing re-accreditation or have completed a study programme at this higher education institution;
6. they are part of a court proceedings against the higher education institution which is undergoing re-accreditation.



(3) A conflict of interest also exists if the above-mentioned relations refer to the panel member's immediate family (legal spouse, first-degree relative, siblings, adoptive parent or adopted child).

(4) The expert panel members shall safeguard the confidentiality of the information they have learned and/or obtained when conducting the procedure of re-accreditation of higher education institutions.

(5) All expert panel members shall sign a confidentiality and non-conflict of interest statement.

5. Election and appointment of expert panel members

Article 9

(1) The expert panel shall be elected and appointed by the Accreditation Council.

(2) When electing potential candidates for expert panel members, the Accreditation Council shall use:

- the internal database of reviewers maintained by the Agency;
- proposals of candidates who have answered a public call;
- recommendations of other agencies responsible for quality assurance in higher education and science;
- direct invitations addressed to potential candidates.

(3) The Agency shall inform the higher education institution about the date of the site visit by the expert panel no less than three months before the site visit.

(4) In addition to the date of the site visit, the Agency shall submit to the higher education institution the decision to appoint an expert panel.

6. Request for the exclusion of expert panel members

Article 10

(1) The higher education institution may submit to the Accreditation Council a request for excluding an expert panel member within 30 days from the day of submission of the decision to appoint an expert panel.

(2) In that case, the Accreditation Council shall decide on the request for exclusion and shall, if it considers the request justified, appoint another expert panel member.

Article 11

(1) Prior to the site visit, the Agency shall organise training for the expert panel members during which it will acquaint the expert panel members with the specifics of the procedure, their role and obligations in the procedure, and deadlines.



(2) Members of the expert panel shall be entitled to remuneration for their work, in accordance with a general act of the Agency.

(3) A staff member of the Agency in the role of coordinator shall provide support to the expert panel, as well as an interpreter and/or a translator if necessary.

7. Site visit of the expert panel (ESG 2.3.)

Article 12

(1) The re-accreditation procedure shall begin on the first day of the site visit to the higher education institution by the expert panel.

(2) The site visit to the higher education institution shall be conducted on site.

(3) The expert panel shall, in agreement with the higher education institution, visit one or more sites where study programmes are delivered and/or scientific activity is performed, and/or one or more sites where the higher education institution operates.

(4) The site visit shall take place in accordance with a planned protocol which shall be submitted to the higher education institution prior to the site visit. The obligatory part of every site visit protocol shall be meetings with representatives of the higher education institution (the management and persons responsible for study programmes at the higher education institution, representatives of teaching staff, representatives of scientific staff, students and others); a tour of the facilities (lecture halls, libraries, laboratories, student administration office, IT classrooms, work facilities); a meeting with representatives of employers, the business sector and business associates; former students if applicable and non-teaching staff if necessary. If necessary, representatives of civil society and/or professional associations may be invited to a meeting with the expert panel.

(5) During the site visit, the higher education institution shall ensure adequate premises for all the meetings planned in the protocol, wireless internet access and a separate room where the expert panel may have their internal meetings, breaks and may lock away any personal belongings.

(6) The higher education institution shall provide the expert panel with access to documents governing its activities (such as rules of procedure, agreements, copies of employment contracts for full-time teachers and their registration for health and pension insurance, copies of employment contracts for external associates, copies of appointment to titles for teachers and external associates if applicable, etc.) and examples of assessment of student work.

(7) The expert panel members are independent in their work and do not represent their home institutions. In the re-accreditation procedure of higher education institutions, the expert panel members shall adhere to principles of impartiality and objectivity.

(8) In the procedure of re-accreditation of higher education institutions, the expert panel members may not give or accept gifts from the higher education institution or any of the



teaching, scientific or professional staff at the higher education institution, or external associates of the higher education institution.

(9) The site visit of the expert panel shall conclude with a meeting with the management of the higher education institution, where the expert panel shall inform the attendees of their observations during the evaluation. This meeting shall not include time for discussion regarding these observations. The expert panel shall not provide the management of the higher education institution with their opinion on the outcome of the procedure in question.

8. Report (ESG 2.3. and 2.6.)

Article 13

- (1) After the site visit, the expert panel shall draw up a report.
- (2) The expert panel shall submit the report using the standardised form in **Annex 3** of this Ordinance, which forms an integral part thereof.
- (3) The report shall be submitted to the Agency within 30 days of the day of the conclusion of the site visit.
- (4) The report shall include relevant evidence, analyses and conclusions with a view to the Quality Standards, as well as quality grades, recommendations for improvement and/or further development, and a final recommendation on the outcome of the conducted procedure.

9. The manner of passing a grade in accordance with Quality Standards and final recommendations of the expert panel

Article 14

- (1) Taking into account the descriptions of individual standards, the expert panel shall grade each standard on the basis of examination of the gathered evidence and available indicators. Grades at the level of the standard shall be the following: *not fulfilled*, *partially fulfilled*, *substantially fulfilled* and *completely fulfilled*.
- (2) The grade *completely fulfilled* implies that the higher education institution fully complies with the standard and that its implementation has been successful. The grade *substantially fulfilled* implies that the higher education institution complies with the standard for the most part and that its principles and spirit are observed in practice. The grade *partially fulfilled* implies that some elements of the standard have been implemented, while others have not, and that the manner of its implementation is lacking in efficiency. The grade *not fulfilled* implies that the higher education institution does not comply with the standard. A standard shall in any case be deemed not fulfilled if one of the criteria laid down by the Act has not been met, or if the conditions laid down in other regulations applicable to the area in which the higher



education institution is delivering the study programme (for example, those related to regulated professions, etc.) have not been fulfilled.

(3) Based on the standards assessments, the expert panel shall grade each area. Grades at the level of the assessment area shall be the following: *not fulfilled*, *partially fulfilled*, *substantially fulfilled* and *completely fulfilled*.

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

- if any of the compulsory standards (2.1., 2.2., 4.1., 4.4., 4.5. and 4.6.) included in the assessment area have been graded as *not fulfilled*, the grade for the whole area may be no higher than *partially fulfilled*;

- if any of the compulsory standards (2.1., 2.2., 4.1., 4.4., 4.5. and 4.6.) included in the assessment area have been graded as *partially fulfilled*, the grade for the whole area may be no higher than *substantially fulfilled*;

- an assessment area may be graded as *completely fulfilled* if most of the standards included in this area have been graded as *completely fulfilled* and no standard has been graded as *not fulfilled* or *partially fulfilled*.

(5) In adopting the final recommendation on the outcome of the conducted procedure, the expert panel shall adhere to the following rules:

- if any of the assessment areas have been graded as *not fulfilled*, the outcome of the re-accreditation procedure shall be a denial of licence or the issuance of a letter of expectation;

-if any of the assessment areas have been graded as *partially fulfilled*, the outcome of the re-accreditation procedure shall be the issuance of a letter of expectation;

- if all the assessment areas have been graded as *substantially fulfilled* and *completely fulfilled*, the outcome of the procedure shall be the issuance of a licence, with the exception of one or more of the compulsory standards graded as *partially fulfilled* or *not fulfilled*, in which case the outcome of the procedure shall be the issuance of a letter of expectation.

(6) The expert panel shall base the grades of all standards and assessment areas on decisions which they have reached by consensus.

(7) If no consensus has been reached, grades of standards and assessment areas shall be brought by a majority vote of expert panel members.

(8) If a member of the expert panel disagrees with the consensus reached over a grade for a given standard or assessment area, or if they disagree with a particular part of the report, they may write a dissenting opinion.

(9) The expert panel member shall justify their dissenting opinion and submit a signed document to the Agency staff member providing support to the work of the expert panel.

(10) The dissenting opinion and the justification thereof shall be submitted along with the final report of the expert panel and shall form an integral part thereof.



10. The higher education institution's comment on the report of the expert panel

Article 15

- (1) The higher education institution is entitled to comment on the report of the expert panel within 15 days of receipt of said report.
- (2) The comment referred to in Paragraph 1 of this Article refers only to a request for the correction of obvious factual inaccuracies or obvious errors in writing and/or figures in the report of the expert panel. The comment shall be submitted using the standardised form in **Annex 4** of this Ordinance, which forms an integral part thereof.
- (3) The higher education institution's comment shall not address the views and conclusions of the expert panel.
- (4) The Agency shall submit the higher education institution's comment to the expert panel, which shall correct the report insofar as it considers the corrections justified, and shall, within 15 days, submit the final report to the Agency. In this case, the final report shall be submitted to the higher education institution by way of information.
- (5) If the higher education institution does not comment on the report within the prescribed time frame, the report shall be considered final.

11. Proposal of the Accreditation Council (ESG 2.5.)

Article 16

- (1) The final report of the expert panel in the procedure of re-accreditation of higher education institutions shall be submitted to the Accreditation Council, which shall adopt a reasoned proposal no later than six months following the first day of the site visit of the expert panel.
- (2) The Accreditation Council may, in the event that it deems this necessary, require the expert panel to provide necessary clarifications.
- (3) A reasoned proposal shall determine that the higher education institution:
 1. Fulfils the criteria for the operation of a higher education institution;
 2. Should take certain measures to fulfil the criteria for the operation of a higher education institution or to fulfil the criteria for delivering a study programme or;
 3. Does not fulfil the criteria for the operation of a higher education institution or for delivering a study programme.
- (4) If the Accreditation Council establishes that a higher education institution fulfils the criteria for the operation thereof, they shall submit a reasoned proposal to the Agency to issue a licence for a five-year period.



(5) If the Accreditation Council establishes that a higher education institution should take measures set forth in Paragraph 3, Item 2 of this Article, it shall submit a reasoned proposal to the Agency to issue a letter of expectation with a deadline of up to three years containing the measures the higher education institution should take in order to obtain a licence.

(6) If the Accreditation Council establishes that a higher education institution does not fulfil the criteria for the operation of a higher education institution and/or delivering a study programme, it shall submit a reasoned proposal to the Agency to revoke the licence of a higher education institution for the operation thereof and/or revoke the licence for delivering a study programme.

(7) A reasoned proposal of the Accreditation Council includes a quality assessment of the higher education institution and recommendations for quality improvement.

12. Complaint by the higher education institution against a reasoned proposal of the Accreditation Council (ESG 2.7.)

Article 17

(1) The reasoned proposal of the Accreditation Council shall be submitted to the higher education institution, which is entitled to lodge a complaint with the Complaints Committee within 30 days of receipt of the reasoned proposal.

(2) The complaint shall be reasoned and accompanied by relevant evidence.

(3) The Complaints Committee shall investigate the validity of the complaint and respond to each claim made in the complaint no later than 15 days of receipt of the complaint.

(4) If the higher education institution has not lodged a complaint against the reasoned proposal, the reasoned proposal shall be submitted to the Agency.

13. Decision-making and legal protection (ESG 2.5. and 2.7.)

Article 18

(1) The Agency shall take decisions to issue licences.

(2) On the basis of the reasoned proposal of the Accreditation Council, and the response of the Complaints Committee if a complaint has been filed, the Agency shall take a decision to issue a letter of expectation i.e. revoke the licence for the operation of a higher education institution or to revoke the licence for delivering a study programme, within a maximum of 30 days upon receiving the reasoned proposal or the response of the Complaints Committee.

(3) The decision to issue a letter of expectation shall define the measures that a higher education institution should take in order to meet the criteria for the operation of a higher education



institution or a to meet the criteria for delivering a study programme, as well as the deadline for taking said measures.

(4) There shall be no possibility of appeal against the decision of the Agency as defined in Paragraph 1 of this Article, but an administrative dispute may be initiated.

14. Follow-up (ESG 2.3.)

a) Follow-up in case of issuance of a letter of expectation

Article 19

(1) In case of issuance of a letter of expectation, the Complaints Committee shall follow up on the work of the higher education institution for a period of three years.

(2) A higher education institution which has received a letter of expectation shall, within a maximum of three months from the day of issuance of the letter of expectation, adopt an action plan defining the activities, deadlines and indicators necessary for taking measures defined in the letter of expectation.

(3) The Accreditation Council shall decide on the justification of the proposed activities, deadlines and indicators within a maximum of 30 days.

(4) If the higher education institution fails to carry out the activities in accordance with the deadlines set and the indicators defined, the Accreditation Council shall submit a reasoned proposal to the Agency to revoke the licence for the operation of a higher education institution and/or revoke the licence for delivering a study programme.

(5) The Agency shall decide on the revocation of the licence for the operation of a higher education institution and on the revocation of the licence for delivering a study programme, and issue a decision thereof.

(6) There shall be no possibility of appeal against the decision of the Agency as defined in Paragraph 4 of this Article, but an administrative dispute may be initiated.

b) Follow-up in case of issuance of a licence

Article 20

(1) The decision to issue a licence shall also determine the follow-up procedure on the operation of the higher education institution to be carried out by the Follow-up Committee.

(2) During the follow-up procedure, the implementation of the recommendations of the expert panel shall be judged and/or evaluated.

(3) The follow-up procedure shall include the submission of an action plan for the enhancement of the quality of operations of the higher education institution in accordance with the



recommendations of the expert panel, as well as reporting on the implementation of said action plan.

(4) The Follow-up Committee shall, having reviewed the documentation, submit to the Accreditation Council its opinion on whether to adopt, i.e. not adopt, the action plan, i.e. reports on implementing said action plan.

(5) The opinion shall be considered at a session of the Accreditation Council and, once it has been adopted, shall be sent to the higher education institution.

15. Public information

Article 21

The final report, the higher education institution's comment, and the decision on the outcome of the conducted re-accreditation procedure shall be public documents, which shall be published on the Agency website.

16. Feedback

Article 22

Upon completion of the re-accreditation of a higher education institution, an Agency staff member shall collect feedback from the higher education institution and the expert panel members by means of a questionnaire. Feedback is collected to improve the work of the Agency.

IV. TRANSITIONAL AND FINAL PROVISIONS

Article 23

(1) The periods from 15 July to 31 August, and from 24 December to 6 January, shall not be counted against the deadlines specified in this Ordinance.

(2) The Agency shall submit the decision on the outcome of the re-accreditation procedure to the Ministry of Science and Education, so that it may be added to the relevant Registers.

(3) In case of revocation of a licence for the operation of a higher education institution and/or a licence for delivering a study programme, the Ministry of Science and Education shall, at the proposal of the Agency, bring forth measures to assure the continuation and completion of studies for the students of the higher education institution i.e. the study programme in question.

(4) Upon entry into force of this Ordinance, the Procedure of Re-accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (consolidated text) (CLASS: 602-04/18-04/0025; FILE NUMBER: 355-02-04-19-0004 of 17 July 2019) shall cease to have effect.



(4) This Ordinance shall be published on the website of the Agency and shall enter into force on the day of its publication on the website.



President
of the Accreditation Council

Mirjana H.

Prof. Mirjana Hruškar, PhD

ANNEX 1 – SELF-EVALUATION REPORT FORM

ANNEX 2 – INFORMATION SUBMISSION FORM

ANNEX 3 – EXPERT PANEL REPORT FORM

ANNEX 4 – HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION COMMENT FORM