

Last amended on 02/02/2022

The order published in the Register of Legal Acts on 19/12/2019, ID 2019-20644

Unofficial translation

APPROVED BY
by Order No V-1529
of 29 December 2019
of the Minister of Education, Science and
Sport

THE PROCEDURE FOR THE EXTERNAL REVIEW AND ACCREDITATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND BRANCHES OF FOREIGN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS, EVALUATION AREAS AND INDICATORS

CHAPTER I GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. The Procedure for the external review (hereinafter referred to as ‘the external review’) and accreditation of higher education institutions and branches of foreign higher education institutions, evaluation areas and indicators (hereinafter referred to as ‘the Procedure’) shall regulate the procedure for implementation of the external review and accreditation of higher education institutions established and authorised to carry out studies and activities related to studies in the Republic of Lithuania, branches of foreign higher education institutions established in the Republic of Lithuania and authorised to carry out studies and study-related activities (hereinafter referred to as ‘the higher education institution’), the evaluation areas and indicators.

2. This Procedure shall not apply to the external review of higher education institutions in exile and priest seminaries. The external evaluation of higher education institutions in exile shall be organised by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereinafter referred to as ‘the Centre’) in accordance with the procedure established by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania. The external review of priest seminaries is performed by the Holy See’s Agency for the Evaluation and Promotion of Quality in Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties (AVEPRO) under the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. It conducts the external review of priest seminaries together with the external evaluation of study programmes according to the AVEPRO criteria.

3. The purpose of the external review is to determine the quality of the performance of a higher education institution based on the findings of the external review, to create prerequisites for improvement of the performance of a higher education institution, to promote a culture of quality, and to inform founders, academic community and the society about the quality of higher education institutions.

4. The Procedure has been drafted in accordance with the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania and the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

5. The terms used in the Procedure shall be those defined in the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania.

6. The external review shall be initiated by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania, who approves the plan of external review of higher education institutions. The external review shall be organised by the Centre. The external review shall be carried out at least once every 7 years.

CHAPTER 2

EXTERNAL REVIEW AND ACCREDITATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

7. The external review shall be carried out in accordance with the evaluation areas and indicators of the higher education institution set out in the Annex of the Procedure and the criteria established in the Methodology for Conducting an Institutional Review of a Higher Education Institution (hereinafter referred to as 'Institutional Review Methodology') approved by the Centre. The external review may not last more than 9 months from the date of submission of the self-evaluation report to the Centre.

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8. The external review shall be organised by the Centre in accordance with the Law on Higher Education and Research, this Procedure, the Institutional Review Methodology and other legal acts regulating the activities of higher education institutions.

9. The external review shall be carried out in the following stages:

9.1. submission of a self-evaluation report prepared by a higher education institution to the Centre;

9.2. formation of an expert team and analysis of the self-evaluation report;

9.3. expert team visit to the higher education institution;

9.4. preparation of the external review report and publication thereof;

9.5. follow-up activities aimed at improving the performance of the higher education institution, taking into account the external review report.

10. The Centre shall, not later than within 12 months before the start of the external review, announce the deadlines for the submission of self-evaluation reports of higher education institutions to the Centre. In case of a repeated institutional review of a higher education institution, the deadline for submission of the higher education institution's self-evaluation report shall be set at least 6 months before the start of the external review.

11. The form of the self-evaluation report (the document summarising the results of self-evaluation) is laid down in the Institutional Review Methodology.

12. The higher education institution shall perform the following actions in order to ensure the conditions for the external review:

12.1. submission of the self-evaluation report meeting the requirements set out in the Institutional Review Methodology to the Centre;

12.2. organisation of meetings of the expert group appointed by the Centre with the target groups, review of the learning resources;

12.3. provision of additional information and documentation required for the evaluation at the request of the Centre.

13. During the external review, activities of a higher education institution are evaluated according to the following evaluation areas:

13.1. management;

13.2. quality assurance;

13.3. studies and research (art);

13.4 impact on regional and national development.

14. The external review shall be carried out by an expert team formed by the Centre in accordance with the Experts Selection Procedure approved by the Centre and publicly announced in advance. The external evaluation shall include experts from abroad.

15. The external review of the higher education institution shall be based on the self-evaluation report prepared by the higher education institution, the data obtained during the visit at the higher education institution and the results of the comparative expert evaluation of research and experimental development activities and / or the results of the annual formal evaluation of research

and experimental development and art activities, the results of the evaluation of the ongoing study fields, other documents of the higher education institution, previous external review reports and the recommendations as well as the data on the progress and results of the implementation of the recommendations, data on the activities of the higher education institution from state registers, other information about activities of the higher education institution (survey results, official statistical data, etc.).

16. The expert team shall, not later than within 3 months from the end of the visit at the higher education institution, prepare the external review report. The external review report shall include a general analysis of activities of the higher education institution according to the evaluation areas, indicators and criteria, proposals and recommendations to the higher education institution on how it could improve its activities, as well as the summary evaluation according to the evaluation areas specified in paragraph 13 and the evaluation scale specified in paragraph 17 of this Procedure.

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17. The review of a higher education institution must assess each of the evaluation areas with one of five ratings:

17.1. excellent – 5 points – the area is rated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally;

17.2. very good – 4 points – the area is rated very well in the national context and internationally, without any drawbacks;

17.3. good – 3 points – the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks;

17.4. satisfactory – 2 points – the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are drawbacks that must be addressed;

17.5. unsatisfactory – 1 point – the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental drawbacks.

18. Within 2 months as of receipt of the external review report prepared by the expert team, the Centre shall take one of the following possible decisions on the external review:

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18.1. to evaluate the performance of the higher education institution positively;

18.2. to evaluate the performance of the higher education institution negatively.

19. The decision on positive evaluation is made when none of the evaluation areas is evaluated unsatisfactorily (1 point).

20. The decision on negative evaluation is made when at least one of the evaluation areas is evaluated unsatisfactory (1 point).

21. The Centre shall send the external review decision together with the external review report to the higher education institution, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter - the Ministry) and publish it on the website of the Centre within 3 working days after the external review decision is adopted.

22. On the basis of the external review report, the Centre shall take one of the following decisions on the accreditation of the higher education institution:

22.1. to provide accreditation for a period of 7 years if performance of the higher education institution is evaluated positively;

22.2. to provide accreditation for a period of 3 years if performance of the higher education institution is evaluated negatively;

22.3. to provide no accreditation if the repeated external review results of the higher education institution are negative.

23. The Centre shall notify the higher education institution of the decision on the accreditation within 3 working days as of the date on which the decision is made.

24. If a higher education institution is accredited in accordance with sub-paragraph 22.2 of the Procedure, it must submit an action plan to the Ministry within 3 months as of the receipt of the external review report on how it intends to strengthen its activities. The action plan shall be examined by a commission formed by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport, which shall, within 3 months after the receipt of the action plan, evaluate it and, if necessary, submit comments on the appropriateness of the action plan measures aimed at activity enhancing. While performing follow-up activities, the Centre shall monitor the implementation of the action plan at least once during the period of accreditation of the higher education institution and inform the Ministry about the results of the implementation of the action plan.

25. Upon accreditation of a higher education institution in accordance with sub-paragraph 22.2 of the Procedure, at least 12 months before the end of the accreditation term, a repeated external review shall be initiated in accordance with the evaluation areas specified in paragraph 13 of the Procedure and the procedures provided in the Institutional Review Methodology. The Centre shall announce the decision regarding the external review and accreditation of the higher education institution at least 1 month before the expiry of the accreditation term of the higher education institution.

26. The Minister of Education, Science and Sport shall, within 20 working days as of the date of the decision in paragraph 22.3 of the Procedure, take a decision to revoke the higher education institution's authorisation to conduct studies and study-related activities. Where there are students who are studying and have not completed their studies in the higher education institution the accreditation of which has been revoked, the Minister of Education, Science and Sport shall determine the further possibilities for their studies.

27. Following the entry into force of the decision of the Centre for the accreditation of a higher education institution referred to in sub-paragraphs 22.1 and 22.2 of the Procedure, the follow-up activities shall commence.

28. The follow-up activities include a set of actions and measures to implement the proposals and recommendations made during the external review, to improve the performance of the higher education institution and to ensure that drawbacks identified during the external review are eliminated.

29. Follow-up steps:

29.1. provision of measures for performance improvement - the higher education institution, upon receipt of the decision of the Centre in accordance with the proposals and recommendations provided in the external review report, shall provide for measures aimed to improve the performance of the higher education institution and publish a plan of performance improvement measures on the website of the higher education institution within the terms set in the Institutional Review Methodology and shall inform the Center thereof;

29.2. implementation of planned measures to improve the activities of the higher education institution – the higher education institution implements the provided measures for the improvement of the activities of the higher education institution and prepares and submits a progress report on the implementation of external review recommendations to the Center within the terms set in the Institutional Review Methodology;

29.3. monitoring of the results of the implementation of the measures provided for the improvement of the activities of the higher education institution - the Center monitors the implementation of the improvement of performance of the higher education institution and the implementation of recommendations in accordance with the procedure established in the Institutional Review Methodology. Monitoring is carried out at least once during the accreditation period of the higher education institution.

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CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE FOR SUBMISSION AND EXAMINATION OF COMPLAINTS

30. Within 10 working days as of receipt of the decision on the external review, the higher education institution shall be entitled to lodge a reasoned complaint to the Commission for Appeals formed by the Centre (hereinafter referred to as 'the Commission for Appeals').

31. The Commission for Appeals shall examine the justification of the appeal and the procedural violations of the review process.

32. The procedures for examining the appeal, the organisation of the proceedings of the Commission for Appeals and the decisions taken shall be determined by the provisions of the Appeal Committee approved by the Director of the Centre.

33. The Commission for Appeals shall investigate the appeal of the higher education institution not later than within 20 working days from the date of receipt of the appeal.

34. The decisions of the Centre and the Commission for Appeals may be appealed against in accordance with the procedure established by the Law on Administrative Proceedings of the Republic of Lithuania.

CHAPTER IV FINAL PROVISIONS

35. The Centre shall announce the decision on the external review together with the conclusions of the external review and the decision on the accreditation of the higher education institution within 5 working days from the date of the decision on the Centre's website. The higher education institution shall announce the Centre's decision on the evaluation of the higher education institution together with the external review report within 5 working days on the website of the higher education institution and maintain it until the next external review.

**EVALUATION AREAS AND INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE OF A HIGHER
EDUCATION INSTITUTION**

EVALUATION AREA	INDICATORS
1. Management	1.1. Compliance of the higher education institution's strategic action plan with the mission, assurance of its implementation
	1.2. Effectiveness of process management of the higher education institution
	1.3. Publicity of information on the performance of the higher education institution and its management efficiency
	1.4. Effectiveness of human resource management
	1.5. Efficiency of financial and material resource management
2. Quality assurance	2.1. Implementation and effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system
3. Studies and research (art)	3.1. Level of research (art), compatibility of studies and research (art) and its compliance with the strategic aims of activities
	3.2. Internationality of studies, research (art)
4. Impact on regional and national development	4.1. Effectiveness of the impact on regional and national development
	4.2. Assurance of conditions for lifelong learning
