

Methodical Guidelines for the External Evaluation of HEIs

The National Accreditation Bureau for Higher Education (NAB), in accordance with Section 83(2)(d) and Section 84 of the Higher Education Act, carries out external evaluation of educational activities, scientific, research, innovation, artistic and other creative activities (hereinafter referred to as "creative activities") and related activities of higher education institutions. This evaluation is carried out on the initiative of the Minister of Education or if the NAB finds serious grounds for an exceptional evaluation.

Article 1 Initiation of the external evaluation

According to Article 15 of the Statute of the NAB, external evaluations may be based on the initiative of the Minister of Education or they may be exceptional (on the initiative of the NAB Chair or a member of the NAB Board). In accordance with Article 3 of the Statute of the NAB, the Board of the NAB approves the conduct of an exceptional external evaluation as well as an external evaluation based on the initiative of the Minister of Education. The NAB Board shall inform the HEI that it has decided to initiate an external evaluation and of the scope and nature of the evaluation to be initiated. An Evaluation Committee is established for external evaluation in accordance with Articles 29 and 30(4) of the Statute of the NAB. When an external evaluation is based on an initiative, Article 15(2) of the Statute of the NAB shall be followed.

Article 2 Activities of the Evaluation Committee

- a) The activities of the Evaluation Committee established for external evaluation are governed by the Rules of Procedure of Evaluation Committees.
- b) The Evaluation Committee, through the NAB Office, will request from the HEI the necessary documents for the external evaluation, taking into account the scope and nature of the external evaluation, within a reasonable timeframe. The documents usually include a self-evaluation report based on a general outline. The Evaluation Committee may also request other necessary supporting documents during the evaluation, if necessary. The HEI may propose additions to the documents used as a basis for evaluation.
- c) After the NAB Office receives the requested documents from the HEI, they are forwarded to the Evaluation Committee. The Evaluation Committee will become familiar with the documents and will use them to prepare for the visit to the HEI. The NAB Office will arrange the on-site visit and all requirements for the visit. The visit usually includes:
 - meetings with the HEI management,
 - a tour of the HEI premises and an on-site study of the documents submitted,
 - where relevant, a discussion with students or HEI staff.
- d) At least three members of the Evaluation Committee shall always participate in the visit and, in addition to them, members of the NAB Board and the NAB Office staff may also participate in accordance with Article 31(3) of the Statute of the NAB.
- e) The external evaluation assesses compliance with legal and internal regulations in the activities of the HEI and the fulfilment of the standards for accreditation in their entirety.
- f) The evaluation should not be static, but on the contrary, it shall reflect the development of the implementation of the HEI's activities and its internal quality assurance. The evaluation shall capture whether the HEI's quality improvement tools and measures are effective. For this reason, it shall include independent consideration by evaluators even where the requirements are not explicitly stated (e.g., by quantification or other specific measure) in the law, accreditation standards or NAB methodical documents. The objective of the evaluation is in particular:

- to assess the activities of the HEI in its specific context,
- its ability to ensure the quality of educational activities in the longer term,
- to highlight its strengths and weaknesses and
- to provide it with inputs for future direction.

Article 3 External Evaluation Report

- a) On the basis of all available documents, taking into account the internal evaluation report of the HEI and its amendments, and the visit to the HEI, the Evaluation Committee prepares a draft external evaluation report. The report assesses:
 - whether the HEI's activities comply with the Higher Education Act,
 - whether the HEI's activities comply with the registered internal regulations,
 - whether the HEI's activities comply with accreditation standards and other relevant regulations; and
 - what the potential problems are in the short, medium and long term.
- b) The report must be specific, referring to concrete data and facts so that the statements contained therein are substantiated and verifiable.
- c) External evaluation reports should be structured within evaluations of a similar nature and scope in a consistent manner, logically, coherently and with easy navigation in the report. Emphasis is placed on conducting an objective analysis and breakdown of the available documents. On the one hand, the report draws the HEI's attention to any shortcomings in its activities and shows room for improvement, and on the other hand, it highlights good practice and changes already implemented. The external evaluation report includes recommendations for the HEI to develop strengths and address any weaknesses. The report also sets out a mechanism for monitoring the implementation of these recommendations within a specified timeframe. The external evaluation may also result in tentative conclusions for institutional accreditation or the accreditation of degree programmes or fields of habilitation procedures and procedures for the appointment of professor.
- d) Recommended general structure of the report (may be modified according to the nature and objectives of the evaluation):
 - I. Introduction with the basic characteristics of the HEI, its mission.
 - II. The HEI's ability of critical self-reflection and the ability to take adequate action.
 - III. Accredited degree programmes and educational activities.
 - IV. Personnel resources.
 - V. Creative activities.
 - VI. Information resources and instruments, material and financial resources.
 - VII. Students and the conditions of their studies.
 - VIII. Administrative support and the organisation of studies.
 - IX. Internal evaluation system, its effectiveness and impact on quality improvement.
 - X. The culture of the academic environment.
 - XI. Conclusions.
 - XII. Recommendations for the HEI.
 - XIII. Conclusions on accreditations and follow-up on recommendations.

Article 4 Issuance of the external evaluation report

- a) The Evaluation Committee shall draft an external evaluation report. The draft external evaluation report is sent to the evaluated HEI for comments within 15 days of receipt of the draft. The draft report and any comments from the HEI are discussed by the Board of the NAB at its meeting, to which representatives of the HEI are also invited.

- b) Pursuant to Section 83c(2)(f) of the Higher Education Act, the Board of the NAB shall issue a report on the external evaluation on the basis of mainly the above-mentioned documents, in accordance with Article 15 of the Statute of the NAB, within 180 days of the receipt of the initiative from the Minister of Education or the approval of a resolution of the Board of the NAB to carry out an exceptional external evaluation.
- c) The Board of the NAB also considers any objections submitted against the external evaluation report, with a deadline for submitting objections of 60 days from the delivery of the report to the HEI. The objections are commented on by the Evaluation Committee that prepared the draft external evaluation report. The external evaluation report may be modified after the Board of the NAB has discussed all the documents. The final external evaluation report is published on the NAB website. At the request of the HEI, any objections from the HEI will also be made public.