Responsible bodies

Quality assurance of higher education is regulated by the Law on Higher Education [1] and the relevant by-laws. Pursuant to the Law, the tasks of quality assurance in higher education are performed by the Agency for Control and Quality Assurance of Higher Education [2] and the Council for Higher Education [3]. By establishing of the Agency, for the first time in Montenegro, in accordance with EU legislation and recommendations in the field of higher education quality, quality assurance mechanisms will be improved.

Responsibilities of the Agency are the following:

- conducts study programme accreditation procedure and issue a certificate on accreditation of the study programme;
- conducts higher education institution external evaluation procedure and issues a certificate on reaccreditation of the higher education institution based on the reaccreditation report;
- conducts a periodic assessment of quality of licensed higher education institutions’ work, following the request of an authorized body of institution or the Ministry;
- establishes the list of experts for accreditation of study programmes, or reaccreditation of institutions based on a public call;
- cooperates with higher education institutions with regard to matters of quality assurance and quality improvement;
- analyses self-evaluation and external evaluation reports of institutions;
- proposes measures for quality improvement of higher education based on recommendations put forward in re-accreditation reports of higher education institutions and present them to the Ministry and the Government;
- keeps a register of accredited study programmes and reaccredited institutions;
- establishes methodology for ranking of institutions and ranks higher education institutions;
- performs other tasks prescribed by this Law.

Funds required for the work of the Agency are provided from the Budget of Montenegro and own revenues.

The Agency is managed by a director and a board of directors. The Director is selected on the basis of a public competition and is appointed by the Government of Montenegro.

Activities of improvement and development of higher education are conducted by Council for Higher Education.

In performing the activities the Council:
analyses the condition and achievements in higher education and offer expert proposals to the Ministry and the Government of Montenegro;
provides opinion concerning the proposal of strategy for development of higher education;
prescribes conditions and criteria for appointment to academic titles;
provides opinion on the amount of resources required for funding public higher education institutions and students attending them, for each academic year;
provides opinion on the number of students and the amount of resources required for funding students that attend study programmes of public interest at private higher education institutions, for each academic year;
provides opinion on regulations in the field of higher education;
adopts standards for evaluation of institutions in compliance with standards in the European Higher Education Area;
cooperates with higher education institutions in terms of quality assurance and quality improvement;
performs other activities prescribed by the law.

The Council is appointed and removed by the Parliament on the proposal of the Government. The Council is composed of seven members appointed for a period of four years. Council members are appointed from among eminent experts in the area of higher education, science, arts, from among students and the area of economy, social matters and other relevant areas. Representatives from among students are appointed for a period of two years. Council members from among students are proposed by student parliaments of higher education institutions. The work of the Council is public.

Funds required for the work of the Council are allocated from the budget of Montenegro. Expert and administrative-technical activities for the Council are performed by the Ministry of Education.

In April 2019, the Council for Higher Education adopted the Terms and Criteria for Academic Appointments [4].

Higher education institutions have offices or centers for quality assurance.

**Approaches and methods for quality assurance**

External evaluation of higher education institutions and new study programs

The Agency implements the procedures of external evaluation in accordance with the by-laws, which, in accordance with the Law, are issued by the Ministry of Education, ie the Agency:

- Standards and guidelines for the accreditation of study programs, Standards and guidelines for the re-accreditation of institutions and Standards and guidelines for quality assurance of the Agency (prepared and adopted by the Agency);
- Rulebook on accreditation of study programs (proposal prepared by the Agency, the Ministry adopts);
- Rules on the re-accreditation of higher education institutions (prepared and adopted by the Agency).

Quality assurance through external evaluation is carried out, in accordance with the Law on Higher Education, by the following procedures:

1. Accreditation of study programs;
2. Re-accreditation of higher education institutions;
3. Periodic control of the realization of study programs or the work of institutions;
4. Accreditation of the Lifelong Learning Program;

**Accreditation**

The accreditation process is the responsibility of the Agency. The institution is obliged to submit to the Agency, at least six months before applying for a license, a request for accreditation of the study program. The process of accreditation of the study program evaluates the quality of the study program and its compliance with professional needs and standards adopted and comparability with the same or similar programs abroad, as well as the representation and credit evaluation of practical training. The accreditation of the study program is issued for a period of no more than five years. Exceptionally, accreditation for study programs lasting more than five years is granted for the duration of that study program. The Agency shall set up a committee for the accreditation of study programs. The Commission is formed of independent experts from Montenegro and abroad from the list of experts. The list of experts shall be determined by the Agency following a public invitation. The cost of accreditation of study programs is funded by the institution itself. The funds are paid to the Agency. The procedure for accreditation of study programs, the content and form of the accreditation certificate are prescribed by the Ministry, upon the proposal of the Agency. In 2019, the Agency has accredited another 52 new programs at private higher education institutions, following the new 3 + 2 + 3 study model.

**Self-evaluation**

At the end of each academic year, an institution conducts a self-evaluation procedure related to quality of study programmes, teaching and working conditions, in compliance with statute of the institution. Within the procedure of self-evaluation student surveys concerning study programmes, teaching, conditions and work of academic staff are carried out at all levels, at least once a year. Participation of students in the survey is mandatory. The survey is anonymous. Self-evaluation reports of an institution are passed by the governing body of the institution. An institution submits a self-evaluation report to the Ministry of Education and Agency. Method and criteria of self-evaluation concerning study programmes, teaching equipment, qualifications of academic staff, teaching methods, enrolment of students, exam pass rate, percentage of graduate students and the content of survey are defined in more detail by act of the Agency.

The institution's self-evaluation is carried out on a continuous basis and is conducted by the higher education institution in accordance with its statute (internal evaluation). In the process of self-evaluation, students are interviewed at all levels, at least once a year, about study programs, teaching, conditions and work of academic staff. The internal evaluation report is an integral part of the re-accreditation. Also, the research on the applicability of acquired knowledge and competences in the labor market is obliged to conduct the institution once every five years, and the findings are considered during the preparation of the self-evaluation report.

**Reaccreditation of Institution**

Reaccreditation of institution is carried out by the Agency. Reaccreditation of institution is carried out every five years. The Agency conducts the evaluation of institution on the basis of evaluation standards for institutions, in compliance with this Law. Within the reaccreditation procedure, an institution prepares a self-evaluation report covering the period not longer than five years. Based on the self-evaluation report and the conducted evaluation procedure the Commission for reaccreditation, appointed by the Agency, prepares a reaccreditation report for the institution. The reaccreditation report is submitted to the Agency, the institution and the Ministry of Education. Based on the positive reaccreditation report of the Commission, the Agency issues a certificate on reaccreditation of the institution. The form of the certificate is prescribed by the Ministry of Education.
and published by its website. Evaluation costs are covered by the institution.

If an institution fails to obtain a reaccreditation certificate, the license is valid maximum one year, without the possibility to enroll students during that year. If an institution fails to obtain a reaccreditation certificate after this period the Ministry shall by means of a decision revoke the license granted to the institution. An administrative procedure may be initiated against this decision.

During the validity period of accreditation or reaccreditation, a licensed institution can make alterations in study a programme at undergraduate level up to maximum 30 ECTS credits without undergoing accreditation and licensing procedure.

An institution carries out labour market research at least once in five years by conducting survey among graduate students, associations of employers, commercial entities and entrepreneurs concerning the applicability of the obtained knowledge, skills and competences required in the labor market. The results of the research are considered on the occasion of preparing self-evaluation and reaccreditation reports, and shall be published on the website of the institution.

Institution reaccreditation is a process based on the Institution’s external evaluation report and its study programs in accordance with the prescribed standards for institution reaccreditation. The reaccreditation process is implemented through the following stages:

1. The institution shall apply for accreditation of the institution with a report on self-evaluation and other supporting documents.
2. The Agency shall delegate a procedure coordinator from among the staff of the Agency.
3. The coordinator checks the formal fulfillment and timeliness of the reaccreditation request and supporting documents.
4. After establishing that the material is complete, the Director of the Agency shall form an expert committee that will evaluate the reaccreditation request with at least five members that include the student as compulsory and the representative of the economy as the required member.
5. The Commission, on the basis of standards and criteria for the reaccreditation of the institution, documentation and visits to the institution, evaluates the request for reaccreditation and sends to the Agency a report with an reaccreditation position.
6. The Agency shall send the report to the institution for its opinion;
7. The Commission shall, in accordance with the justification of the opinion of the institution, submit to the Agency a final reaccreditation report with an reaccreditation position.
8. The Director of the Agency shall decide on the request for reaccreditation of the institution based on the reaccreditation report.
9. The Agency shall notify the institution of the decision on reaccreditation and publish the report and decision on the website.
10. The Agency shall issue a certificate for reaccreditation of the institution.

**Licensing**

The establishment of higher education institutions and the licensing process are regulated by the Law on Higher Education. An institution can perform its activity and admit students after the Ministry identifies that the institution has met the requirements prescribed by this Law and renders a decision on licensing. The license determines the type of institution, accredited study programmes, maximum number of students that can be admitted to certain study programmes, levels of education and degrees that can be obtained at the institution. The decision on licensing is passed by the Ministry of Education and published in the Official Gazette of Montenegro.

Licensing procedure is performed in accordance with the Rulebook on more detailed Conditions for
External evaluation

Within the Project "Higher Education and Research for Innovation and Competitiveness" financed by the World Bank loan, an external evaluation of all higher education institutions in Montenegro was carried out by the experts of the European Association of Universities - EUA in 2014. The external evaluation reports of the individual higher education institutions as well as integrated report of higher education system quality are available on the official EUA IEP website.

Periodic control of the realization of the study programs or work of institutions

So-called post-evaluation (follow up) involving six HEIs that were evaluated during 2013/2014 year was completed in 2018. Three initial individual institutional evaluations of higher education institutions that were not included in 2013/2014 evaluation were subjects of evaluation too. Evaluation was conducted in 2018 by the Institutional Evaluation Program (IEP), the European University Association (EUA). The outcomes of the post evaluation are the individual reports of the institutions, as well as the integrated report of higher education system quality in Montenegro.

Accreditation of the Lifelong Learning Program

The Lifelong Learning Program is a part of the study program, i.e. module, with a defined structure that provides learning outcomes for the acquisition of competencies and the issuance of certificates for performing related tasks in the areas of higher education work defined in the national qualifications framework. The accreditation process for lifelong learning programs is implemented through few stages defined by specific legal act.

Periodic control of the implementation of study programs and the work of higher education institutions is an ad hoc procedure carried out at the initiative of the Ministry of Education or Institution.

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