

Guideline for the Accreditation Council of Educational Programmes



National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement

Contents

Introduction	5
Vision of the Center	6
Mission of the Center	6
Values of the Center	6
Goals of the Center	6
Types of Proceedings that the Accreditation Council Considers	7
Parties Involved in the Proceedings	7
Functions of the Experts	7
Functions of the Representatives of the Center	8
Functions of the Higher Education Institution	8
Functions of the Accreditation Council	9
Principles of the Council's Activities	9
Conflict of Interests	10
Independence of the Council ESG-2015 Requirements	10
Oral (Public) Hearing Format	10
Functions of the Council Chair	11
Accreditation Standards	12
Assessment of Compliance with the Component of the Programme Standard	14
Assessment of Compliance with the Component of the Standard	14
Decision Making	16
Decision Types	17
Useful Links	19
Practical Information	19
Consent on observance of the council activity rules, principles and ethical norms by the members of the accreditation council of the educational programmes	20

Introduction

The National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement is a legal entity of public law within the sphere of governance of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, which, in order to promote the development of the quality of education in the entire territory of the country, carries out authorization of educational institutions and accreditation of educational programmes, as well as monitors the fulfillment of authorization and accreditation standards.

In order to bring the field of higher education of Georgia closer to the European educational space and to ensure compliance, the center also works on the development, implementation and development of external mechanisms for ensuring the quality of education, in order to develop the quality of education in higher educational institutions. In order to get closer to the European educational space, the center is also working on improving the national qualification framework. For this purpose, the center is involved in the European project of twinning of public services (EU-Twinning), the task of which is to support the center in the development of institutional capacities of the education quality assurance system, in the issues of quality assurance reform and the introduction and monitoring of the new framework of national qualifications.

Internationalization occupies a large place in the activities of the center. For this purpose, the center cooperates with international organizations and is involved in international projects.

The National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement has been recognized by the following international organizations and is involved in the following international projects:



European Association for Quality Assurance of Higher Education



Register of European Agencies for Quality Assurance of Higher Education



WORLD FEDERATION FOR
MEDICAL EDUCATION

World Federation for Medical Education



EU-Twinning project

Vision of the Center

The Center represents a regional hub with high credibility and recognition on local and international level, which offers wide range of services related to the education quality enhancement to the public.

Mission of the Center

The mission of the Center is to support education quality enhancement by providing services that are user-oriented and based on internationally recognized standards and best local practices, as well as by supporting enhancement of quality-oriented governance.

Values of the Center

The Center is primarily guided by the best interests of the persons involved in the educational process and carries out its activities based on the following values:

Objectivity: Assessments carried out by us alongside self-evaluation is based on the standards established by the legislation and on factual circumstances. Established procedures eliminate partiality of the persons involved in the evaluation as much as possible.

Transparency: The standards and procedures of our activities, our visions and values are publicly accessible and known to all stakeholders in advance. Publicity of the information on the Center's activities is ensured.

Impartiality: We ensure that the decisions made by the Center are in line with the legislation and that they account for the best interest of the involved stakeholders.

Cooperation: We are open to cooperation with stakeholders. We review the novelties, offers and different opinions in a constructive manner and are driven to find solutions to problems.

Development and Innovation: We systematically evaluate our activities and plan innovative ways for development based on the results of evaluation. We offer the same approach to the education providers and we expect the same from our partners.

Goals of the Center

Goals of the Center are:

- The institutional sustainability and operational efficiency is ensured by the organizational arrangement, resources and ongoing processes of the Center;
- In order to bring the education quality assurance system of Georgia closer to European and international standards, the Center actively uses the best international practices;
- The services provided by the Center are developed, flexible, easily accessible and user-oriented;
- Effective quality assurance mechanism tailored to the specifics of general education have been implemented, taking into account national characteristics, best foreign practices and modern challenges in accessing educational services;
- There is a system of best quality assurance in vocational education, based on European experience, which provides / promotes confidence in the qualifications issued in the field of vocational education in Georgia for the purpose of continuing education and / or employment in the national and international labor market;
- Existing external quality assurance mechanisms for higher education institutions and educational programmes take into account national peculiarities and are fully harmonized with international standards.

Types of Proceedings that Accreditation Council Reviews

	Name of the proceeding
1	Accreditation/Reaccreditation
2	Verification of the fulfillment of the condition of accreditation of educational programmes by HEI: Planned monitoring
3	Verification of the fulfillment of the condition of accreditation of educational programmes by HEI: Case-based monitoring
4	Verification of the fulfillment of the condition of accreditation of educational programmes by HEI: Based on an appeal
5	Report on fulfillment of the recommendations provided in the decision made by the accreditation council and in the report drawn up by accreditation expert panel.
6	Reports submitted for the purpose of compliance with the National Qualifications Framework and Classification of Fields of Study

Parties Involved in the Proceedings

Functions of the Experts

Functions of the experts are as follows:

- A) At the first stage of evaluation of the educational programme, examine the documents submitted by the institution; also, get acquainted with the relevant materials and documents for the purpose of examining the issues to be determined within the monitoring;
- B) On the basis of the study of the documents in relation to each standard, formulate the notes, opinions and inquiries in the mapping grid that an expert would like to clarify during the site visit and send the filled mapping grid to the chair within the agreed term;
- C) Participate in the preparatory meeting of experts panel planned before the site visit to discuss the documents;
- D) Take part in the drafting the site visit agenda in case of the implementation of the visit;
- E) In case of carrying out the visit, examine all issues to draw up report in accordance with an agreed agenda, including to interview interested persons, if necessary, request additional documentation, perform visual inspection and perform activities not covered by the agenda; verify the compliance of the information reflected in the self-evaluation report with the existing situation in the institution and the accreditation standards;
- F) After the site visit/study of the documents, take part in the discussion of the evaluation outcome and summarizing;
- G) Participate in the preparation of the draft report and the final report;

H) Participate in the discussion of the relevant issue at the meeting of the accreditation council, including through electronic communication, which is reflected in the minutes of the meeting. An expert (except for an international expert) may participate in the meeting of the accreditation council by electronic communication only if he/she notifies the Center in writing or via the official e-mail of the Center - info@eqe.ge at least two working days prior to the meeting of the relevant Council.

Functions of the Representatives of the Center

In order to manage effectively the activities of experts panel in accordance with the legislation, and to adhere to the common approach to the evaluation, the Center sends its representative to the visit of the experts panel.

Functions of the representatives of the Center are as follows:

- Ensure the effective management of the experts panel activity and adherence to uniform approach of the evaluation at all stages of evaluation of the educational institution / programme;
- Inform the Center in case of procedural violations in the educational institution / programme evaluation process;
If necessary, provide technical assistance to the experts panel.
- Establish the formal compliance of the accreditation expert panel report with the requirements determined by the individual administrative-legal acts of the Director of the Center, which means that the final report shall be:
 - Clear and self-evident;
 - Linguistically sound;
 - Argumentative and evidence-based;
- The Representative of the Center does not take part in the process of evaluation and report drafting;
- Organize the accreditation councils of the educational programmes and provide methodological and technical support for their work;
- Work on continuous improvement of the processes.

Functions of the Higher Education Institution

Function of the higher education institution during the process is as follows:

- Self-evaluation of its activities with the maximum engagement of the stakeholders;
- Submission of the self-evaluation report and the documentation to the Center;
- Creation of relevant conditions in order to implement the evaluation;
- Cooperation in the process of evaluation and confirmation of necessary details;

Functions of the Accreditation Council

Functions of the accreditation council are as follows:

- Examination of the documentation related to the issues envisaged by the agenda in order to fully examine and evaluate all the essential conditions to be reviewed, before the oral hearing of the council; These documentation include: self-evaluation report of the educational programme and its annexes, report of the accreditation expert panel, argumentative position presented by the higher education institution on the draft report of the experts;
- Requesting additional documentation if necessary; In order to study additional documentation, the council is authorized to postpone the review of the issue considering the remaining terms of the administrative proceedings;

Principles of the Activities of the Council

1. While performing his/her functions, a member of the council shall be independent, objective, and unbiased;
2. Member of the council shall remain neutral in any situation, and shall not fall under the influence of interested parties, regardless of their status;
3. Member of the council shall not disclose any information and/or documents obtained during work, and should not use them for personal interests;
4. Member of the council shall be focused on cooperation and shall not try to display privileged position. He/she shall not publicly doubt competence of experts, representatives of educational institutions, members of council, and members of appeal council, even if he/she does not share their position;
5. Member of the council is obliged to declare about conflict of interests with an institution and on self-recusal before the review of the case starts. Conflict of Interests could be any circumstance stipulated in Article 92 of the General Administrative Code of Georgia.
6. In the event of a conflict of interest, the member of the council shall not participate in the discussion, decision-making and voting processes of the issue to be reviewed at the council meeting.
7. Member of the council is not authorized to represent a position of the interested party - educational institution - at the council meeting.

Taking into consideration the mentioned principles, the Center has elaborated form of consent on observance of the council activity rules, principles and ethical norms by the members of the educational programme accreditation council. All members of the council are obliged to get acquainted with these norms and confirm it with a signature.

Conflict of Interests

Member of the council is responsible for declaring about any conflict of interests and self-recusal within two days after receiving agenda.

Conflict of Interests could be any circumstance stipulated in Article 92 of the General Administrative Code of Georgia, which means that member of the council shall not participate in the oral hearing if:

- a) he/she is the interested party in the case;
- b) he/she is a relative of the interested party of the case;
- c) he/she is the representative of the interested party participating in the case;
- d) he/she was an expert regarding the matter;
- e) was a mediator of the same case or of the other case substantially related to the case;
- f) he/she is in a business relationship with the interested party involved in the case;
- f) he/she or his/her family member owns shares or a share of the authorized capital in the institution that represents the interested party;
- g) he/she is a family member of the interested party or its representative;

In this case, a relative means:

- Direct line relative;
- Spouse, brother in law, sister in law and direct line relative;
- Siblings of a direct relative of the ascending line;
- Siblings, their spouses and children.

Independence of the Council ESG-2015 Requirements

Based on ESG-2015 requirements, it is important for the council to be independents and to act autonomously without the third party influence, whether this influence is from a certain institution, state or business- sector; It is important for the council members to take into consideration that they represent an independent body and not their own institutions. The council, in its activities and during the decision making process, shall consider the goals of assurance of the higher education quality and respectively the goals of the Center; The council shall be responsible for the objectivity and validity of the final results of the evaluation.

Oral (Public) Hearing Format

The session of the Council is called by the Chair of the Council, or the Director of the Center. The council members shall make a decision on accreditation based on the accreditation documents, report of the accreditation expert panel, the study of argumentative position of the institution about draft report of the accreditation expert panel, and the oral hearing.

The interested party shall be notified on the oral hearing at least 7 calendar days prior to the oral hearing. The interested party participating in administrative proceedings shall be authorized to participate in oral hearing.

The session is authorized, if it is attended by more than half of the members, but no less than 3 members. In case of participation of invited members of the Council, it is authorized if it is attended by more than half of the members of the list, but no less than 3/4 of invited members. This number does not include a member of the Council, which has self-recusal or recusal towards the issue at hand.

Session of the council is public. It is possible to invite other expert in the relevant field, a member of a professional organization, a specialist of the field and other person to the oral hearing by the decision of the Council.

When making a decision on the oral hearing, the document of the accreditation seeker which was drawn up after accreditation site visit is not taken into consideration.

Minutes of the council meeting is signed within 10 business days after the meeting by the signatures of the chair of the council and the council secretary. An individual administrative-legal act is issued based on the minutes of the council and signed by the chair and secretary of the council.

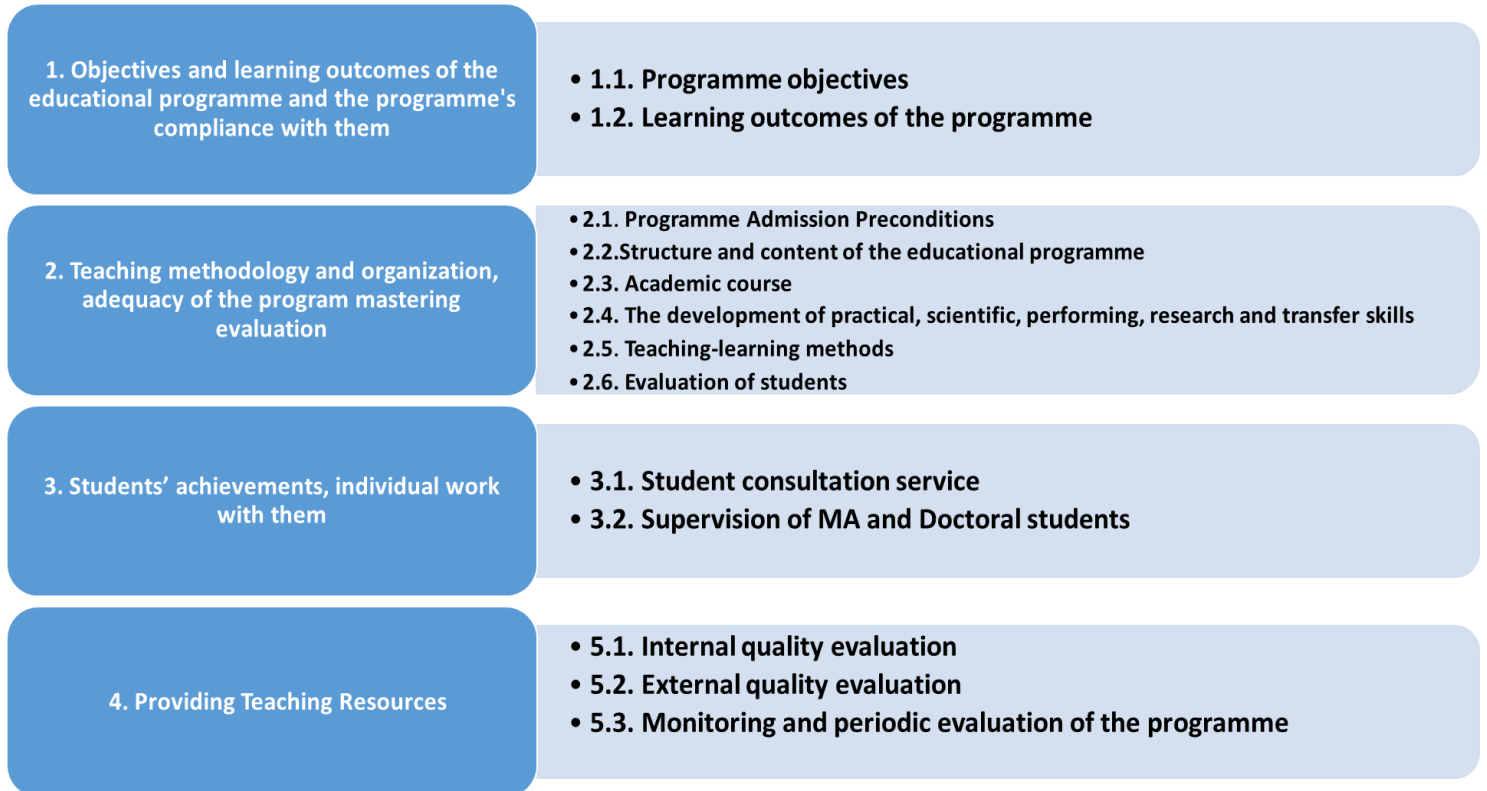
Functions of the Council Chair

The session is chaired by the chair of the council, in case of his/her absence - deputy, and in case of absence of the chair and deputy chair - a member of the council determined by a majority of attendees. If the secretary of the council is unable to perform duties, such duties are carried out by one of the members of the council, as requested by the chair.

Chair of the meeting is obliged to ensure examination of the case related circumstances at the oral hearing. The chair of the council is authorized to announce the meeting closed in the cases envisaged by the legislation of Georgia.

Accreditation Standards

Educational programme is evaluated according to the 5 standards:



Each component of a standard is connected to at least 3 components. In order to observe the coherence in the evaluation, one of the approaches may be to see the accreditation standards in the view of standards envisaged by ESG-2015 document. The table below will help you for this purposes:

ESG 2015 and Accreditation Standard

ESG 2015	Accreditation/standard component
1.1 Quality assurance policy	1.1. Programme objectives; 1.2. Programme learning outcomes; 2.2. Structure and content of the educational programme
1.2 Programme elaboration and approval	1.1. Programme objectives; 1.2. Programme learning outcomes; 2.2. Structure and content of the educational programme; 2.4. The development of practical, scientific, performing, research and transfer skills; 5.3. Monitoring and periodic evaluation of the programme
1.3 Student oriented teaching, learning and evaluation	2.5. Teaching-learning methods; 2.6. Evaluation of students;
1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification	2.1. Programme admission preconditions; 5.1. Internal quality evaluation;
1.5 Teachers/lecturers	4.1. Human resources; 4.2. Professional development of academic, scientific and invited personnel;
1.6 Teaching resources and students support	3. Students' achievements, individual work with them; 4.1. human resources; 4.3 Material resources; 4.4. Budget of the programme/faculty/school and financial sustainability of the programme
1.7 Information management	1.2. Programme learning outcomes; 5.1. Internal quality evaluation; 5.2. External quality evaluation; 5.3. Monitoring and periodic evaluation of the programme;
1.8 Public information	1. Programme objectives; 1.2. Programme learning outcomes; 2.1. Programme admission preconditions; 2.2. Structure and content of the educational programme;
1.9 Ongoing monitoring and periodic evaluation of the programme	1.1. Programme objectives; 1.2. Programme learning outcomes; 5.3. Monitoring and periodic evaluation of the programme
1.10 Periodic external quality assurance	5.2. External quality evaluation; Educational programme accreditation standard 65/n

Assessment of Compliance with the Component of the Programme Standard

Compliance of the educational programmes with the standard requirements is established by the 4-scale evaluation. Evaluation of the programme against the standard requirements may be one of the following:

- a) Fully complies with the standard requirements;
- b) Substantially complies with the standard requirements;
- c) Partially complies with the standard requirements;
- d) Does not comply with the standard requirements.

The educational programme is evaluated in relation to the standard component as “**complies with the standard requirements**”, if the educational programme fully meets the requirements of the standard component.

The educational programme is evaluated in relation to the standard component as “**substantially complies with the standard requirements**” if the educational programme substantially ensures the compliance with the standard component requirements and the institution is able to demonstrate the respective results. However, the institution has weak sides, for overcoming of which in the short term (not more than 1 year) it has willingness, readiness and a plan to provide resources

The educational programme is evaluated in relation to the standard component as “**partially complies with the standard requirements**”, if the educational programme meets the component requirements on basic level and has such areas for improvement that require mobilization of significant resources. However, the institution has a willingness and plan to provide adequate resources to overcome weak sides in the medium term (more than 1 year but not more than 2 years).

The educational programme is evaluated in relation to the standard component as “**does not comply with the standard requirements**” if the educational programme fails to satisfy the requirements of the standard component on the basic level.

Assessment of Compliance with the Component of the Standard

Institution's compliance with the component of the standard is established by the 4 -scale evaluation. Evaluation of the institution against the standard requirements may be one of the following:

- a) Fully complies with the standard requirements;
- b) Substantially complies with the standard requirements;
- c) Partially complies with the standard requirements;
- d) Does not comply with the standard requirements.

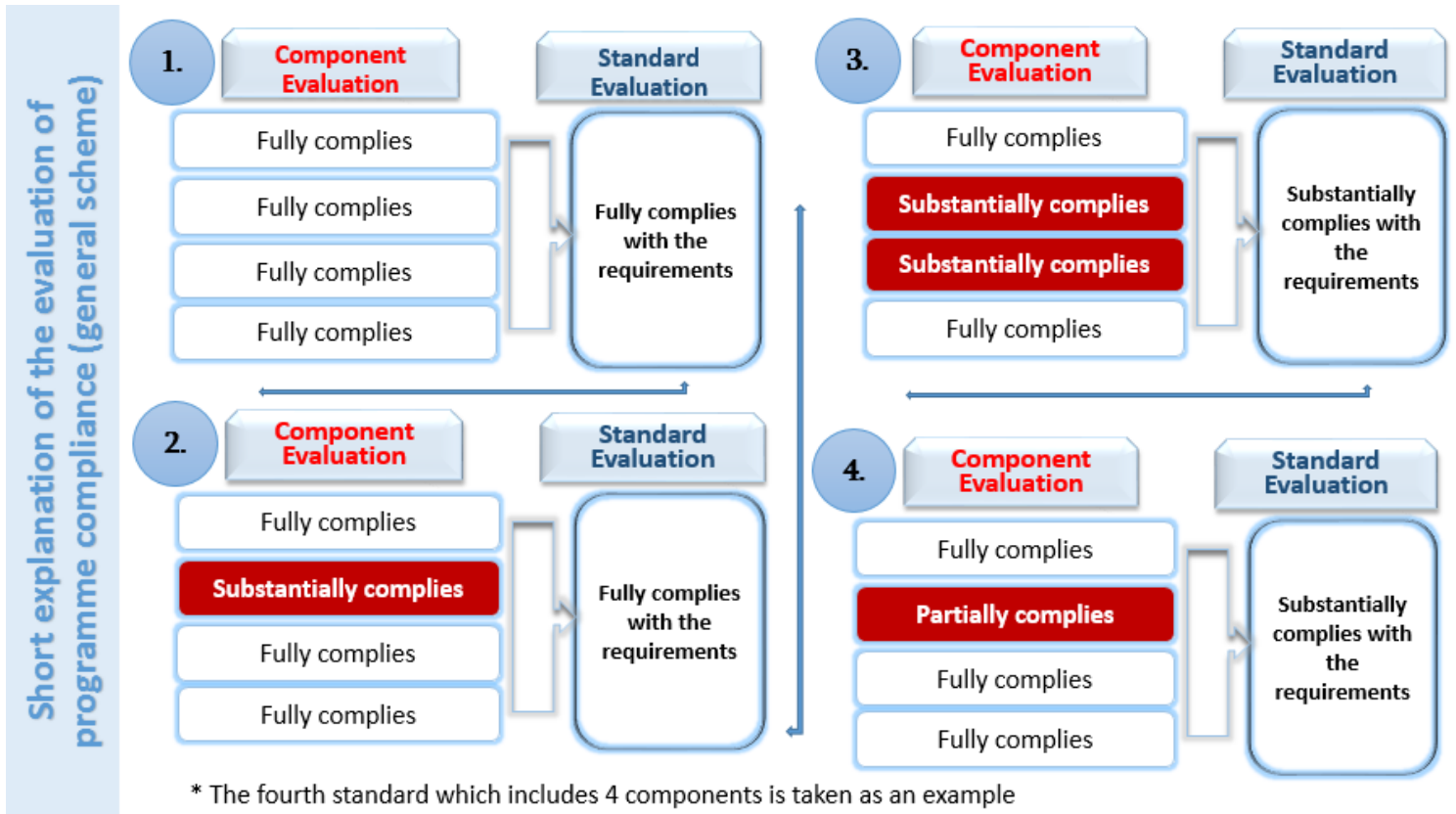
An educational programme “**complies with the standard requirements**” if it is evaluated in relation to not more than one component of this standard as “substantially complies with standard requirements” and with regard to the rest of the components - as “complies with standard requirements”.

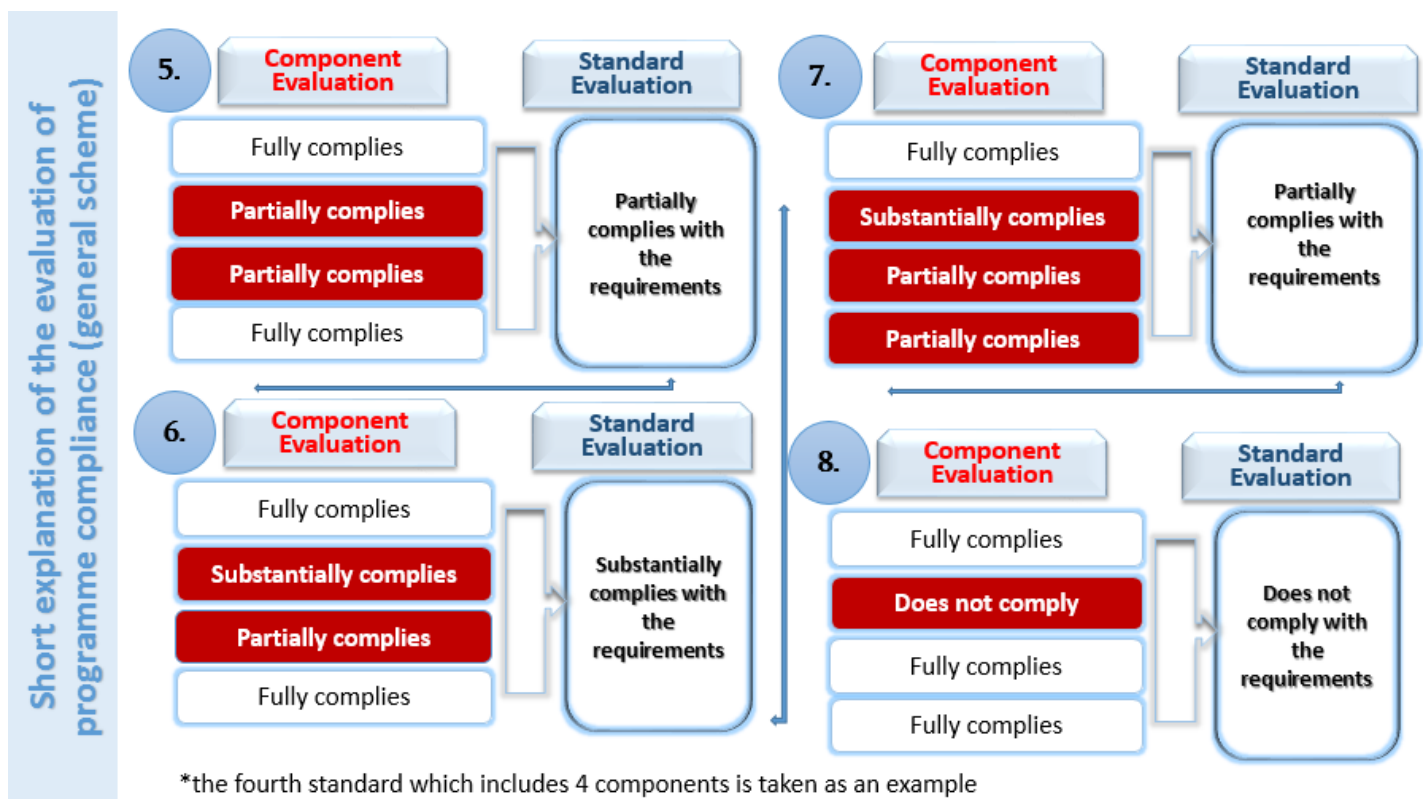
Educational programme “**substantially complies with the standard requirements**” if the educational programme is evaluated against more than one of the components of this standard as “substantially complies with the standard requirements” or if the educational programme is evaluated against not more than one component of this standard as “partially complies with the standard requirements, while it is not

evaluated as “does not comply with standard requirements” against any of the other components.

Educational programme “**partially complies with the standard requirements**” if the educational programme is evaluated against more than one component of this standard as “partially complies with the standard requirements”, while it is not evaluated as “does not comply with the standard requirements” against any other component.

The educational programme “**does not comply with the standard requirements**”, if the educational programme is evaluated in relation to at least one of the components of this standard as “does not comply with the standard requirements”.





Decision Making

The decision of the council shall be made by at least 3/4 of the members attending the session. In addition, in case of participation of invited members of the accreditation council of educational programmes, the council shall make decision by no less than 3/4 of the members present at the meeting, from which the votes of invited members shall be at least 3/4 of the present invited members. Also, it should be noted that the council shall make the decision based on the secret ballot. Furthermore, the minutes of the council meeting ensure publicity of the ballot results.

When making a decision on the oral hearing, the document of the accreditation seeker which was drawn up after accreditation site visit is not taken into consideration.

Member of the council is not entitled to refrain from voting. A member of the council is not entitled to refrain from voting. The decision is published on the Center's website within 10 after its adoption. Together with the decision, evaluation report of the expert panel is also published on the webpage.

Decision Types

The council makes one of the following decisions regarding **the matter of accreditation of the educational programme:**

- a) On accreditation;
 - 1. With the condition of representing the accreditation report;
 - 2. Accreditation via mediation of implementation of the monitoring;
- b) On conditional accreditation;
- c) On refusing the accreditation;
- d) On cancellation of accreditation.

- During the first and every consequent accreditation of the educational programme, **the decision on accreditation** is made if the council thinks that the programme has been evaluated as “complies with the standard requirements” against all the standards;
- If the programme is evaluated against at least one standard as "substantially complies with standard requirements" and is not evaluated against any of the standards as "partially complies with standard requirements" or "does not comply with standard requirements", the **Council shall make a decision on accreditation** and shall define the term for the institution to submit the report on the fulfillment of the recommendations that will be reflected in the minutes of the Council session; Presented report is reviewed at the council session;
- If the programme is evaluated in relation with at least one standard as "partially complies with the standard requirements" and is not evaluated in relation with none of the standards as "does not complies with the standard requirements," the **Council makes a decision about conditional accreditation;**
- If the programme is evaluated as “does not comply with the standard requirements” in relation to at least one standard, **the Council makes a decision to refuse accreditation.**

In the case of examination of the fulfillment of the accreditation conditions by higher education institution via monitoring the council shall make one of the following decisions:

- a) Termination of the administrative proceedings;
- b) Determining the term of no more than 60 days for the educational institution to resolve the shortcomings, except in the cases when it is evident that this will not have any results;
- c) Cancellation of the accreditation.

- As a result of examination of the accreditation conditions, the Council may decide cancellation of the educational programme’s accreditation/ conditional accreditation if the programme was evaluated against one standard as "does not complies with the standard requirements".
- In case of identification of a violation, the Council is authorized to set the term of no more than 60 days for the institution to resolve the shortcoming, except for the cases when it is obvious that this will not have any outcome.
- In case an institution fails to correct the deficiencies within the given deadline, the Council is authorized to make a decision about cancellation of accreditation or cancellation of conditional accreditation.

While reviewing the report presented by the institution on the educational programme, the council accepts the report as a note or establishes the necessity of implementation of the monitoring if necessary.

The council shall take the report as a note if the report drawn up on the documentation examined by the expert is positive and the educational institution has taken into consideration the recommendations provided by the experts or the council members during the accreditation process.

While reviewing the documentation submitted for the purpose of compliance with the qualification framework, the accreditation council may make the following decision:

- a) In the case of establishment of the compliance, terminates the administrative proceedings and grants the educational institution the right to implement the modified programme until the expiration of the accreditation term.
- b) In the case of identification of a violation, the council is authorized to provide educational institution with reasonable period of no more than 60 days for resolution of the shortcoming, except for the case, when it is apparent that it may not have actual results.
- c) On the cancellation of accreditation.

If within the establishment of the compliance the accreditation council of the educational programmes makes a decision on cancellation of the accreditation and the educational institution keeps the right to implement the programme in an authorized mode, then the accreditation council shall address the authorization council of the higher education institutions to examine the educational programme in question within their competence.

Useful Links

<http://erasmusplus.org.ge/publications>

<https://enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg/>

https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf

<http://www.ehea.info/page-ministerial-declarations-and-communications>

Practical Information

Contact persons

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Annex: Form of consent on observance of the council activity rules, principles and ethical norms by the members of the accreditation council of the educational programmes

Consent on observance of the council activity rules, principles and ethical norms by the members of the accreditation council of the educational programmes

Name, Surname: _____

I understand the role and functions of the accreditation council of the educational programmes in terms of development of assurance of higher education quality of the country and increase of the trust towards the system of higher education quality assurance on local and international level, I hereby confirm with the signature that:

While performing the functions determined by the legislation, I will be independent, unbiased and objective.

While making a decision, I will observe the current legislation and will take each decision by protecting the highest standards of substantiation, taking into consideration the goals of higher education, quality assurance and Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Education Area (ESG).

I will maintain neutrality in any situation and I shall not be influenced by interested parties despite their status;

I will be focused on cooperation and I will not try to represent myself in a privileged position. I shall not publicly doubt the competence of an expert and/or representatives of the educational institution, the Center and nor the council member.

I shall not publish and use for personal interests the information and/or documentation obtained during performance of the functions of the council member;

Before the oral hearing, in order to examine and evaluate fully all the essential conditions regarding the case, I shall get acquainted with the documentation sent from the Center fully and in-depth.

In the case of conflict of interests, I shall inform the Center on this matter according to the rules of procedure established by the legislation.

Based on the accreditation process including the analysis of the councils' activities I shall always take care of the development of the higher education system, accreditation process, including the activities of the accreditation council.

Signature: _____

Date:



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