GUIDANCE ACTIVITIES OF EVALUATION QUALITY PROGRAMS OF STUDY UNIVERSITY AND OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

CHAPTER III

EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC QUALITY IN HIGHER ACCREDITED INSTITUTIONS

(INSTITUTIONAL EXTERNAL EVALUATION)

GUIDANCE ACTIVITIES OF EVALUATION QUALITY PROGRAMS OF STUDY UNIVERSITY AND OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

The external evaluation of academic quality is done in the following cases:

a) to authorize the provisional functioning of a study program (program authorization) or a provider of higher education services (institutional authorization);

b) for the accreditation of a study program (program accreditation) or of a higher education institution (institutional accreditation);

c) for the periodic certification, at five-year intervals, of the academic quality of the educational and research services of an accredited university.

SUMMARY

The external evaluation of academic quality in higher education accredited institutions is carried out for the periodic certification at five-year intervals of the academic quality of education and research services as part of an accredited university education process.

3.1. EXTERNAL EVALUATION AT INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL:

- verification of managerial activity and institutional structures;
- verification of financial activity;
- verification of internal quality assurance procedures;
- verification of the state of quality at institutional level, resulting from the analysis and correlation of all the available information corresponding to the Methodology.

3.2. EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE QUALITY OF STUDY PROGRAMS

Verification of the further fulfillment of the requirements on the basis of which the provisional authorization / accreditation of programs and institutional accreditation was granted, starting with the **verification of the fulfillment of the mandatory normative requirements regarding the authorization of the provisional functioning and the accreditation of the university degree programs**, specified in paragraph 4.2. of the Methodology, for a number of accredited programs established according to the number of license areas, but not less than three accredited programs.

Monitoring the evaluation: **a mission director**, member of the ARACIS Council, usually from the *Quality Assessment Department*.

The Mission Director proposes, **as coordinator of expert team** of evaluators who are performing visiting, a representative of the Commission for Institutional Assessment of Managerial or Financial Activities or, as the case may be, a representative of one of the Standing Expert Expert Boards assessing a field , one or more study programs. The proposal is discussed and approved in the Council of the Agency.

The Commission (Team) of Expert Evaluators:

Expert evaluators from the fields of study programs visited, usually one member of the Commission of Permanent Expert Experts (prepare the visits cards, in order to evaluate the academic quality of the study programs signed by the all team members);

The file of the visit is discussed and approved in the *experts personnel* and *experts committes*, by field (*Quality assessement reports* are prepared for each evaluated program); The quality evaluation reports of the study programs are submitted to the Quality external evaluation department;

Valuation experts in the field of managerial and financial activities and institutional structures (draw up the visit of fire and the institutional evaluation committee's report for managerial and financial activities, submitted to the quality external evaluation department);

The quality external evaluation department discusses and approves the Quality Assessment Reports of Study Programs and the Report of the Institutional Evaluation Committee for Managerial and Financial Activities (draws up the external quality assessment report);

The report of the external quality assessment departament is presented and discussed in the Aracis Council (after approval, it is finalized by the Agency's External Institutional Evaluation Report).

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ANNEXES

1. Introduction

1.1. Context

The Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (hereinafter referred to as the Agency or ARACIS), established in accordance with the provisions of Government Emergency Ordinance no. 75/2005 on the quality assurance of education, approved by Law no.87 / 2006, Art.14 (1), consists in the external evaluation of the quality of education, respectively the results and the academic performances of the higher education institutions. In this respect, the Agency contributes to the promotion of public confidence in the rules and standards for the granting of university qualifications, respectively of the diplomas and certificates in higher education in Romania.

This part of the guide describes the methods and procedures applied by the Agency for external institutional evaluation.

The external institutional evaluation process (external institutional evaluation) is based on a permanent strategic partnership between the Agency and the National Council of Rectors (CNR), on the systematic consultation of the National Agency for Qualifications in Higher Education and Partnership with the Economic Environment and Social (ACPART) as well as in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Research.

1.2. Principles for the application of external institutional evaluation methods :

External evaluation is a process that focuses both on the quality of study programs and on standards for the award of diplomas and certificates, and the responsibility of higher education institutions for what they are doing in this area. The external evaluation is a peer review, which starts from the internal quality assurance documents existing in each institution and follows the observance of several fundamental principles.

• Institutional external evaluation seeks to balance the need for a rigorous, independent and credible public assessment of institutions and the recognition that institutions are themselves in the most appropriate position to provide accurate and up-to-date information to all those concerned about the quality of their programs studies and standards for the award of diplomas and graduation certificates.

• As part of the implementation of the external institutional evaluation process, the Agency periodically establishes, together with M.Ed.C and CNFIS, the categories of data, information and criteria related to the quality of education and the mandatory standards for each higher education institution. The Agency expects higher education institutions to systematically publish a series of updated information on quality and standards each year and to conduct their own internal assessments in the context of their teaching and learning strategies. The process of external institutional evaluation is based, to a large extent, on these data and published information.

• The process of external institutional evaluation requires a high degree of openness, transparency and trust in the relationship between the Agency and each higher education institution. In order to ensure seriousness, impartiality and respect for trust,

the work of the Agency is based on general principles and also on the adoption of a set of principles and operating rules that are outlined in ANNEX 1.1.

• The quality assessment process places a special emphasis on students, on the information they receive about study programs, on how they have access to learning and on academic standards and competencies recognized in the labor market, presumes to be achieved through the academic qualifications obtained by each graduate of a study program.

The **external evaluation** combines the appreciation of the institutional capacity to properly organize the study programs with the investigations on how quality is ensured at the level of each study program. (this term is used in this Guide to cover the full range of modalities, options and other study opportunities, individual research and related support for learning, which together constitute the learning pathway that allows access to the award of the diploma once the program has been graduated).

1.3. Periodicity of external institutional evaluation

The process of external institutional evaluation is progressively introduced into the Romanian higher education starting with the academic year 2006-2007. The higher education institutions will participate in the first round of the external institutional evaluation by the end of 2009. The external evaluation will then be carried out cyclically at 5 years. At mid-cycle (after at least two years but no later than three years), the Agency will conduct a short visit to each institution to assess the progress made since the last external evaluation and to discuss the institution's intentions related to the improvement management quality and reference standards for the remaining years until the next assessment. It is assumed that throughout the evaluation cycle the institutions will continue to meet the standards found in the previous assessment and will also try to rise to higher levels.

• During the first 3 academic years of implementation of the external institutional evaluation mechanism (2006-2007, 2007-2008 and 2008-2009), the institutions that wait for the first external institutional evaluation participate initially in the process, starting from the corresponding internal institutional evaluation.

• In the first year, the evaluation is experimental and is initiated on a voluntary basis. In the first year, experimental character, also called "piloting", aims to improve the internal quality evaluation mechanism at study and institutional level, in order to test, with the assistance and in cooperation with the Agency, the internal procedures of the universities quality assurance and the relevance and functionality of standards and benchmarks.

• It is expected that the number of institutions subject to piloting will be limited in the first year, also in view of the training needs of the Agency's evaluators.

2. The purpose and objectives of external institutional evaluation

2.1. The purpose of the external institutional evaluation

The purpose of the external institutional evaluation is to identify and certify the extent to which higher education institutions respond to the public interest as well as measures for quality enhancement in the following main components of academic life:
• In the teaching-learning process, by ensuring a qualitatively acceptable level of study programs in line with the academic reference standards it has made public and which are at least at the level of standards, benchmarks and indicators performance ARACIS, in accordance with the provisions of Romanian Government Decision no. 1418 / 11.10.2006.
• In exercising the legal right to award diplomas and qualifications.

2.2. The objectives of the external institutional evaluation

The objectives of the external institutional evaluation are:
· Contribute, along with other mechanisms, to promoting and ensuring a high quality in the teaching-learning process in higher education institutions.
· Provide students, employers and the public with the widest and most rapid access to clear, trusted and explicit information on how each institution offers curricula, diplomas and qualifications that meet national requirements, in line with European academic standards and principles quality.
· Ensure that in cases where the quality of study programs is deficient, the external evaluation process creates the premises for initiating actions to improve them.
· Apply external evaluation mechanisms that guarantee the quality of the teaching-learning process, the transparency of the management and the public accountability of the higher education institutions.

3. Main Aspects of the External Institutional Assessment Process

3.1. Main Aspects of the External Institutional Assessment

The external institutional evaluation focuses on following three main issues, as follows:
· The effectiveness of mechanisms and internal quality assurance structures at institutional level (institutional capacity), from the perspective of the Code of Good

Practice for ensuring academic quality and graduation standards in higher education, and the extent to which the content and quality of study programs and diploma standards are periodically reviewed by each university. The Code is to be developed by the Agency after the pilot phase of 2006-2007, taking into account the good practices at European level contained in the ENQA documents of the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. At the same time, it is analyzed whether the recommendations made during the previous evaluations (internal and external) are implemented and what is their effect. The purpose of this examination is to provide public information on the quality of activities in any higher education institution as a provider of higher and higher internal and internationally recognized qualification programs;

· Accuracy, completeness and credibility of the information that institutions publish about the quality of their study programs and the degrees they award when they graduate. In this way, information is provided on the level of trust that can be given to information material published by the institutions on the quality of the activity and the usefulness of information for students and other interested parties;

· Internal quality assurance mechanisms and procedures, which are analyzed by documentary examination of the quality assurance of study programs, respectively by thematic evaluation of some activities (eg: how is the quality of professional and career guidance services ensured at university level of students, which is the mechanism of internal assurance of the quality of examination at the level of faculties and faculties etc.). The external evaluation aims at demonstrating the validity and credibility of the information provided by universities based on the internal quality assurance process. As a general trend, in the framework of the institutional external evaluation the evaluation of study programs is expected to cover at least 20% of the programs of a higher education institution.

3.2 The main elements of the external institutional evaluation

In order for the external institutional evaluation to be able to meet the purpose for which it is carried out, it pursues several main elements:

·Examine the mechanisms and internal procedures for assuring and continuously improving the quality and results of their application, especially at the level of study programs;

·How to use the external references included in the Quality Assurance Methodology, including the Code of Good Practice;

·Available public information on the content and quality of study programs and the standards for the award of diplomas;

·Internal management information system and its contribution to internal quality monitoring and compliance with standards;

·Designing, using and publishing information about programs;

·Academic standards proposed by the institution and those made by students in obtaining academic qualifications when graduating from study programs;

·Student experience in the learning process;

·Ensuring the quality of the teaching staff, including assessment criteria and how the efficiency of teaching-learning is monitored, refined and rewarded by university management;
·The way in which the institution raises the qualitative level of all educational, research and managerial activities in relation to the levels of performance indicators achieved in accreditation.

This enumeration is not limitative, and other elements may be added for the purpose of the external evaluation, including in agreement with the institution.

4. Data required for evaluation of the activities and structures involved in the evaluation

4.1. The access of the evaluation teams to the information

To assist assessment teams (committees) in formulating their assessments, they have a variety of sources of information, including:

·The set of information that is reported annually to the Ministry of Education and Research and CNFIS to the National Council for Higher Education Financing and CNCSIS to the National Council for Scientific Research in Higher Education. The Agency is aware of the fact that the institutions will need time to meet the requirements and will provide appropriate recommendations to the expert assessment teams that will visit the institutions during the pilot phase.
·Self-assessment reports developed by institutions, including self-assessment papers specific to study programs and support documentation; The Guide to the development of the institution's self-evaluation documents and recommendations on the structure of the Internal Evaluation Report (self-evaluation) is presented in ANNEX 4.1;
· Information from the institution and other sources on the selected disciplinary areas to be evaluated, including the evidence of the students' results in these disciplines at the respective university compared to other higher education institutions.
· Institution reports developed by the Agency or other relevant bodies over the last five years.
· Information obtained during or after the evaluation visits.

In order to support the development of assessments, the evaluation teams (evaluation committees) have at their disposal relevant information and analyzes, which

will be developed by the Agency from the experimental period and, at least, on an annual basis.

• The team of expert assessors interacts permanently with a representative of the institution, hereinafter referred to as a contact person. It is a representative member of the academic community, established by the education provider's management. The contact person shall contribute to effective communication between the Agency's evaluators and the higher education institution and shall be designated by the Rector's decision.

4.2. Student participation

Students are a central element of the objectives of the institutional external evaluation. Evaluation teams examine a number of relevant issues for students:

· The quality of the information provided to them, the way in which the learning process is facilitated and supported, the academic standards that are expected to be attained and those actually achieved in practice at the time of obtaining the university qualification.
· In each evaluation process, students are invited to participate in the main stages of the evaluation process. Their representative bodies - mainly the student organization or its equivalent - have the opportunity to participate in the preliminary meeting between the Agency and the institution and can provide a written report before the evaluation visit.

The members of the representative body and other students are invited to attend certain meetings during the evaluation visits and have the opportunity to ensure that the external evaluation team got acquainted with the issues of primary interest and their student preoccupations.

It is recommended that the institution ensure the direct and independent participation of students in the process, starting with the drafting of institutional self-evaluation documents.

5. The finality and usefulness of the external institutional evaluation and the reports published by the Agency

5.1. Results of institutional evaluation

The results of the institutional evaluation are published by the Agency in the form of an INSTITUTIONAL EXPERT EVALUATION REPORT of the AGENCY, in which the following types of assessments are made:

· The trust that can be given to the present and foreseeable management of the institution in terms of quality of study programs and graduation standards at graduation; this assessment may be useful in the financing decision from public or private sources of the institution.

· The trust that can be given to the university on the basis of the clear, complete, complete and correct character of the information the institution publishes about the quality of the programs its certification standards; this appreciation is useful with the priority of the present and future students of the institution and other categories of beneficiaries.

THE EXTERNAL INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION REPORT OF THE AGENCY shall also formulate comments on other issues, including on the characteristics, capacities and limits of internal quality assurance methods by institutions, on the quality of study programs and the standards for the award of diplomas and certificates of study, based on the conclusions of the evaluation of the study programs.

The report highlights aspects of good practice, includes recommendations for progressive improvement of quality and / or recommendations for internal review required at the discipline or institutional level.

5.2. Comparison of quality assessment results with reference sources

In order to assess the quality management of a higher education institution, a series of external reference sources, including the National Framework of Qualifications in Romanian Higher Education (in process of elaboration), the External Evaluation Methodology, standards, reference standards and the list of ARACIS performance indicators published by the Agency, good practices at European level included in the documents of the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education - ENQA.

In doing so, both the identification of compliance is not sought, but the way in which the institution took account of the proposals from the reference sources reflected them in its own practices in different areas of activity and the conviction that it adopted or that it will soon adopt all the measures necessary to ensure quality. The Agency wishes to ensure that the necessary changes are effectively taken to ensure that the

university complies with the principles and standards of assurance and continuous improvement of quality.

6. The external institutional evaluation team (committee)

6.1.Component of the external institutional evaluation team (committee)

The external evaluation team(s) shall monitor the quality of the institution according to the areas, standards, criteria and performance indicators established by the regulations in place at the level of the institution accredited as a provider of higher education programs. Since, through these regulations, the education provider is not decoupled from the programs they offer, in order to achieve the objectives set, the team of external evaluators has a structure that allows both dialogue with the provider of education considered as an institution, with as many as possible large beneficiaries as well as with the structures responsible for carrying out a relevant number of study programs.

In view of this objective context, the external valuation team may consist of at least three people, one of which is the team coordinator. In well-justified cases, additional assessors may be added to the team, depending on the number of study programs or other aspects that are considered necessary. Additional assessors, technical or specialized, from the country or from abroad, are invited to provide other opinions on specific aspects of the activity at the level of mandatory normative requirements, discipline or study program, etc.

The coordinator of the visiting expert team of evaluators is proposed by the mission director and may be a representative of the Commission for Institutional Assessment for Managerial and Financial Activities or, as the case may be, a representative of one of the Standing Expert Expert Boards assessing a field or one or more study programs. The proposal is discussed and approved in the Agency Board after approval by the Executive Bureau.

The size of the team is determined by the Agency in accordance with the size and complexity of the assessed institution's activity. The team co-ordinator focuses primarily on institutional issues and has an important role to play in ensuring that the work of team members collects relevant data for a full evaluation. The other evaluators respond to both institutional and study-related requirements.

If during the visit it was not possible to elucidate any uncertainties about a study program, a field, in financial and managerial activity, or in connection with the internal insurance mechanism of quality, up to two additional expert, technical or specialist

assessors from the country or from abroad other than those who participated in the visit may be required to make a new visit as soon as possible specified by the Agency.

The evaluators are selected by the Agency from their own data base and are trained by the Agency to ensure they are familiar with the goals, objectives and procedures of the external evaluation process as well as with their own roles and tasks within the assessment mission.

Evaluators, people with relevant experience for their functions within the assessment team, are trained by the Agency in line with the dynamics of the methodology, standards, performance criteria and indicators.

The quality assessment reports of the study programs are drawn up by the Standing Expert Expert Boards of the Agency. The report of the institutional evaluation commission for managerial and financial activities is drawn up by the commission, with the participation of the evaluators, visiting team members, who deal with financial, patrimonial and managerial issues.

6.2. Follow-up of evaluation at Agency Board level

For each evaluation mission, the Quality Assessment Department proposes to the Agency Council a mission director from the members of the ARACIS Council, an assessment team (commission) and a team leader.

The Mission Director selects the Valuation Team (s) from the Valuation Expert Register and proposes for the Executive Board of the ARACIS Council an evaluation assessment coordinator who is part of the Institutional Assessment Commission.

For the selection of experts, account shall be taken of the elements contained in ANNEX 6.1.

The implementation of external quality assessment mechanisms should be as transparent and efficient as possible and should not consume more resources than necessary. For this purpose, the team (commission) of evaluating experts uses existing information and documentary support provider of study programs. Thus, internal documents are subject to examination the evaluators designated by the Agency as self-assessment documents. Evaluators will use, by as well as other information and documents available electronically, for example, on a site intranet of the higher education institution.

Mission Director:

· Monitors the time required to conduct an evaluation to be the minimum necessary to help evaluating experts make their own assessments of the assessed study programs and the institution;

· Ensures the transparency of the evaluation process by applying the standards and reference standards made public by the Agency;

· Permanently interact, with the team coordinator, with the contact person established by the institution.

The external evaluation team (commission) is monitored by the Agency Board throughout the preparation, running and reporting of the external evaluation mission through the mission director.

The mission director makes recommendations to the institutions during the preparation of the visit and works with the assessment team on the initial analysis of the documentation, using as reference date the information in the Agency's database.

The mission manager is an important speaker in the dialogue with the representative of the evaluated institution. At the same time, he is responsible for the completion of the mission, working with the coordinator of the team of assessors to draft and, if necessary, review the final report on the basis of any suggestions of the evaluated institution.

He shall sign with the Mission Coordinator the final form of the Quality Assessment Reports of Study Programs and the Report of the Institutional Assessment Committee for Managerial and Financial Activities presented QUALITY EXTERNAL EVALUATION DEPARTMENT of ARACIS.

7. The conduct of the external institutional evaluation process

7.1. Preparing and running the external evaluation

The external institutional evaluation process is carried out according to the calendar presented below. (for 2007, where the Methodology is applied experimentally, it is recommended that the specified time intervals be lower).

The timetable for organizing and conducting an external institutional evaluation mission:

No.crt.	Activities	Time interval
1.	The Quality Assurance Department of ARACIS act on the External Evaluation Request submitted to the Agency by the university, or by filing another document legal basis on which external evaluation is initiated, and fulfilling the contractual terms for the evaluation institutional and at least 20% of the study programs.The evaluation request will include the list of all accredited study programs , from all fields, on for all three cycles.	Appointment of the mission director external evaluation is done by ARACIS, with 6 months before the evaluation visit based on request for institutional or other evaluation the legal document under which it is initiated external evaluation, filed at the Agency's premises by the institution. The appointment of the mission director is done within one month of receiving the External Evaluation Request.
2.	Preliminary visit of the mission director of evaluation. The mission director visits the institution to do so meet with representatives of the institution and with students in the link to the next evaluation visit. During the visit the list of accredited programs is finalized which will be subject to evaluation. The mission director discusses and establishes together with the institution the timing of the process external evaluation, evaluation methodology and guides related. The institution is represented by the person contact.	Preliminary visit of the mission director evaluation takes place no more than 5 months before by the evaluation visit. Meeting with the contact person is completed by a document signed by both parties.
3.	At the proposal of the Department of Quality Assurance, on the basis of the document presented by the Director of Mission, The Agency Board approves the list of study programs will be evaluated, as well as the composition of the team expert evaluators: team coordinator, experts evaluators. Program data is communicated university to prepare documentation necessary complementarity .	It is completed no more than four months before by the evaluation visit.

4.	Agency receives report (documentation) self-evaluation at institutional level (paper and format electronic), documentation for study programs selected by the Agency's External Evaluation Agency, as well as the annexes in electronic format.	The Agency expects to receive the Self-Assessment Report accompanied by full documentation no more than two months before the evaluation visit. If the documents are not received during this period or are found to be incomplete, the Agency reserves the right to reprogram the visit at a later date that does not disturb the schedule of the other evaluations Agency.
5.	Meeting of the assessment team coordinator, with the contact person and a representative of the students to identify the objectives of running evaluations during the visit, the possible areas of evaluation theme and timing, timetable and place of each stage in evaluation visit. Information is also established which need to be prepared by the institution until external evaluation visit.	It takes place at ARACIS headquarters, at most one month before the evaluation visit. In the time visits, the commission of experts may request to evaluate a limited number of others objectives, as well as some changes timetable.
6.	The evaluation team visits the institution. directory mission joins the team on the final day of the visit. The team of assessors meets with the teaching staff and with students to discuss issues that concern them evaluation at institutional and thematic level and at study programs selected by the Agency. Evaluation study programs and / or domains is carried out by rule, by one or two experts.	The external institutional evaluation visit is takes place for three working days (of rule, Wednesday - Friday).
7.	Where appropriate, the institution shall be informed of it possibly requesting specialized expertise independent for a study program or one an area in which uncertainties or doubts arose in related to the internal quality assurance mechanism evaluation, any supplementary information that may help to clarify the situation.	At the beginning of the second day of the visit.
8.	The mission director sends the visited institution a letter containing the preliminary results of the evaluation institutional. The letter is drawn up with	Within two weeks after the visit evaluation.

	the agreement of all members of the assessment team and countersigned by mission coordinator.	
9.	If necessary, the Mission Director shall establish in within one week, together with the institution, the date / dates on which the evaluating experts will be presented additional for the additional evaluation visit program, domain or thematic evaluation. This visit takes place within a period of not more than two weeks after institutional evaluation visit.	Additional assessors submit to Quality Assurance Department of ARACIS reports are included the conclusions of the new visit, within a week after its conclusion.
10.	The institution responds to the letter containing the results preliminary assessment of the institutional assessment.	Within one month of the evaluation visit institutional capacity.
11.	THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION DEPARTMENT QUALITY Discussion and Approves Reports evaluation of the quality of study programs and Report of the institutional evaluation committee for the managerial and financial activities. Department EDIT DEPARTMENT REPORT FOR EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF QUALITY; Department Report EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSESSMENT is presented It is being discussed in the ARACIS COUNCIL, which draw up the DEVELOPMENT REPORT EXTERNAL INSTITUTIONALITY OF THE AGENCY, in the presence of the Mission Director. The Council has the publication of the Evaluation Report agency's external institution on the ARACIS site. it recommends the annexation of the letter of reply a institution evaluated.	Within two months of the visit institutional evaluation.

7.2. Additional details to conduct the activities specified in the external institutional evaluation calendar.

The evaluation process begins 6 months prior to documentation visits, when the agency's quality assessment department designates the mission director and makes available the external evaluation request from the higher education institution.

The preliminary meeting of the mission and the higher education team takes place about 5 months before the evaluation visit. The role of the meeting is to clarify the purpose and procedures of the evaluation. It discusses the interaction between the members of the evaluation team, the evaluated institution and the Agency, the content of the documentation prepared by the university for external evaluation (to ensure that the self-evaluation documents cover all aspects of the external evaluation process). Establishes the database for the selection of study programs to be assessed in the mission. The preliminary meeting also provides for the possibility of discussions between the mission director and the students representatives of the students contribution to the external institutional evaluation process.

During this preliminary meeting, the Agency discusses with the institution all aspects that, on request, are to be evaluated more deeply than in the ordinary course of assessment of study programs. These additional assessments are not usually included in the institutional external evaluation process but their results are followed by the institution and (if relevant) by the Agency and the findings can make a major contribution to a future round of evaluation of the programs studies (for example, a field or discipline package with a major contribution to obtaining academic qualifications).

On the basis of preliminary discussions with the higher education institution and the information available in the Agency, the Mission Director proposes to the Council of Ministers the approval of the calendar of the calendar of the institutional evaluation mission, presents the list of all the study programs of the institution and the minimum number of programs to be be evaluated in the mission.

The Mission Director requests the University to respond in writing if they carry out, at headquarters or in relocated centers, study programs that are authorized to operate on a temporary or accredited basis and other programs. All information is submitted in writing to the Agency Board.

If the institution carries out such programs, the Agency Board notifies the university that it does not carry out the external institutional evaluation until it is legalized with all the study programs. At the same time, the Agency immediately informs in writing M.Ed.C. on the situation found.

At the same preliminary meeting, the Agency Board shall, at the proposal of the Quality Assessment Department, establish the list of study programs selected to be evaluated, the lead assessor and the evaluator experts. About four months before the visit, the institution is informed of the study programs to be evaluated.

· Initial documentation required:

The institution is required to provide the Agency with the initial documentation for the external evaluation (one paper copy and five copies in electronic format) no later than two months before the visit. Initial documentation includes an updated internal institutional self-evaluation report, internal self-evaluation reports of study programs selected for external evaluation as well as other data, information, and documents that the institution wishes to provide in advance to the external evaluation team. In ANNEX 7.1. there are presented elements regarding the elaboration of the institution's self-evaluation documents and recommendations regarding the structure of the internal evaluation report (self-evaluation). In Appendix 7.2 are presented additional issues related to the operation and management of information received by the Agency, including from students.

At the time of receiving the documentation, it is handed over to the Mission Director to ensure that it is distributed electronically to the members of the external evaluation team.

· External evaluation visit:

As a rule, the external evaluation mission takes place over three business days, from Wednesday to Friday. The detailed schedule for each working meeting with senior staff, teaching staff and students is established by the team in agreement with the evaluated institution. A visit typically has the following objectives:

· Consultation with the complementary documentation provided by the institution, including the reports of external examiners involved in internal self-assessments.
· Examine the way the institution addresses quality assurance.
· Examine the link between institutional procedures and their application at study or discipline level, with emphasis on the efficiency of internal evaluation of study programs.
· Examine the way the institution relates to the requirements to ensure the knowledge, skills and aptitudes specified in the National Qualifications Framework in Higher Education.
· Examine internal processes for evaluating study and / or thematic evaluation programs, including pre-arranged discussions, as well as evaluating illustrative examples for assessing student activity. Examining the accuracy, reliability and completeness of the information published on the institution's website for students and the interested public, focusing on the specifications of the study programs (mission, content, academic qualification at graduation).
· Assessing the declared quality of current student programs and outcomes, not only on the basis of academic results but also how students are assisted in learning and how to use learning opportunities.
· Examine how the research results of CNCSIS have been evaluated and how the CNFIS quality indicator has been met regarding research.
· At the end of the evaluation visit, meetings are planned with the staff of the institution's management, respectively when needed, with the person in the study

programs and / or disciplines selected for follow-up, in order to clarify the current problems and the issues results of the evaluation.

On the last day of the visit, the team works independently without the contact from the institution. Under the leadership of the coordinator, the team analyzes the conclusions / outcomes of the external evaluation at both institutional and study levels:
· Formulate assessments of the trust that can be given to the institution for the quality management of its study programs and the academic standards announced by the institution in awarding the diplomas.
· Formulate assessments of the confidence that can be taken into account, in terms of accuracy, integrity and completeness and correctness, of the information that the institution publishes about the quality of its programs and the graduation standards.
· Identifies a number of issues, such as good practice in quality management or teaching-learning, and facilitating learning, etc.
· Develop preliminary recommendations to further improve the quality of disseminated activity and information.

The Agency's Mission Director participates with the team members on the last day of the external evaluation visit.

The team also confirms, on the last day of the visit, possible programs or areas for which it wishes to have the expertise of other independent experts. As far as possible, they are notified to the institution evaluated on the second day of the visit. When it is requests the additional specialist opinion, the results, evaluations and recommendations of the external evaluation team made on the last day of the visit are provisional.

At the end of the external evaluation visit, no written or oral information is received from the institution visited. The management of the institution receives a letter from the Agency within two weeks of the visit, highlighting the main conclusions of the external evaluation and the likely recommendations to be included in the preliminary report. If the expert opinion of additional experts is to be taken into account, the Agency shall send the institution a letter informing it that it has sent the documentation to them but the institution is not informed of the main outcomes of the external evaluation until after the additional experts have sent their own findings to the Agency.

3. 2. EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE QUALITY OF STUDY PROGRAMS AS PART OF THE INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION

8. Evaluation of study programs

8.1. The purpose of evaluating study programs as part of institutional assessment

Evaluation of the study programs as part of the institutional evaluation follows:
·Verify the extent to which the quality assurance mechanism at the institution level operates properly at the level of each study program examined.

·Evaluate actual (actual) results obtained by students during the program studies on the institutions declared and the effectiveness of student support in the learning process.
·Compare directly the institution's statement on the accuracy, completeness and correctness of the information provided about the content and quality of its programs, and about the graduation standards experienced by students and graduates.

The number of study programs to be examined in each institutional assessment is determined by the Agency, according to the size and scale of the institution's activity, quantified by a number of distinct academic qualifications (diplomas and certificates) awarded by the university either at the headquarters or in the delocalised centers providing the same study program. As a general rule, the procedures cover 20% of the programs of the assessed higher education institutions. During the experimentation (piloting) of the application of external quality assessment procedures, the Agency may recommend to institutions a higher degree of coverage.

The curriculum evaluations correspond, in a balanced way, to the three courses of university studies, namely, a bachelor's degree, a master's degree and a doctorate.

Initial identification of possible study programs to be subjected to external evaluation shall be carried out by the Director of Mission. The purpose of this external program evaluation is to analyze the effectiveness of the institution's model for its periodic to determine how a curriculum covers the training requirements in the respective field of study, correlated with the definition of the university qualification proposed to the students at graduation.

There are several reasons why a study program (or a domain where several programs are offered) is selected to be rated:
·Provides a recent illustration of the institutional quality assurance process and certification standards.
·Presents aspects of particular interest at institutional level or innovative elements in the teaching-learning process.
·There was a lack of institutional clarity in internal self-assessment documents on quality assurance engagements and that can be clarified by examining by a team of external evaluators a specific program and a particular disciplinary area.
·There are indications in other documents (including reports from the Agency or other bodies about the institution) about possible deficiencies.
·When considering several study programs, the external institutional evaluation team must be able to form an aggregate view of the institution's range of activities.
·If some study programs recently evaluated (typically less than two years before the start of the institutional evaluation) have been rated "high confidence", it is recommended to select other programs for evaluation.

The evaluation of study programs / domains responds to several general requirements during the institutional evaluation visit. It involves the activity of one or two experts, of which at least one has a current or recent experience in relation to the curriculum or the assessed disciplinary area. Normally, approx. 25% of the visit is

allocated to the application of specific assessment procedures for selected study programs / domains adapted to accredited programs.

8.2. Evaluation mode

The evaluation mode is carried out as follows, following the elements set out below. Self-evaluation papers of study programs (or domains) must be made available to the external institutional evaluation team at least two months prior to the visit. A recent internal report on each study program under evaluation, which also includes the way to continue to meet the Mandatory Requirements for Provisional Authorization / accreditation of study programs that were the basis for granting this status, accompanied by relevant specifications on the curriculum (curriculum) and specific domain / program standards is considered sufficient at this stage of the evaluation.

The final self-evaluation report, together with annexes in electronic format, must contain all the elements specified in the Visits card, a) and b) for each evaluated study program and, where appropriate, the homologous documents of the most recent previous evaluation. In ANNEX 8.1. Elements for the elaboration of the self-evaluation documents of the study programs as part of the institutional evaluation are presented.

The provision of additional editing documents (internal records of student results, processed data of opinion polls among students and / or the teaching staff, extracts of minutes of departmental or faculty chair meetings, etc.) may be requested no more than one month before the visit, usually on the occasion of the meeting of the contact person from the institution with the mission director. In all cases, the documentation must be limited to the strict need to inform the team in accordance with the requirements of the team.

· Discussions of the members of the assessment team with the teaching staff and the students of the institution (at the study program level) are carried on specific topics identified by the team but also offer the possibility for the teaching staff and the students to bring to the attention of the team a number of other aspects of interest to ensure or improve quality. You may also ask for a number of outside speakers (graduates, partners in training programs, etc.) to participate in the internal evaluation discussions.

· Discussions with the teaching staff and students about the content and the way of passing the knowledge from the analytical programs of the disciplines are carried out in order to verify the accuracy and reliability of the complete information provided by the institution to current and potential students, the quality of programs and their graduation standards.

· Verifying the link between the programs of study offered and the knowledge, skills and aptitude expected to graduate each study program is made through discussions on the quality of the teaching-learning process and on the performance achieved by students.

After evaluating each selected study program / domain and completing the Visit Card, a team conclusion is drawn on how the quality assurance institution's commitments operate in practice at program / discipline level on how to ensure an acceptable level of quality and graduation standards. It normally expects the team's assessments to confirm the institution's assessments. If the self-evaluation document on a study program / field indicates deficiencies, external evaluation team will seek to ensure that the institution understands δi take appropriate measures to remove those deficiencies.

In some circumstances, the team may find it impossible to draw a conclusion during the visit. Such circumstances imply:
· Identification of a particular potential performance, but which the team can not confirm in the absence of the opinion of independent specialists for the disciplinary area.
· Identification of major deficiencies in facilitating the study process, which the team can not confirm without the opinion of specialists.
· Identifying a significant discrepancy between the information disseminated by the institution and the team conclusions.

In these circumstances, after consulting the Mission Director, the assessment team notifies the institution on the last day of the visit (provided that the evaluation procedure of the study program / field is almost complete up to that point) that it is not in a position to draw up a conclusion without gaining an opinion from additional experts. Upon notification, during the last day of the assessment visit, the assessed institution is given the opportunity to provide the team with additional information. If, on the final day, the team confirms its intention to seek the opinion of other independent experts, the Agency will appoint a team of at least 2 experts to carry out a separate evaluation of the disciplinary area over the next two weeks. In such a case, the Agency's evaluation team will not adopt any final conclusion on a program / domain without referring / reference to the views of these additional experts.

Referral to additional experts is intended to undertake a more in-depth study of the study program / field, to deepen some of the particular aspects raised by the Agency's team. Their work consists in verifying the institution's statement of quality based on the primary internal evaluation record and student activity. The activity involves meetings with students and teaching staff and may involve external examiners that the institution has used to carry out their own internal evaluation. Where specialized findings identified possible deficiencies in facilitating the teaching-learning process, the evaluation also includes verification of the interaction between the teaching staff and the students (separate meetings of independent experts with the students and members of the teaching staff involved). Expert results are not reported to the evaluated institution but to the Agency so that the latter takes them into account in the final evaluation. The draft final report shall be drawn up after the experts carry out their own work and shall not be made available to the institution until such time as the team has drawn up its final conclusions.

·Conclusions by additional experts may include recommendations for the Agency's assessment team to undertake a full study-level assessment. Such a recommendation may be made when the expert's opinion indicates that there are good reasons for concern about the quality of the study programs and / or the graduation standards.

Against this background, the Agency may propose to the institution to carry out a separate evaluation of all study programs on the basis of the procedures described in the Evaluation Guide for Study Programs, with the deadline for the preparation of the INSTITUTIONAL EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT AGENCY and renegotiation of the contract.

3.3. INSTITUTIONAL THEMATIC ASSESSMENT

9. Thematic evaluation

Institutional thematic evaluation is the institutional / inter-departmental analysis of how some components of the quality assurance strategy work. It may be carried out on request or on the own initiative of the assessment team if a particular quality management component and the standards announced by the institution are considered to be of particular interest or if the assessment requires verification of some aspects of inter-disciplinary training.

Relevant data for the thematic evaluations can be obtained both through the evaluation programs of the study programs and during the discussions with the teaching staff and the students. If, during the thematic evaluation, the team identifies problems at the level of study subjects, it may request the opinion of independent expert experts.

In relation to the National Framework of Qualifications in Romanian Higher Education (in process of elaboration), the team analyzes on the basis of the results obtained during the evaluation of the study programs whether the study programs subject to the thematic evaluation correspond to the graduation standards established by the institution or those specified for the professions governed by Romania's commitments as a Member State of the European Union.

3.4. THE INSTITUTIONAL EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT OF THE AGENCY

10. The content and structure of the Agency's external institutional evaluation report

The findings of the external institutional evaluation are reflected in an Agency's Institutional Evaluation Report, which is publicized. The conclusions of this report are the final assessment of the credibility that can be given to the management of the institution in terms of ensuring the quality of the study programs and its compliance with the academic standards for the award of graduation diplomas. The findings are based on a series of evaluation findings, such as the extent to which quality was assured, taking into account the real situation observed during the evaluation visit, the context / conditions and mission of the institution, and how it was managed and reflected in the primary evidence of the institution.

· The Agency's external institutional evaluation report specifies one of three concluding or qualitative assertions related to the credibility of quality assurance management in the rated institution, namely "high confidence," "limited trust", or " lack of trust" . For the award of the qualifications, the external institutional evaluation report shall specify the level of fulfillment of the standards, the performance indicators as well as the fulfillment of the mandatory normative requirements. The Agency expects these to be at least the appropriate level achieved at program and institutional accreditation, respectively.

· Establishing credibility is, in essence, an appreciation with a certain level of relativity. In general terms, when the evaluation team assesses on the basis of the institution's record documents and the findings of the visit, that the institution adequately ensures the quality and standards and, on this basis, creates conditions for future quality assurance, it gives the rating a "high degree of confidence". When the team has some doubts whether in connection with the current assurance of quality or standards or the institution's ability to maintain quality and standards in the future, the rating is given a "Limited Trust" rating and remedial recommendations immediate situation. When the team attributes the "lack of confidence" rating to an institution, it must clearly indicate the elements underlying that assessment. In the case of the last two grades, the institution is invited to take vigorous measures to remedy shortcomings or shortcomings within one academic year. In the event that the institution does not engage in correction or remediation during the academic year, the Agency proposes to the MEdC to initiate the procedures for the cancellation of the accreditation permit, according to the legislation in force.

The final section of the assessment report shall also justify the degree of trust that can be reasonably granted, taking into account the accuracy, integrity, completeness and correctness of the information disseminated by the institution about the quality of its programs and the certification standards for graduating these programs.

In developing its assessments, the team pays particular attention to the Agency's requirements in two key areas. The first requirement is for the institution to frequently appeal to external evaluators independent in the internal quality assurance internal quality assurance procedures. The second requirement is to use similarly independent experts from abroad to apply periodic internal evaluation procedures at the level of disciplines, study programs or research. The Institutional Assessment Team of the Agency is not in a position to make an evaluation to end with the "high degree of confidence" if one of these elements is deficient.

The assessments of the institution's credibility, namely "limited confidence" and "lack of confidence" are accompanied by recommendations to be considered by the institution in the order of priorities as follows:
· Essential Recommendations refer to measures that the assessment team considers to be important from the point of view of quality assurance and require urgent corrective actions.
· "Preventive" recommendations refer to aspects that the team considers to be potential elements or sources of risk to quality and require preventive corrective actions;
· "Desirable" recommendations refer to measures whose implementation could improve the quality of programs and would provide higher benchmarks in the future.

The final part of the report can also highlight good practice aspects in quality management and in redefining reference standards at institutional level and at study program level.

The Agency's external institutional evaluation report usually includes some comments on other issues such as organizational features, strengths and limitations in the design and implementation of institutional quality assurance methods; quality of study programs and graduation standards. In the final report, there is also a summary assessment for each study program included in the institutional evaluation. The report

also lists the areas where there are good reasons for immediate implementation of a corrective action plan at the level of study / discipline or institutional level.

The structure of the Agency's external institutional evaluation report is presented in ANNEX 10.1. In ANNEX 10.2. there are indications of possible situations in which the results of the external evaluation determine the attribution of "limited trust" or "lack of confidence".

11. How to finalize and disseminate the Agency's external institutional evaluation report

The letter containing the preliminary results of the institutional evaluation, which includes the main elements of the draft report, is prepared and forwarded to the institution, as a rule, two weeks after the visit. The institution is required to report to the Agency within the timeframe one month after the evaluation visit (two weeks after receipt of the letter referring to the contents of the preliminary report) any corrections it deems necessary because they are of the nature of errors in the taking of the data from the self-evaluation documents or the nature of the misunderstanding of the information / actions. The draft report may be revised on the basis of the institution's referrals, insofar as such complaints are fully documented. The drafting of the draft report is coordinated by the mission director, and its form and structure correspond to the elements presented in ANNEX 10.1.

The Agency's external institutional evaluation report approved by the Agency Board is made public by the Agency and aims to provide information to both the general public and professionals (academics and managers, researchers, decision-makers, etc.). Therefore, the report contains a summary intended in particular for the general public, mainly for students, which is made available separately from the rest of the report. On the other hand, the institution is required to provide a short statement of acceptance of the report's conclusions for be published by the Agency as an annex to the report. The statement provides the institution with the opportunity to present the progress recorded after the evaluation team visit, in particular, the actions undertaken or proposed and related to the recommendations contained in the report.

Normally, the Agency's external institutional evaluation report is made public on the ARACIS website (www.aracis.ro) published by ARACIS within two months of the institutional evaluation visit. However, this period may be extended if, in the opinion of additional specialist experts, new investigations are necessary for the correct assessment of quality assurance in one or more study programs or fields, under the renegotiation of the contract concluded between the university and the agency to cover the costs of additional evaluation activities .

12. How to capitalize on external institutional evaluation and further actions

The evaluation process is considered to be completed when the Agency Board is aware of the final report of the Agency's external institutional evaluation report and approves it.

· If the report attributes the "high confidence rating" rating, the external evaluation is completed by publishing the report. Granting the "high degree of confidence" is usually accompanied by a limited set of recommendations that are considered to have a preventive effect. Nor is it possible to list observations that should lead the university to adopt measures deemed to be immediately needed, but there will be no essential observation. Granting this rating implies the trust of the Agency's assessment team in the capacity and commitment of the institution to identify and address any situation that would have the potential to threaten the quality of programs and certification standards for graduating a degree program.

· The Agency shall, one year after the publication of the report, conduct a concise investigation by correspondence with the evaluated institution to inform itself of how it has taken into account the observations and recommendations in the report. Three years after the publication of the report, the Agency is to make a short visit to the institution to analyze the post-evaluation progress and discuss its intentions regarding quality management and graduation standards until the next institutional assessment. · When the report grants the "Limited Trust" rating, the report is given to the public, but an action plan is being implemented to improve the quality of the institution's activity. The Agency requests the institution to adopt within three months of the publication of the evaluation report of an action plan and to submit a half-yearly report on the implementation of the action plan. The results of the external evaluation are not officially considered definitive unless the Agency is satisfied with the successful implementation of the action plan with a maximum time limit of 18 months which allows the 'high degree of trust' . However, if uncertainties persist with regard to the effectiveness of remedial actions, the Agency will undertake an additional external evaluation visit, renegotiation of the contract, and make public the new external evaluation report, which becomes a definitive document.

· The report is also published when it includes the "lack of trust" rating. In this situation, the provisions of the Government Emergency Ordinance no. 75/2005 regarding the quality assurance of education, approved by the Law no.87 / 2006, Art.34 and Art.35.

· If the report includes the recommendation that a full evaluation be carried out at the level of a particular study program or a particular disciplinary area, the analysis is conducted by the Agency on the basis of the procedures described in the Study Program Evaluation Guide, which includes an additional assessment in the course of a calendar year, with the renegotiation of the contract, to identify the potential remaining repercussions.

·Three years after the institutional assessment, the Agency shall make a short visit to the institution to review the progress made since the previous evaluation mission was

completed and for to discuss the institution's intentions to continually improve quality management and to increase reference standards over the next two years until the next assessment mission. In the preparation phase of this short visit, the Agency shall review all relevant internal evaluation reports drawn up by the institution during the three years following the completion of the evaluation mission. If any of the reports raise concerns about the approach taken by the institution, the Agency may overtake the date of the next evaluation mission.

13. Management of the evaluation process and institutional relations

Process management takes place in accordance with the External Evaluation Methodology, Standards, Reference Standards and the ARACIS Performance Scoreboard developed and published by the Agency. The responsibility for the follow-up of the institutional evaluation lies with the mission director, but the conclusions and recommendations resulting from the audit are developed by the whole evaluation team and by the standing committees under the guidance of the coordinator of the evaluation team.

The mission director has the responsibility to justify the conclusions and recommendations with appropriate data and evidence from the institution's records or from the findings made during the visit. At the same time, he checks with the team members and the standing committees if the information contained in the report is relevant, identifiable and accessible.

The Agency shall take all steps to establish a close and constructive relationship with the rated institution in order to maintain it in an active form to meet the specific requirements of the service at the level of the reference standards it has itself formulated and publicly announced.

The Agency makes every effort to ensure the quality of the audit process by explicitly adopting the principles and operating standards presented in ANNEX 1.1 and a quality assurance mechanism for its own activities. It provides participants with the various assessment missions, including students, with the opportunity to provide feedback on their experience.

14. Dispute settlement procedure

The Agency is making every effort to have a strong and constructive relationship with each university, based on systematic and continuous communication between institutions. At the same time, after the evaluation visit, the mission director sends the evaluated universities a letter containing the preliminary results of the institutional evaluation, so that they can submit in writing any comments and suggestions for correcting data that were either misunderstood or mistaken.

Since the data used in the report's argumentation is of a public nature and was provided by the institution in writing or during the evaluation visit, the university can only challenge the way the external evaluation process for formal defects has been carried out. After publishing the Agency's external institutional evaluation report on the ARACIS site, the institution may appeal in writing to the Agency in writing within two weeks from the date of publication by a letter registered with the Agency within the said deadline.

As a rule, within 30 days of receipt of the appeal, the Office of the Agency Board re-examines the report, invites the rector of the university and the contact person to a clarification discussion, and then submits to the Council its proposal. The President of the Council officially announces the university about the outcome of the review of the report.

The Agency publishes on the site a note on how the appeal has been resolved.

ANNEXES TO THE GUIDANCE FOR THE EXTERNAL INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION

ANNEX 1.1. Principles and Operating Standards promoted by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education;

ANNEX 6.1. Selection and training of expert-evaluators;

ANNEX 7.1. Elements concerning the drafting of the institution's self-evaluation documents and recommendations on the structure of the Internal Evaluation Report (self-evaluation).

ANNEX 7.2. Issues related to the operation and management of information received by the Agency, including from students;

ANNEX 8.1. Elements concerning the development of self-evaluation documents for study programs as part of institutional assessment;

ANNEX 10.1. Indicative structure of the Agency's external institutional evaluation report;

ANNEX 10.2. Indications of possible situations in which the results of external evaluation determine the attribution of "limited trust" or "lack of confidence".

ANNEX 1.1

Principles and Operating Standards promoted by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

The Agency seeks to respect and promote the following general principles, both at the strategic and operational levels of its activity:

· **Inclusiveness** - Taking into account the interests and expectations of all individuals and public interest groups in higher education and facilitating their participation in all aspects of the Agency's work.

· **Openness** - transparency of the Agency's activities and methods, building institutional trust between the Agency and universities, providing information to the public on the Agency's work.

· **Sequence** - Need for regular, systematic and timely action in all evaluation and reporting activities to support decision-making at the Agency level and in the higher education system.

· **Comparability** - making use of the experience gained in the Agency and other organizations as ways of informing future activities.

· **Relevance** - Ensuring that the information provided by the Agency is useful and understood by the beneficiaries.

These principles are applied to develop standard external evaluation services, according to the Methodology presented on the Agency's website.

The Agency is subject to systematic internal monitoring and an evaluation of its strategy, procedures and processes in order to ensure continued credibility and continuous improvement of its performance. To this end, the Advisory Committee of the ARACIS Council functions.

ANNEX 6.1

Selection and training of expert-evaluators

Introduction

1. Expert assessors and additional experts shall be selected by the Agency on the basis of the published selection criteria and, in general, on their own expert-evaluator basis. Additional experts specializing in certain study programs or fields may also be selected from nominations made by universities and professional bodies.

2. All persons involved in external evaluation, including mission managers, shall receive training programs coordinated by the Agency Board to ensure they are aware of the purposes, objectives and procedures of the external evaluation process, and have the power to assume their own role in within this process.

3. The qualities required of the persons involved in the external evaluation are listed below in a separate section. Each selection procedure aims to ensure balance within the group of evaluators in terms of sectoral, disciplinary, geographic, gender and ethnic characteristics.

4. Where it is necessary to seek a second opinion from independent experts, these shall be selected so as to provide the necessary competence to examine the content of a study program or a disciplinary area and to assess the level of academic standards for graduation a program.

5. The training of staff involved in external evaluation is carried out by the Agency in cooperation with appropriate providers of training programs. The purpose of the training is to ensure that:

·The purposes and objectives of the external evaluation process are understood.

·The procedures involved are known.

·It understands its own role and its own tasks will be fulfilled, but will work in a team to meet the Agency's expectations and adhere to the rules of the process.

·The opportunity to explore and practice assimilation and data analysis techniques, to develop visit programs, to build and test hypotheses, to formulate conclusions and statements on trust, to prepare reports is fully exploited.

Qualities required for valuation experts:

·Relevant experience in academic management and quality assurance at institutional level in higher education;

·Personal and professional credibility from the management of institutions and / or decision-makers who coordinate the work of the higher education sector.

·Ability to assimilate a large amount of disparate information, analyze data and facts, and develop pertinent conclusions about complex actions, and conduct research and investigations in documentary and oral records for the purpose of making conclusions / assessments.

· Clear oral and written communication skills;
· If it is an academic subject, have current or recent experience in teaching or supporting learning at the level of bachelor, master or doctoral study cycles, including through the use of scientific research results.

Qualities required of additional experts required for external evaluation from country or abroad:

· *Personal credibility in the field, higher education or equivalent professional credibility.*
· *Current experience in the process of teaching or supporting the learning process at the level of a bachelor's or master's degree program in the respective field of university studies.*
· *Experience in working with specifications of study programs developed for the respective field; a good understanding of admission requirements within the curriculum and the ability to interpret statistics on student performance; knowledge of comparable programs in other universities and standards of graduation and certification from other institutions.*
· *Ability to assimilate a large amount of disparate information, to analyze and elaborate a pertinent conclusion about complex actions.*
· *Ability to identify, plan, and track the direction of an evaluation in order to respond to the tasks specified by an audit team, using different sources, including documentary and oral evidence, in order to produce a credible conclusion.*

ANNEX 7.1

Elements regarding the drafting of the institution's self-evaluation documents and recommendations on the structure of the Internal Evaluation Report (self-evaluation).

The purpose of the institution's self-evaluation documents:

1.   The institution's self-evaluation documents are the baseline elements for the team of expert assessors. Their importance derives from the concern to make known to the interested public, on the one hand, the institutional methods for ensuring the quality of the study programs and the graduation standards and, on the other hand, the attention paid by the institution to the quality, the consistency and the integrity of the published information on the quality of the training offer expressed in its own reference standards.

2.   Self-assessment documents shall enable the institution to:
· To create the conditions by which, on the basis of the results of the internal analysis and assessment, publicly confirm and publicize through the external evaluation process the strengths of the institution and appreciate the effectiveness of its policies and procedures for assurance management and continuous improvement of quality.
· Presenting its own assessment of how the institution carries out its responsibilities in two areas of vital interest in the institutional assessment: providing quality programs, publicly backed up by appropriate benchmarks, and adequate public responsibility for granting of diplomas and certificates at the graduation of study programs.
· To present its own assessment of the efficiency of internal quality assurance structures and mechanisms; the way in which the accuracy, completeness and credibility of the information published by the institution, its practices and procedures in relation to the mission and the main objectives of the institutional assessment is ensured.
· To enable the external evaluation team to understand how the institution ensures quality and standards for graduating study programs in order to enable the team to adopt a conclusion on the trust that can be given to the management of the institution at present and in the near future in terms of quality and compliance with standards or benchmarks.

The style and size of the institution's self-assessment documents:

3. The institution's self-assessment documents must:
· Be honest and relevant.
· To be concise and substantiated by attached documents, accessible to the assessment team.

· Provide a broad perspective at the institutional level.
· Show an appropriate balance between description and self-evaluation.

4. Self-evaluation papers must provide sufficient data to enable the external assessment team to understand the main features of how the institution addresses quality assurance towards national standards / standards own reference publicly announced on the institution's website. Documents must be effective and focused on presentation. If the institution expresses confidence in its own effectiveness, the institution's self-evaluation documents must be designed to minimize the need for further data and clarification for the team of expert assessors. Because the perception and trust of the team depend (at least early on) on the institutions' self-evaluation documents, it is important that they are clear and can be easily verified through the annexed documentation prepared by the institution.

5. The internal self-evaluation report normally has approx. 40 pages, and is presented on paper and in electronic format. The annexes and additional documents are submitted only electronically.

In order to facilitate the homogeneous presentation of ARACIS Reports and Analyzes, all documents submitted in electronic format will be written in Times New Roman characters, with font size 12, at 1.5 rows. Documents will be written in WORD as well as in pdf format.

Structure of the Internal Evaluation Report (institutional self-evaluation):

6. The Internal Evaluation Report (institutional self-evaluation) is structured as follows:

· Introduction (presentation of the institution and the dynamics of its performance in the period since the last external evaluation).
· The process of ensuring the quality of study programs and of standards and reference standards, respectively, as part of the institutional strategic management.
· Present the measures to ensure the accuracy, completeness and trust of the information disseminated by the institution.

7. In preparing its own self-assessment documents, the institution is called:

(i) create the conditions for the external evaluation team to easily identify the size, type of institution, mission, cycle / cycle of study for which it provides study programs, organizational and managerial structure of the educational activity and scientific research;
(ii) present and analyze on the basis of documents the progress made in the delivery of study programs since the last external evaluation;

(iii) present and analyze own findings made during internal assessments of subjects or disciplinary areas as well as how the identified shortcomings have been addressed and addressed to promote the improvement of institutional practice;

(iv) briefly describe the main features of its own institutional framework and its own quality assurance activities and the maintenance of academic standards for the award of diplomas and graduation certificates, continuous improvement of the quality of study programs and support for the learning process Formation; (v) describe the internal professional regulations of teachers and students and highlight all important institutional changes in response to their implementation;

(vi) mention the use of any external reference sources, including the National Qualifications Framework in Higher Education and, where possible, the reference benchmarks of the Subject-specific benchmarks;

(vii) describe and comment on its own strategy for the next four years to strengthen good results and address the shortcomings that have been identified;

(viii) Identify disciplines or areas at the level of the entire institution that exemplify good practice and illustrate the statements made.

8. When the institution is involved in the process of changing its own system or procedures during the external evaluation, the Agency accepts the lack of availability of the records illustrating the efficiency of the new structures. Under these circumstances, the institution should refer to how it manages and monitors the change process. The Agency expects these changes not to be operated by the institution during the authorization / accreditation process.

Presentation of documents to the Agency:

9. The institution is required to submit to the Agency the self-assessment and other documents and records enclosed in a copy in paper format and in electronic format according to the Calendar for the organization and conduct of the external institutional evaluation process for authorization / accreditation, respectively at least two months before external evaluation visit.

Confidentiality:

10. The content of the institution's self-assessment documents remains confidential at the Agency and external evaluation team level. However, if further experts are required to be consulted on domains or thematic areas, self-evaluation documents will be made available to them subject to the confidentiality of the data they operate with.

ANNEX 7.2

Issues related to the operation and management of information received by the Agency, including from students

Introduction

1. Students are the primary objective of each institutional assessment. That is why they are invited to participate in the main stages of this process. The representative body of the students in the institution - usually the student organization or its equivalent - has the opportunity to participate in most stages of an external evaluation process, starting with the preliminary visit of the institutional assessment mission manager five months before the actual evaluation visit. Also, members of the governing body of the representative body and other students are invited to participate in the stages of the institutional evaluation visit. These meetings provide students with opportunities to ensure that the external evaluation team knows issues of primary interest to them.

2. In order to trigger the external evaluation process, the university must present the institutional self-evaluation documents as well as the statement by which the Agency ensures that the information it provides to students and other interested audiences is clear, complete and reliable. The Agency encourages the university to consult students on the content of self-assessment papers, and also to invite students, through their representative body, to develop their own written report.

3. Students' written report provides additional possibilities for students to communicate with the external institutional evaluation team, through their representative body, issues of primary interest to them. It is the result of a voluntary action in the external evaluation process, and no institution will be penalized if its students do not want to submit a written report to the team of evaluators.

Format, size, and content:

4. There is no pre-established rule as to the format and size of the students' written report, or a pre-established list of what they should contain. Students are free to provide any kind of information they consider to be appropriate and useful for the purposes of the external institutional evaluation process and to design it as they wish.

5. However, the report includes a presentation of the student body, its representativeness among university students, if the report only considers students in an educational cycle or opinions of all categories of students, related information the way the opinions and drafting style were collected, the relationship between the student body, the university management and the institution's administration, if and how they got acquainted with the content of the official university self-evaluation documents, etc.

6. The report is not an alternative to institutional self-assessment documents nor should it take the form of a commentary on institutional self-evaluation documents. Students may opt to take into account the headings used by the institution in drafting their own self-assessment papers and / or take into account the areas of particular interest pursued in the external institutional evaluation and which are communicated by the Mission Director on the occasion of the preliminary visit with five months before making the actual visit. These include:

· Accuracy, completeness and trustworthiness of the information published by the institution about the quality of its programs and the graduation standards (this could include the accuracy of the promotional material and references to the program specifications);
· The information received by students about the expected academic performance, their experience from curriculum studies and how their performance is evaluated (this may include aspects such as: the usefulness of guidance for vocational guidance for study programs, assessment and feed -back that students receive for their academic performance);
· Students' experiences in learning (this could include the quality of academic and non-academic support and access to learning facilities);
· Student participation in quality management and graduation standards within the institution (this could include the possibility of representation within the committees at university and program level, but also other ways of providing feedback to teaching and management staff institution).

7. The student's report should not comment on the competence of some teaching or management staff or contain personal claims / complaints.

Style:

8. The written report must:

· Be balanced and relevant;
· Be concise;
· To achieve a proper balance between description and evaluation.

Drafting / editing details:

9. The student report must be submitted to the Agency at least two months before the institutional evaluation visit.

Confidentiality:

10. The Agency particularly supports the dialogue between the student organization and the institution and recommends that students submit the written report to the institution and that the institution provides the student organization with its own self-evaluation documents. This openness allows the external evaluation team to discuss both documents freely with both the university staff and the students during the evaluation process and to check the accuracy of their content. If the student organization wishes, it may even request that the written report be made available to the institution and the confidentiality of the report be kept by the Agency, by the team and by any independent expert requested to assist the team in its work. The Agency will respect this desire, but students are asked to take into account that the confidential use of their report leads to a weak impact at the university level, since the staff of the institution is not aware of the students opinion.

Elements concerning the development of self-evaluation documents for study programs as part of institutional assessment

Program data:

1. Once the Agency has made known in writing to the university the list of study programs to be evaluated during the institutional evaluation visit, the university has two months to prepare and make available to the team of external evaluators the self-assessment documents for each program.

2. Where a recent internal evaluation of the study program is not available, the university may prepare a short self-evaluation document specifically for the institutional evaluation process. Such a program self-evaluation document contains about 3,000 words and covers the following aspects:

• The educational objectives of the study program - a presentation of the program's objectives and objectives in terms of the distinct academic qualifications of graduation.
• Expected learning outcomes and assessment of the degree of compliance of actual outcomes with the educational objectives proposed by the program, referring to internal benchmarks or external (National Framework of Qualifications in Higher Education).
• The curriculum, in line with the specific standards per domain of ARACIS.
• Assessment / marking of students in order to record the progression to the academic level of certification / graduation diploma.
• *The quality of the learning process opportunities, which can be divided into:*
  o Teaching and learning - assessing the effectiveness of the teaching and learning strategies applied within the program to provide students with increased learning opportunities;
  o Admission of students and their evolution / progress - assessment of how the evolution of students within the study program is supported and monitored, from admission to graduation;
  o Study resources - Assessing the effectiveness of the availability of human resources and materials that support students' learning process and the effectiveness of their correlation with the proposed learning outcomes of the program / programs.
• Maintaining and enhancing standards and quality - Assessing the effectiveness of procedures to maintain and strengthen the quality of training and to ensure academic standards for graduating the program.
• Attachments, in electronic format, containing the required data requested in the Visits Card, the sections a) and b) and for each evaluated program, "STANDARDS AND INDICATORS" PERFORMANCE for accreditation "of PART I - EXTERNAL EVALUATION IN TAKE ACCREDITATION OF STUDY PROGRAMS.

3. In the self-assessment documents of each study program, the emphasis should be on evaluating students' outcomes, on student study facilities analysis. The description of the program should be limited to the minimum necessary to facilitate the understanding by the team of external assessors of the quality and effectiveness of their own self-assessment experience.

Presentation of documents to the Agency:

4. The evaluated university is required to submit to the Agency the self-evaluation papers of the study programs at least two months before the institutional evaluation.

Confidentiality:

5. Self-evaluation study programs remain confidential at Agency level and external evaluation team but, where necessary, they will be made available to independent experts who may be required to provide a specialist opinion.

Indicative structure of the Agency's external institutional evaluation report

Summary

The executive summary has a common structure for all external evaluation reports submitted to the Agency Council's attention and includes the results and conclusions of the evaluation. It is intended for the general public, especially potential students, and is available separately from the rest of the report. This summary includes:

· Introductory statement on the overall objectives of the evaluation.
· Summary of the evaluation team conclusions.
· The credibility of the information disseminated by the institution.
· Appreciation of academic infrastructure.
· Characteristics of good practice.
· Statement on trust in the institution.
· Recommendations for the activity of the institution.

External Institutional Review Report:

The external institutional evaluation report is prepared for the use of the audited university and for the Agency's database. Once approved by the Agency Board, this report is published on the Agency's website together with the letter of the evaluated university.

The main report consists of three parts:

(1) A descriptive introduction of standard content (size, type, mission and particularities of the institution, organizational structure, list of university cycle programs, type of information disseminated by the institution to students and candidates, progress since the last academic evaluation) ;

(2) A description of the evaluation process with the conclusions of each stage of the institutional quality assurance analysis and study programs, compliance with the graduation standards; this section also makes findings on the results of confronting claims from the self-assessment report with field findings and the results of discussions with the representatives of the teaching staff, students, graduates, and possibly graduate employers;

(3) Assessments of the credibility, accuracy and completeness of the published information.

Results of the external evaluation:

The results of the external evaluation process on the whole of the institution relate to managerial capacity the institution to ensure and continuously improve the quality of study programs; the ability to effectively support learning to achieve graduation standards. These results can be structured as follows:

· The effectiveness of institutional quality assurance procedures.
· Effectiveness of institutional procedures to guarantee graduation standards.
· The effectiveness of institutional procedures in support of the learning process.
· Outcomes of internal quality assessment of study programs.
· Student use of academic infrastructure.
· The utility of self-assessment documents in illustrating the institution's ability to reflect its own possibilities and limits and how to manage it to enhance quality and graduation standards.
· The credibility of the information disseminated by the institution about the study programs.
· Aspects of good practice
· Statement on trust in the institution;

ANNEX 10.2

Indications of possible situations in which the results of external evaluation determine the attribution of "limited trust" or "lack of confidence".

1. Granting the "Limited Trust" rating is determined by the fact that there is obvious evidence or there are issues where the institutional capacity to manage the quality of programs and / or certification standards in a sound and effective manner is limited or potentially limited future. Such a conclusion can be based on deficiencies either of the management of institutional structures or procedures or in the process of implementation at program or discipline level. Trust can be limited and due to the amplitude or typology of deficiencies identified in any area or program evaluated. The Agency may also decide to grant the rating a "limited degree of confidence" if there are reasonable grounds for doubting that the information provided by the institution and the publicly available are complete, accurate and reliable or when the institution uses to a certain extent reduced independent external examiners within the regular periodic assessments of disciplines or study programs. Granting the "Limited Trust" rating leads to a set of recommendations that are considered to be essential, possibly accompanied by recommendations that are preventive and / or desirable.

2. Granting the "lack of trust" rating indicates that there is substantial evidence of serious and fundamental deficiencies in institutional capacity to ensure and maintain the quality of programs and standards of certification / award of diplomas both at institutional level and in programs of studies. The decision will be accompanied by a significant number of examples and recommendations considered essential, and also by a number of recommendations considered to be preventive and should be followed in order to allow for an improved qualification following another assessment. Failure to comply with mandatory statutory requirements for study programs and at institutional level is a serious reason for the Agency to attribute the "lack of trust" rating.