Quality assurance in higher education was established for the first time by virtue of Law 3374/2005, whereby a single, nationwide ongoing evaluation process is established, aimed at stock-taking, analyzing and systematically assessing teaching and research work, study programmes and other services of Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). The same Law establishes the Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (ADIP) which is the competent body for implementing Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

With Law 4009/2011 “Structure, function, quality assurance for studies and internationalization of Higher Education Institutes”, Greece acquires a national accreditation system which supports HEIs, so that they can develop stable programmes of growing academic and professional quality. Accreditation is a process of external evaluation on the basis of, on the one hand, particular, predetermined, internationally acceptable quantitative and qualitative criteria, which are published in advance and on the other, on the basis of indicators streamlined with the Principles and Guidelines for Quality Assurance of the European Area of Higher Education (ESG 2015).

**Responsible bodies**

**Quality assurance and accreditation agency in higher education (ADIP)**

ADIP’s mission is to periodically certify the quality of HEIs, that is, both of the internal system of quality assurance developed in Higher Education Institutes and of the study programmes of all three cycles of Higher Education which are offered by academic units.

In the framework of its mission, ADIP (Laws 3374/2005 and 4009/2011) a) supports the State and Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) in formulating and implementing the national strategy for Higher Education and b) validates the quality of their function.

In particular:

- It periodically certifies quality of:
  
  1. Internal quality assurance systems in Higher Education Institutes (HEIs)
  
  2. Study programmes in higher education, including short-cycle programmes, lifelong learning, distance learning e.t.c

- It recommends an expert opinion to the Minister of Education and HEIs administration bodies on approaches and instruments to assure top quality in higher education.

To achieve its mission, the Authority:

- Formulates, organizes, specifies, standardizes and publicizes a priori the relevant processes, criteria and indicators, in the context of joint principles and guidelines of the European Area of Higher
Education. Guiding principles of the European Area of Higher Education are adapted to the National Quality Assurance System with the issuing of models for the quality accreditation of the study programmes and internal quality assurance systems in Hellenic HEIs

- Develops an integrated information management system and database of evaluation, in cooperation with the Quality Assurance Units (MODIP) in Higher Education Institutes
- Supports HEIs in planning and implementing quality assurance and accreditation processes
- Conducts studies and research related to its mission or assigns their carrying out to other bodies
- Draws up, keeps and updates the External Experts Registry
- Communicates evaluation outcomes and informs the state and Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) on international trends related to similar issues.

**Competences of ADIP for the implementation of the national strategy for higher education and the funding of HEIs**

The single National authority: a) delivers its opinion on the national strategic programme for Higher Education and supports its implementation, b) it negotiates agreements of programmatic planning with the respective institutes and evaluates the execution of the national strategic programme, c) it guarantees transparency in the funding criteria and proposes to the Minister of Education and the competent administrative bodies of HEIs ways and means for constant quality assurance.

**Financing of institutes/centres of excellence**

ADIP [3] may recommend to the Minister of Education the total or partial suspension of funding, when an Institution out of its own responsibility fails to provide the required material for information and the required evidence.

Accordingly, HEIs [2] have established centres of Excellence so as to award and support good practices in quality and innovation.

The Hellenic Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation gives prominence to HEIs, Faculties or Units as Excellence Centres, after a call for applications and evaluation by special committees whose members are drawn from the Registry of External Experts which is kept by the Authority itself. Criteria for being nominated as Excellence Centres are primarily the high quality of supportive services. The criteria and conditions for candidate evaluation and the particular procedure of giving prominence as Excellence Centres are stipulated by decision of the Minister of Education and issued in the Government Gazette, after the Authority’s proposal.

**Evaluation and publishing of ADIP’s work**

Every year, the Authority drafts a higher education quality report for the previous year, which is submitted to the President of the Hellenic Parliament and the Minister of Education.

Pursuant to the provisions of its Organisational Charter, the Authority proceeds to an internal evaluation of its operation and work. External evaluation is assigned by the Authority to prestigious and internationally acclaimed evaluators, organisations or other bodies that develop similar activities worldwide.

The Authority is administratively independent. It is supervised by the Minister of Education and is a Member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).
Quality assurance unit (MODIP)/internal evaluation

Pursuant to Law 4009/2011 (4), the Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP) is the responsible body in every Higher Education Institution (HEI) for the coordination and support of quality assurance processes. In particular, MODIP is responsible for:

- The development, organisation, operation and continuous improvement of the institution’s internal quality assurance system.
- The coordination and support of evaluation processes of academic units and other services in the institution and
- The support of external evaluation and accreditation of study programmes and of the institution’s internal quality assurance system, in the context of principles, guidelines and directions of the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency in Higher Education (ADIP).

For all afore-mentioned objectives, the Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP) cooperates with the Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (ADIP); it develops an evaluation information system and is responsible for systematic monitoring and uploading on the institution’s webpage of relative evaluative processes and outcomes.

MODIP is set up by a decision of the institution’s Board and consists of the Rector, as President, or one of its deputies, five HEI professors, one representative from each personnel category with a voting right when issues of the respective personnel category are discussed; other members include one representative of undergraduate students and one representative of postgraduate students and doctoral students, if any, as specified in the Organisational Charter.

Approaches and methods for quality assurance

In accordance with the existing institutional framework, the validity duration of the accreditation decision (which is obtained after the occurrence of the external evaluation) is determined per programme or internal system of quality assurance and cannot exceed a period of eight years. ADIP has decided that the duration of the initial accreditation of the study programmes and internal quality assurance systems should be four years. Therefore, the frequency of periodic repetition of external evaluation is every four (4) years.

Accreditation criteria for study programmes and internal quality assurance systems

Law 4009/2011 (4) (article 72) determines particular sets of criteria for the accreditation of study programmes and internal quality assurance systems:

1. The general criteria for the accreditation of study programmes include:

a) The academic character and direction of study programmes

b) Learning outcomes and pursued qualifications in accordance with the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education, as foreseen in case d’, paragraph 4, article 16 of L. 3879/2010 (5), as amended by article 46 of the existent legislation

c) The structure and organization of the study programmes

d) The quality and performance of the teaching work, as evident especially through the evaluation of students
e) The suitability of qualifications of the teaching staff

f) The quality of research of the academic unit

g) The degree to which teaching is linked to research

h) Demand in the labour market of the acquired qualifications

i) The quality of supporting services, such as administration, libraries and student care services.

2. The general criteria for the accreditation of internal quality assurance systems of HEIs include, primarily, the following:

a) The establishing of clear and determined objectives for assurance and continuous improvement of quality of study programmes and supporting services of the institution

b) The process of policy planning, effective organization and the process of decision making on continuous quality improvement

c) The process of policy implementation for continuous quality improvement

d) Evidence-based quality improvement.

The Authority’s Council, decides on further criteria for the study programmes which lead to the exercise of legally regulated vocations. This reassures that the particular study programmes respond effectively to the educational and institutional demands of the relevant professional fields. For this purpose, the Authority cooperates with the respective associations and chambers.

The above criteria may be completed, specified and revised by decision of the Authority’s Council, which is published in the Government Gazette. The criteria are decided on the basis of knowledge and experience derived from applying accreditation procedures, corresponding international changes and the particular character and mission of HEIs and Technological Institutes.

As regards the validation of study programmes and internal systems for quality assurance, Law 4009/201, Article 72, determines the specific sets of criteria.

**The constitution of independent expert committees**

In accordance with [Law 4009/2011](https://example.com) the evaluation of a study programme or of the internal quality assurance system of an Institute is undertaken by an accreditation committee assembled by ADIP. The committee members are taken directly by the Independent Experts’ Registry which is maintained and updated by the ADIP. The Accreditation Committee evaluates the quality of the Studies programme or of the internal quality assurance system on the basis of predetermined criteria. It studies the information and evidence underlined by ADIP and visits, where necessary, the relevant unit or Institute. Finally, it prepares the accreditation report which is submitted to the Agency’s Council. so that the accreditation Decision is issued and published.

**Drawing up the experts’ registry**

The independent experts’ registry is recorded at the suggestion of HEIs and ADIP and it is renewed every four years.

The registry is maintained and updated by the Agency, which for this reason takes under consideration the recommendations of HEIs and other bodies relevant to the objectives of the Authority. The procedure of registry maintaining and updating is determined by decision of the Agency, which is published in the
Government Gazette. The Agency is obliged to include in the registry experts - either Greek or foreigners - of acknowledged authority, specialists teaching in equivalent HEIs abroad or researchers of corresponding HEIs and research centres abroad, preferably with experience in the evaluation of HEIs.

Members of ADIP, as well as the specialized scientific staff engaged by the Authority under any contract, cannot be included in the registry of independent experts and take part as external evaluators in any kind of evaluation process.

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Qualifications of members and incompatibility of interests

The members of the Accreditation Committee are designated by ADIP in accordance with the procedure described in the Accreditation Guide of ADIP.

The members of ADIP cannot belong or be related through education or research with the HEI to which the academic unit which is being evaluated belongs, neither be related in such a way in the last five years.

The members of the Independent Experts Committee should meet the following conditions:

a) (i) they should specialize in a cognitive subject relevant to that of the academic unit or HEI under evaluation,

  (ii) they should be scientists of acknowledged authority, preferably with experience in issues of HEIs evaluation and guaranty impartial judgment,

b) it is also desirable to have:

(i) the participation of at least one foreigner, either an expert, a full professor or distinguished researcher in equivalent HEIs or research centres abroad - preferably with experience in evaluation of Higher Education issues,

(ii) independent experts with administrative experience in academic units of higher education institutes,

(iii) the participation of one representative from a professional or scientific body of a cognitive subject equivalent to that of the academic unit under evaluation. The representative should be able to appraise the contribution of studies in the exercise of the profession.

Accreditation models and evaluation standards

ADIP [3] decides upon the accreditation standards in accordance to the following principles:

General Principles of Accreditation:

1. Accreditation is carried out with single criteria and quality assurance procedures for everyone, in accordance to the national legislation and our country’s commitment as a member state in the European Area of Higher Education.

2. It is a fair procedure, which is carried out in conditions of transparency and credentialism by an Authorized Independent Authority.

3. It is based on evidence and it is realized by independent experts.

4. It leads to the decision on whether a study programme complies with a minimum of determined and published beforehand standards for accreditation.

5. It leads to the decision on whether a study programme complies with a minimum of determined
and published beforehand standards for accreditation. The results of accreditation are published and are accessible to anyone interested.

Basic duties and standards of the National Accreditation Model:

- In the framework of its strategy, the institute is obliged to determine its quality policy
- The institute is obliged to plan the programme of studies, to determine its objectives, the expected learning outcomes and professional qualifications
- It is obliged to make use of student-centered teaching and learning methods
- The obligation to assure high quality knowledge and skills
- The obligation to supply an adequate foundation and services so as to cover learning needs and facilitate access
- The institution is obliged to gather, analyze and make use of information on the quality of the academic work and incidental services
- The institute is obliged to publish educational and academic activities immediately and openly
- The Quality Assurance Unit of the institute is obliged to carry out constant monitoring and periodical internal appraisal of the study programmes
- The Institute is obliged to go under periodical external evaluation (Accreditation and re-accreditation)

Evaluation procedure

- The accreditation committee evaluates the quality of the study programme or of the internal quality assurance system. Based on predetermined criteria, it studies the material and elements put forward for consideration by the Authority and visits whenever required the relevant unit or institute. The accreditation committee itself may: a) evaluate more than one study programmes, especially if the completion of one is a pre-requisite for entrance to the other and b) evaluate similar study programmes or the internal quality assurance systems of different institutes.
- The committee prepares a validation report, which is submitted to the Authority’s Council, so that the decision for validation can be issued and published, in compliance with the following article may be issued
- The studies programmes and internal quality assurance systems of the HEIs are accredited, by decision of the Agency’s Council based on the reports of the accreditation committees. The decision of the Authority’s Council may be positive, positive upon conditions or negative.
- Accreditation of the revisions of specific aspects of the programmes and internal quality assurance systems is not required

Building on results

At the time during which the positive accreditation decision is still valid, the Authority’s Council, ex officio or after an inquiry of the Minister of Education, may examine to see if the accreditation criteria are still met. If the accreditation standards are not met, the Council of the Authority withdraws the accreditation and informs immediately the relevant HEI and the Minister of Education and Religious Affair [6].

The rector should inform the competent Authority when the accreditation criteria are not being met or when there is ambiguity.

The positive, upon conditions, decision is the case when the criteria are not met and a time schedule is given for compliance with the criteria and the reviewing of the decision. The Council, after submitting a supplementary validation report concerning the compliance or not with the above
criteria, issues a new decision.

If the accreditation decision is negative, the Minister of Education may by decision constrain the funding of the HEI and the enrollment of new students to the programme of studies or the HEI, depending on the object of the accreditation. (programme of studies or internal quality assurance system).

The same decision provides students of study programmes or HEIs the possibility of continuing their studies in another accredited programme of studies or HEI respectively and regulates all relevant issues.

Accreditation reports of accreditation committees and the accrediting decisions of the Agency’s Council are made known to the HEI and the Minister of Education and publicized in the website of the Authority, while the Ministry keeps a register of all the accredited programmes of studies and HEIs with an accredited internal quality assurance system.

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