

APPROVED

by Order No 1-01-135 of 25 October 2010  
of the Director of the Centre for Quality  
Assessment in Higher Education  
(Amendment of Order No V-687 22 July 2016  
of the Director of the Centre for Quality  
Assessment in Higher Education)

## **Methodology for Conducting an Institutional Review in Higher Education**

### **General provisions**

1. The *Methodology for Conducting an Institutional Review in Higher Education* (hereinafter referred to as 'the Methodology') shall define the procedures to be followed in producing a self-evaluation report and the process, procedures, areas and criteria to be followed in an external institutional review of higher education institutions (hereinafter referred to as 'the external/institutional review') organised by the Agency authorised by the Minister for Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter referred to as 'the Authorised Agency').

2. The Methodology has been produced pursuant to the Law on Research and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania (*Official Gazette*, 2009, No 54-2140) as part of the implementation process of Government Resolution No 1317 of 22 September 2010 and other legal acts governing the activities and evaluation of higher education institutions and the provisions of the European guidelines for quality assurance in higher education.

3. External reviews shall draw on the evaluation outcomes of specific areas and of the learning resources of a higher education institution, the self-evaluation report, other documents of the institution, data obtained during the on-site visit, the judgements and recommendations of the previous evaluation, the follow-up data and other information on the performance of the higher education institution.

4. The purpose of external reviews shall be to ensure prerequisites for the improvement of the performance of higher education institutions and the promotion of their culture of quality, also to offer recommendations for the development of the activities of higher education institutions.

### **Evaluation principles, areas and criteria**

5. The self-evaluation and review of a high education institution shall be based on the following principles:

- 5.1. autonomy and accountability – account shall be taken of the balance between the autonomy and social responsibility of the institution of higher education;

5.2. contextuality – account shall be taken of the qualities of the institution’s mission, strategy and operating conditions;

5.3. holistic approach – account shall be taken of the interaction and compatibility of the areas being reviewed;

5.4. stakeholder involvement – representatives of the study system stakeholders (students, graduates, academics, employers and other social partners) shall be involved in the procedures of self-evaluation and evaluation;

5.5. unity of internal and external quality assurance – the internal quality assurance system and the external review must be based on mutually harmonised principles and public criteria, which also lie at the basis of the quantitative and qualitative indicators set by the institution for itself;

5.6. continuity – while conducting an institutional review of a higher education institution, account shall be taken of the previous evaluation and the follow-up performance.

6. An institutional review of a higher education institution shall assess the operation of the institution according to the following areas:

6.1. strategic management;

6.2. academic studies and life-long learning;

6.3. research and/or art activities;

6.4. impact on regional and national development.

7. Where the review covers from 6.1 to 6.4 review areas, it is necessary to analyse and evaluate their interaction with the relevant components of strategic management.

8. Criteria of strategic management shall include: the strategic plan's fitness for purpose, publicity, guarantees for its implementation and management effectiveness.

8.1. In order to ascertain the strategic plan’s fitness for purpose, its publicity and guarantees for implementation it is necessary to analyse the following:

8.1.1. alignment of the strategic plan with the higher education institution’s mission, the strategic documents of the national policy on research and studies, the principles of the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area;

8.1.2. validity and interoperability of the strategic plan components (analysis of the existing situation, strategic directions, purposes, objectives, implementation measures, resources, projected outcomes);

8.1.3. reasonableness and comprehensiveness of the quantitative and qualitative indicators of the strategic plan implementation;

8.1.4. relevance of the procedures for monitoring the strategic plan implementation;

8.1.5. adequacy of the information on the strategic plan implementation made available to the founders, stakeholders, the academic community and the public at large.

8.2. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the management of a higher education institution shall be based on the analysis of the following:

8.2.1. the internal quality assurance system, which includes: a quality assurance policy as well as the planning, implementation and improvement thereof; conformity of the qualifications conferred with the national and European Qualifications Framework; evaluation of study programme quality; the assurance of effective support for students; data collection and analysis, usage and publicity; and recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning;

*Amendments to the clause:*

*Nr. V-67, 2016-07-22, TAR 2016-07-25, i. k. 2016-21003*

8.2.2. appropriateness of the changes in the organisational structure to the implementation needs of studies, research and experimental (social, cultural) development and/or art activities;

8.2.3. process management – decision-taking effectiveness, distribution of responsibilities and accountabilities, allocation of resources, involvement of internal and external stakeholders; orientation to strategic goals and outcomes;

*Amendments to the clause:*

*Nr. V-67, 2016-07-22, TAR 2016-07-25, i. k. 2016-21003*

8.2.4. management of human resources (analysis of needs, alignment with the implementation of the strategic plan, clarity and transparency of recruitment procedures, development of academic, administrative and support staff competencies);

*Amendments to the clause:*

*Nr. V-67, 2016-07-22, TAR 2016-07-25, i. k. 2016-21003*

8.2.5. management of change (process optimisation) – analysis of process quality, prerequisites for improvement, risk analysis;

8.2.6. infrastructure (learning resources) management;

8.2.7. the planning and rational use of the higher education institution's funds, taking the performance goals of the institution into account;

*Amendments to the clause:*

*Nr. V-67, 2016-07-22, TAR 2016-07-25, i. k. 2016-21003*

8.2.8. usage of internal and external assessment results in improving the higher education institution's management;

*Amendments to the clause:*

*Nr. V-67, 2016-07-22, TAR 2016-07-25, i. k. 2016-21003*

8.2.9. publication of evaluation findings and decisions, as well as publicising information about the activities of the higher education institution (new study programmes being offered and the criteria for their selection; the expected learning outcomes for these programmes and the qualifications that will be conferred upon their completion; teaching, studying and assessment procedures; the number of students who have completed studies successfully and the provision of learning opportunities to students; and information about the employability of graduates);

*Amendments to the clause:*

*Nr. V-67, 2016-07-22, TAR 2016-07-25, i. k. 2016-21003*

8.2.10. the code of academic ethics and procedures for the enforcement thereof, and implementation of student appeal procedures.

*Amendments to the clause:*

*Nr. V-67, 2016-07-22, TAR 2016-07-25, i. k. 2016-21003*

9. Criteria for the evaluation of the conditions for studies and for life-long learning comprise their alignment with the requirements for Lithuanian higher education and harmonisation with the principles of the European Higher Education Area.

9.1. In order to ascertain the suitability of the conditions for studies and for life-long learning, it is necessary to analyse the following:

9.1.1. alignment of the qualifications awarded under the study programmes (including joint programmes) and in the course of life-long learning with the institution's mission and strategic documents, also with the needs of the national economy and social and cultural development;

9.1.2. variety of life-long learning forms and conditions;

9.1.3. the system of monitoring the employment and career of graduates and its contribution to the improvement of the studies;

9.1.4. cooperation with the institution's academic, social and business partners and their impact on the life-long studies and learning provided by the higher education institution (including the development of new and the improvement of old study programmes).

9.2. In order to ascertain how well the conditions for studies and for life-long learning align with the provisions to date of the European Higher Education Area, it is necessary to analyse the following:

9.2.1. alignment of the strategic documents relating to studies and life-long learning with the provisions of the European Higher Education Area and the EU documents relating to higher education;

9.2.2. dynamics of the international (incoming and outgoing) mobility of teaching staff and students and its impact on the activities of the higher education institution;

9.2.3. the implementation of studies and assurance that studies are student-oriented (the creation of conditions for students to choose their path of learning in order to ensure that they are responsible for their studies; ongoing review and assessment of the study process; involving students in all of the levels of development, implementation and assessment of the study programme; the selection of appropriate methods of study and evaluation; etc.);

9.2.4. the student admissions process and outcome, student progress, and issue of documents for the completion and recognition of studies;

9.2.5. the usage of internal and external evaluation results in improving the studies being offered and conditions for lifelong learning;

9.2.6. opportunities for teachers to improve their teaching competencies, and promotion of the use of new technologies and innovations oriented towards learning outcomes;

9.2.7. foreign qualifications and partial studies recognition procedures and practice, as well as their alignment with the principles of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region (the Lisbon Recognition Convention) ratified by the 15 October 1998 Law No. VIII-891 of the Republic of Lithuania; non-formal and informal learning recognition procedures and practice, as well as their alignment with the provisions of national and international documents.

*Amendments to the clauses 9.2.3 – 9.2.7:*

*Nr. V-67, 2016-07-22, TAR 2016-07-25, i. k. 2016-21003*

10. Evaluation criteria for research (applied research) and/or art activities comprise their relevance, international links and harmonisation with the provisions of the European Research Area.

10.1. In order to ascertain the relevance of research (applied research) and/or art activities, it is necessary to analyse the following:

10.1.1. alignment of research (applied research) and/or art activities with the institution's mission and strategic documents;

10.1.2. alignment of research (applied research) and/or art activities (and cycle 3 study programmes) with the priorities of the national and/or regional economic, cultural and social development;

10.1.3. impact of academic, social and business partners on the research (applied research) and/or art activities of the higher education institution.

10.2. In order to ascertain the international links of research and/or art activities of the universities and their alignment with the provisions of the European Research Area, it is necessary to analyse the following:

10.2.1. alignment of the higher education institution's strategic documents relating to research and/or art activities with the priorities of the European Research Area;

10.2.2. participation in international research and/or art projects;

10.2.3. researchers' and/or artists' international mobility and the impact of the visiting researchers and artists on the research and/or art activities of the higher education institution;

10.2.4. usage of internal and external evaluation results in improving scientific and/or artistic activity.

*Amendments to the clause:*

*Nr. V-67, 2016-07-22, TAR 2016-07-25, i. k. 2016-21003*

11. Criteria for assessing the institution's impact on the national and regional development comprise the effectiveness and relevance of its contribution and impact on the economic, cultural, social and environmental development. The institution's impact may take various forms including but not limited to the following: applied research and/or transfer of research outcomes to businesses, public institutions, non-governmental institutions; popularisation of science (art), diffusion of modern culture and cultural heritage; both internal and external activities directed to socially excluded groups; environmental protection and sustainable use of resources and other practical projects within the institution and the local community. In order to evaluate the impact on the national and regional development, it is necessary to analyse the following:

11.1. measures of impact in the institution's mission and strategic documents;

11.2. effectiveness of the implementation of specific measures of impact;

11.3. alignment of the impact with the priorities of the national and/or regional economic, cultural and social development;

11.4. inclusion of themes pertaining to national and regional development in students' training practice and graduation projects;

11.5. recognition of the participation of the teaching and administrative staff in voluntary service activities (including participation in elected professional bodies (boards, committees, strategic planning working groups, etc.) also participation in voluntary organisations which are not directly related to the staff's professional activities);

11.6. usage of internal and external assessment results in improving the field of activity of impact on the development of the regions and the entire country.

*Amendments to the clause:*

*Nr. V-67, 2016-07-22, TAR 2016-07-25, i. k. 2016-21003*

## **Self-evaluation and the production of the self-evaluation report**

12. Higher education institutions shall carry out self-evaluation and prepare a self-evaluation report.

*Amendments to the clause:*

*Nr. V-67, 2016-07-22, TAR 2016-07-25, i. k. 2016-21003*

13. Higher education institutions shall conduct self-evaluation according to the procedures defined by themselves with due regard to the purpose, objectives and areas covered by the self-evaluation process.

14. If necessary, the Authorised Agency shall give advice on issues relating to the production of the self-evaluation report.

15. The self-evaluation report must demonstrate the institution's capacity for self-analysis and critical evaluation of its own work and for projection of prospects for improvement. The statements in the self-evaluation report should be based on quantitative and qualitative evidence. The report should present information required for external review.

16. The self-evaluation report shall comprise the following parts: introduction, analysis of the higher education institution's activities by each area to be reviewed and the annexes.

17. The self-evaluation report shall analyse the activities of the higher education institution according to the data submitted for the past six years. In case of a repeated external review, the self-evaluation report shall analyse the data of the past two years. Where the higher education institution has existed for a shorter period of time, the report should present the data on the entire period of its existence.

*Amendments to the clause:*

*Nr. V-67, 2016-07-22, TAR 2016-07-25, i. k. 2016-21003*

18. The higher education institution shall submit an application to the Authorised Agency requesting an external review of its performance and the evaluation of its self-evaluation report. The self-evaluation report should be presented in two copies, one in Lithuanian and the other in English, and also in the electronic (DOC or PDF) format sent by e-mail or submitted on a computer medium.

*Amendments to the clause:*

*Nr. V-67, 2016-07-22, TAR 2016-07-25, i. k. 2016-21003*

19. The Authorised Agency shall make sure that the self-evaluation report has been drawn up according to the requirements of the Methodology and, within 20 days of the receipt of the report, shall notify the higher education institution of any amendments required.

20. The higher education institution shall submit a corrected version of the self-evaluation report within 20 days of the receipt of information on the irregularities found in the report.

21. Two weeks before the visit at the latest, the higher education institution may submit to the Authorised Agency information on any the material changes that have taken place at the institution since the submission of the self-evaluation report.

## **External review procedures**

### **General principles**

22. The external review of a higher education institution shall be carried out by an expert team set up by the Authorised Agency.

23. The work of the expert team shall be organised by the leader of the team, who shall chair the meetings of the team, set tasks for the team members and bear the general responsibility for the team's work.

24. The work of the expert team shall be coordinated by an employee or a civil servant appointed by the Authorised Agency.

25. In performing an external review of a higher education institution, experts shall be guided by the following principles of ethics:

25.1. Objectivity principle. An expert shall be fair and objective in his/her efforts to achieve the aims of the review and to evaluate the higher education institution. While expressing his/her opinion, formulating conclusions and taking decision, an expert shall draw on the Methodology, precise facts and information and his/her own competence and relevant experience.

25.2. Impartiality principle. During evaluation, the expert shall act independently and impartially, without representing any institution or having any vested interest in the institution being evaluated.

*Amendments to the clause:*

*Nr. V-67, 2016-07-22, TAR 2016-07-25, i. k. 2016-21003*

25.3. The principle of respect for the participants of the evaluation exercise. During a review, an expert shall act with good grace, as a professional, shall not abuse his/her functions of an expert and shall not use any financial, psychological or any other pressure. An expert shall treat the participants of the review exercise as persons capable of taking responsibility for their actions therefore, when referring to the strengths and weaknesses of the institution, an expert shall refrain from advice on what, in his opinion, could lead to the best solutions.

25.4. Confidentiality principle. All the information relating to the review (issues considered at meetings, opinions offered by other participants of the review, the self-evaluation report and documents provided for evaluation) shall be used strictly for the purposes of the review and may not be divulged for any other purpose.



25.5. Cooperation principle. As a member of the external review team, an expert shall seek common aims with the other members of the team and shall carry out his/her assignments in a timely manner. In his/her relations with the higher education institution, an expert shall make every effort to help the institution enhance its culture of quality and shall seek to develop mutual understanding.

26. Experts who do not respect the ethical principles or do not fulfil their tasks according to the requirements or by their action or inaction discredit the Authorised Agency shall be removed from the review team according to the procedure set in their contract with the Authorised Agency.

### **Preparation for the review**

27. Five months prior to the start of the review, at the latest, the Authorised Agency shall publish the deadlines for the submission of self-evaluation reports and for the completion of the institutional review.

28. The Authorised Agency shall coordinate the conditions and deadlines of the review with the higher education institution in question.

29. The expert team shall be set up according to the published procedure for expert team selection.

30. The Authorised Agency shall notify the higher education institution about the composition of the expert team by fax or by e-mail. Within five working days of the receipt of the notification on the intended composition of the expert team, the higher education may submit a motivated proposal to replace a member or members of the intended expert team. The Authorised Agency shall consider the proposal received and notify the higher education institution about the decision taken. In cases when the higher education institution does not submit a proposal to change the composition of the expert team within the period specified herein, it shall be deemed that the higher education institution has approved of the composition of the expert team.

*Amendments to the clause:*

*Nr. V-39, 2013-07-12, Žin., 2013, Nr. 77-3916 (2013-07-18)*

30<sup>1</sup>. After setting up the expert team and establishing the date of the expert team's visit to the higher education institution, the Authorised Agency shall coordinate with the agency evaluating the learning resources the deadline for the submission of the results of learning resources.

*The order supplemented with the clause:*

*Nr. V-39, 2013-07-12, Žin., 2013, Nr. 77-3916 (2013-07-18)*

31. The Authorised Agency shall organise training for the experts to help them understand the purpose and objectives of the review and the legal acts governing evaluation.

32. The experts shall receive the self-evaluation report from the Authorised Agency a month before their visit at the higher education institution at the latest. Together with the self-evaluation report they shall receive the results of the evaluation of the institution's learning resources if the Authorised Agency receives it till the specified deadline. When the outcome of the evaluation of learning resources is submitted to the Authorised Agency later, it shall be immediately submitted to the expert team. Before the visit, the experts may be advised of the opinion of the community on the activities of the higher education institution. In cases when some members of the expert team change due to the reasons beyond the Authorised Agency's control and it is impossible to submit information to the new members of the expert team within the period specified herein, information shall be submitted immediately after the inclusion of the new experts into the expert team.

*Amendments to the clause:*

*Nr. V-39, 2013-07-12, Žin., 2013, Nr. 77-3916 (2013-07-18)*

33. The visit of the expert team at the higher education institution shall be organised by the review coordinator appointed by the Authorised Agency, who will decide on the schedule of the visit by coordinating it with the higher education institution and the expert team.

34. The higher education institution shall announce the date and the schedule of the visit on its website.

### **Visit at the higher education institution**

35. The visit should last from 1 to 3 days. The duration of the visit shall be determined by the Authorised Agency taking into account the size of the higher education institution and the scope of its activities.

36. During the visit, the expert group shall meet the administration of the higher education institution, the self-evaluation group, the teaching staff, students, graduates and social stakeholders. During the visit, the experts shall review the infrastructure of the higher education institution and all the documents necessary for the purposes of the external review.

36<sup>1</sup>. The visit shall be deemed accomplished if at least 2/3 of the members of the expert group participate in it.

*The order is supplemented by the clause:*

*Nr. V-39, 2013-07-12, Žin., 2013, Nr. 77-3916 (2013-07-18)*

37. The higher education institution shall ensure that any member of its community wishing to meet the expert group can have an opportunity to do so.

38. The higher education institution shall ensure that the expert group has the appropriate premises and equipment necessary for its work and meetings.

39. During one visit, a member of the institution's community may participate only at one meeting with the expert group except for the cases coordinated with the representative of the Authorised Agency in advance.

*Amendments to the clause:*

*Nr. V-39, 2013-07-12, Žin., 2013, Nr. 77-3916 (2013-07-18)*

40. Meetings with graduates and employers may not be attended by the students or the staff members of the higher education institution.

41. If necessary, the higher education institution shall ensure the quality of interpreting services during the visit. The interpreter participates in the meetings with students only upon prior coordination with the representative of the Authorised Agency.

*Amendments to the clause:*

*Nr. V-39, 2013-07-12, Žin., 2013, Nr. 77-3916 (2013-07-18)*

42. At the end of the visit, the expert team shall discuss the outcomes of the visit at its meeting and shall brief orally the community of the institution on the preliminary observations.

*Amendments to the clause:*

*Nr. V-39, 2013-07-12, Žin., 2013, Nr. 77-3916 (2013-07-18)*

### **Preparation and publication of the report**

43. The institutional review report shall include the analysis and general evaluation of the areas reviewed, proposals and recommendations for improvement and the overall judgement on the activities of the higher education institution, also recommendations and observations intended for bodies responsible for the formation and implementation of policies on studies and research.

44. The expert team's conclusions and recommendations should be well motivated and based on the outcomes of the evaluation of the institution's learning resources, the data contained in its self-evaluation report, other documents provided by the institution, the information garnered during the visit and other official sources.

45. While formulating their conclusions, experts should try to arrive at a unanimous opinion. If it is impossible to reach a consensus, the formulations shall be adopted by the majority of votes while the dissenting opinions and the names of the dissenting experts should be documented and appended to the report.

46. The expert team shall produce a draft report and submit it to the Authorised Agency by e-mail within a month after the visit at the higher education institution at the latest.

*Amendments to the clause:*

*Nr. V-39, 2013-07-12, Žin., 2013, Nr. 77-3916 (2013-07-18)*

47. After familiarising with the draft report, the Authorised Agency shall send the draft report by e-mail to the higher education institution in question, which is entitled to submit its comments regarding the factual errors contained in the draft report within 10 days of the draft report's dispatch. The comments regarding the factual errors shall be submitted in Lithuanian with the translation into English.

*Amendments to the clause:*

*Nr. V-39, 2013-07-12, Žin., 2013, Nr. 77-3916 (2013-07-18)*

48. The Authorised Agency shall forward the higher education institution's comments to the expert team. The expert team shall examine the higher education institution's comments and adjust its report accordingly within 10 days and submit it to the Authorised Agency.

*Amendments to the clause:*

*Nr. V-39, 2013-07-12, Žin., 2013, Nr. 77-3916 (2013-07-18)*

## **Examination and publication of the report**

49. The Authorised Agency shall examine the draft evaluation report in the Higher Education Evaluation Commission. The representative of the expert team and the representatives of the higher education institution may be invited to the sitting of the Higher Education Evaluation Commission when the need arises.

*Amendments to the clause:*

*Nr. V-39, 2013-07-12, Žin., 2013, Nr. 77-3916 (2013-07-18)*

49<sup>1</sup>. Upon approval of the draft report, the expert team shall submit the final evaluation report to the Authorised Agency.

*The order supplemented with the clause:*

*Nr. V-39, 2013-07-12, Žin., 2013, Nr. 77-3916 (2013-07-18)*

50. The Authorised Agency shall take a decision on the external review report within the time limits and rules established in the Procedure for the External Review of Higher Education Institutions.

51. Within two working days of the decision date, the Authorised Agency shall send its decision and the external review by registered mail to the higher education institution concerned and the Ministry of Education and Science.

52<sup>1</sup>. In case of a negative evaluation decision regarding the activities of a higher education institution, a repeated external review according to the evaluation areas and procedures provisioned in the Methodology shall be initiated within 2 years after the coming into force of the evaluation decision.

The repeated evaluation of the activities shall be based on the repeated outcome of the evaluation of the higher education institution's learning resources, the repeated self-evaluation report containing the progress report with regard to the implemented and/or intended measures for the elimination of the drawbacks identified during the self-evaluation and/or the previous external review and for the improvement of the activities of the higher education institution.

*The order supplemented with the clause:*

*Nr. V-39, 2013-07-12, Žin., 2013, Nr. 77-3916 (2013-07-18)*

## **Follow-up**

53. Responsibility for its activities after the institutional review shall lie with the higher education institution unless specified otherwise in other legal acts.

54. After the external review, the higher education institution shall determine the measures for the elimination of the drawbacks found during the self-evaluation and external review and for the improvement of its overall activities. The higher education institution shall make such measures publicly available not later than within six months after the decision on the evaluation of the higher education institution takes effect and notify the Authorised Agency thereof. If the higher education institution changes the place where the performance improvement plan is published, it must inform the Authorised Agency thereof immediately.

*Amendments to the clause:*

*Nr. V-67, 2016-07-22, TAR 2016-07-25, i. k. 2016-21003*

55. After the evaluation of the higher education institution, the Authorised Agency shall advise the institution on the possible ways to eliminate the drawbacks specified in the external review report.

55<sup>1</sup>. The meetings of the representatives of the Authorised Agency and the higher education institution shall be held to discuss the measures and their implementation progress reports.

*The order is supplemented with the clause:*

*Nr. V-39, 2013-07-12, Žin., 2013, Nr. 77-3916 (2013-07-18)*

56. The Minister for Education and Science may authorise the external reviewer to monitor the implementation of the recommendations and the elimination of the drawbacks.

### **Final provisions**

57. Higher education institutions shall be accredited in accordance with the procedure established by the Description of the Accreditation Procedure of Higher Education Institutions approved by Resolution No 1317 of 22 September 2010 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania.

*Amendments to the clause:*

*Nr. V-39, 2013-07-12, Žin., 2013, Nr. 77-3916 (2013-07-18)*

58. Appeals against the institutional review of higher education institutions may be lodged according to the procedure established in the Procedure for the External Review in Higher Education approved by Government Resolution No 1317 of 22 September 2010.