

The guidelines for the preparation of the joint report of the group of experts for study directions

The guidelines for the preparation of the joint report of the group of experts for study directions (hereinafter – the experts group) (hereinafter – guidelines) are developed in accordance with Subparagraph 2.6 of Cabinet Regulation No. 407 of 14 July 2015 "Regulations on Accreditation of Institutions of Higher Education, Colleges and Study Directions" and are subject to the requirements set forth in these regulations.

The purpose of the guidelines is to provide the experts group with a structured framework to prepare the joint report about the accreditation of study directions. The experts group shall prepare the joint report in English within the accreditation of a study direction.

The joint report shall be prepared by the experts group:

- in the sequence set forth in the guidelines, justifying the made statements and providing references and examples;
- in accordance with the literary and grammar rules of language, legal and academic terminology;
- providing recommendations for elimination of the deficiencies found (in the short-term period) and improvement of the study direction and its relevant study programmes (in the long-term period).

Preparing the report, the experts group shall assess all assessment criteria specified in the guidelines.

Each assessment criterion is followed by aspects (in italics) which are to be taken into account when assessing the relevant criterion. At the discretion of the experts group, it may assess other aspects which are significant for assessment of the relevant criterion. Assessing each criterion, the experts group shall analyse the information available for the experts group, giving concrete examples and references to the Self-Assessment Report prepared by higher education institution¹ (hereinafter – HEI) and information obtained during the visit.

The experts group shall analyse each criterion and make conclusions, specifying strengths and weaknesses of the HEI with regard to meeting the assessment criterion in the study direction and its relevant study programmes.

Preparing its joint report about the study direction, the experts group shall agree on the assessment of criteria and evaluate each criterion as follows: “poor”, “average”, “good”, “excellent”. If the opinion of experts regarding any of the criteria differs, the different opinion shall be specified in the joint report.

In the part with recommendations, the experts group shall provide short-term recommendations for elimination of the deficiencies found, as well as long-term recommendations for further improvement of the study direction and its relevant study programmes. In the part with the study direction assessment, the experts group shall justify the recommendation about the accreditation term of the study direction.

¹The definition “higher education institution” used herein is applicable to all higher education and science institutions mentioned in the Law on Institutions of Higher Education which implement academic and professional study programmes, as well as deal with science, research activities and artistic creation (universities, higher education institutions, academies, and institutes).

The joint report of the experts group shall be filled in on the computer and shall be submitted in an electronic and paper format. The report submitted in a paper format shall be drawn up in duplicate and signed.

After the procedure of the study direction accreditation is completed, the joint report of the experts group shall be published in the Register of Study Directions.

The structure of the report

K1. The relevance, aims and objectives of the study direction and its relevant study programmes as a whole and their clarity, attainability, and compliance with the general strategic development of the HEI.

K2. The management of the study direction

K3. The effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system

K4. Resources and provision of the study direction

K5. Science, research and artistic creation

K6. Cooperation and internationalization

K7. Activities of students' self-governance

K8. The implementation of the recommendations (if such had been given) provided for a particular study programme within the previous accreditation of the study direction (if such had been conducted) or licensing of a study programme

Recommendations for the study direction

Assessment of the study direction

Assessment of the study programme (*for each relevant study programme of the study direction*)

K9. The reciprocal compliance between the name of the study programme, the degree to be acquired, professional qualification or degree and professional qualification, aims and objectives, and terms of admission

K10. The content of studies

K11. Resources and provision of the study programme

K12. Employment opportunities of the graduates of the study programme

Recommendations for the study programme

Summary of the assessment criteria of the study direction

Summary of the assessment criteria of the study programmes

Guidelines for assessment of the study direction and its relevant study programmes

Assessing the criterion K5 “Scientific research, and, if the study direction “Arts” is assessed – also artistic creation”, we call for taking into account the type of the HEI (university, academy, higher education institution).

If more than half of the relevant study programmes of the study direction are evaluated as “poor” in the criterion K11 “Resources and provision of the study programme”, then the evaluation of the study direction in the criterion K4 “Resources and provision of the study direction” cannot be higher than “average”.

If more than half of the relevant study programmes of the study direction are evaluated as “poor” in the criterion K9 “The reciprocal compliance between the name of the study programme, the degree to be acquired, professional qualification or degree and professional qualification, aims and objectives, and terms of admission”, then the evaluation of the study direction in the criterion K1 “The relevance, aims and objectives of the study direction and its relevant study programmes as a whole and their clarity, attainability, and compliance with the general strategic development of the HEI” cannot be higher than “average”.

If more than half of the relevant study programmes of the study direction are evaluated as “poor” in the criterion K10 “The content of studies”, then the evaluation of the study direction in the criterion K2 “The management of the study direction” cannot be higher than “average”.

If more than half of the relevant study programmes of the study direction are evaluated as “poor” in the criterion K12 “Employment opportunities of the graduates of the study programme”, then the evaluation of the study direction in the criterion K6 “Cooperation and internationalization” cannot be higher than “average”.

Recommendation about the accreditation term of the study direction

The experts may recommend to accredit the study direction (for a period of 6 years) if at least five of the assessment criteria of the study direction are evaluated as “good” or “excellent”, it is recommended that at least one assessment criteria of the study direction is evaluated as “excellent”.

The experts may recommend to accredit the study direction (for a period of 2 years) if at least four assessment criteria of the study direction are evaluated as “good” or “excellent”.

If the criterion K4 “Resources and provision of the study direction” or criterion K8 “The implementation of the recommendations (if such had been given) provided for a particular study programme within the previous accreditation of the study direction (if such had been conducted) or licensing of a study programme” is evaluated as “poor”, then the experts may recommend to cancel the accreditation of the study direction.

If the criterion K4 “Resources and provision of the study direction” or criterion K8 “The implementation of the recommendations (if such had been given) provided for a particular study programme within the previous accreditation of the study direction (if such had been conducted) or licensing of a study programme” is evaluated as “average”, then the experts may recommend to accredit the study direction for a period of 2 years.

If the experts group finds, after the assessment is completed, that any of the relevant study programmes of the study direction does not comply with the requirements defined in regulatory enactments, then the experts group may propose to the HEI to close that relevant study programme of the study direction.

Evaluation	Evaluation explanation
Excellent	A regulatory framework which is documented, implemented, logical and effective, regularly being revised and improved is created in order to meet the criterion to be assessed, and the staff and involved parties are informed about this framework and take part in its implementation. Specific methods and solutions which are adopted to the study direction are used for meeting the criterion. These methods and solutions significantly improve the quality of the study direction and can be used as examples of good practice for other HEIs in Latvia and in the world. Fully meeting the criterion to be assessed, a significant contribution is provided to the general development of the relevant industry.
Good	A regulatory framework is created within the relevant study programme in order to meet the criterion to be assessed; it is documented, implemented and the staff of the HEI and involved parties are informed about it. Regulatory framework, procedures, processes, etc. are regularly revised and improved. Methods that develop the study direction and improve its quality are used for meeting the criterion. Insignificant deficiencies, that can be easily eliminated, are found upon meeting the criterion to be assessed within the study direction.
Average	A regulatory framework is created in order to meet the criterion to be assessed, but this framework is not fully implemented and the staff of the HEI and/or involved parties are not informed about it and do not take part in its implementation, provision, improvement and other stages. Though, in general, the study direction and its relevant programmes formally comply with the criterion to be assessed, but deficiencies in its implementation are significant and affect the quality of the study direction, while long-term planned activities, support of the interested parties and additional resources are required to eliminate them. The criteria is not fully provided.
Poor	The HEI does not meet the criterion to be assessed within the study direction or meets it at a low level, without a clear aim, structure and implementation strategy. The management principles and processes are not clearly defined, implemented and known to the HEI and/or involved parties. The study direction and its relevant study programmes do not meet the good practice in Latvia and in the world. The existing provision of the study direction within the specific criterion is assessed as critical; it does not promote the quality of studies and even pose a threat to it.

JOINT REPORT OF THE EXPERTS GROUP FOR STUDY DIRECTIONS

STUDY DIRECTION

(name)

Name of the higher education institution

The experts group recommends to accredit the study direction for a period of ____ years.

(The experts group recommends not to accredit the study direction)

Experts group:

1. Degree / professional qualification, name, surname _____
2. Degree / professional qualification, name, surname _____
3. Degree / professional qualification, name, surname _____
4. Degree / professional qualification, name, surname _____
5. Degree / professional qualification, name, surname _____

_____ (date)

K1. The relevance, aims and objectives of the study direction and its relevant study programmes as a whole and their clarity, attainability, and compliance with the general strategic development of the HEI

Assessing the criteria, please analyse the following aspects:

- *Justification and relevance of creation of the study direction and its relevant study programmes;*
- *Aims of the study direction (Are the aims and objectives of the study direction clearly defined and achievable? / Do they comply with the general strategic development directions of the HEI, and with needs and development trends in the society and economy?);*
- *SWOT analysis of the study direction (Can HEI define its weaknesses and use its strengths to prevent threats posed to achieving the aims set for the study direction?);*
- *Study direction development plan (Is it reasonable and implementable, taking into account the activities carried out by the HEI and the existing study quality?).*

Analysis

Conclusions, specifying strengths and weaknesses

Evaluation of criterion

Poor	Average	Good	Excellent
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K2. The management of the study direction

Assessing the criteria, please analyse the following aspects:

- *Study direction management structure (Is it oriented to development of the study direction? / Is the decision-making process effective?);*
- *Processes of creation and revision of the relevant study programmes of the study direction (Are they defined, effective and logical?);*
- *Student admission requirements (Are systems/procedures created, logical and effective?);*
- *Procedure for recognition of the study period, professional experience and previously acquired formal and non-formal education within the study direction (Are systems/procedures created, available, implemented and effective?);*
- *System of evaluation of students' achievements and study results, separately assessing the study programmes implemented in the form of distance learning (Is an evaluation*

system created, implemented, effective and in compliance with the specific features of the direction?);

- *Process for submission and review of the students' complaints and proposals (Is the system/procedure created, available, workable and effective?);*
- *Academic integrity principles, separately assessing the study programmes implemented in the form of distance learning (Are the principles defined? / Are the used mechanisms and anti-plagiarism tools appropriate, workable and effective?).*

Analysis

Conclusions, specifying strengths and weaknesses

Evaluation of criterion

Poor	Average	Good	Excellent
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K3. The effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system

[with regard to achieve the development aims of the study direction, by assessing aspects in the internal quality assurance system]

Assessing the criteria, please analyse the following aspects:

- *Quality policy (Is it defined, publicly available? / Are the interested parties involved in the determination of the policy?);*
- *Mechanism for the implementation of the quality policy (Is a mechanism created? / Does it ensure implementation of the policy? / Are persons responsible for implementation of the policy assigned?);*
- *Internal quality assurance system (Is it effective within the study direction? / Are indicators for implementing the objectives and reaching the aims of the study direction defined?)*
- *Internal quality assurance system (Does it ensure the observance of the standards specified in the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)?).*

Analysis

Conclusions, specifying strengths and weaknesses

Evaluation of criterion

Poor	Average	Good	Excellent
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K4. Resources and provision of the study direction

Assessing the criteria, please analyse the following aspects:

- *Financial provision of the study direction (Is the HEI aware of the financial resources required for the implementation of the study programme? / Does the HEI have them? / Are they sufficient to ensure a qualitative study process? / Is there long-term planning with regard to financial resources?);*
- *System to finance scientific research and/or artistic creation (Is it defined and effective?);*
- *Infrastructure of the study direction and material and technical provision (Is the HEI aware of the infrastructure resources and material and technical provision required for the implementation of the study programme? / Does the HEI have them? Do students and teaching staff ² have a long-term access to the resources? / Is development of the infrastructure planned?);*
- *Methodological and informational support of the study direction (Is the support sufficient and suitable for the needs of the implementation of the relevant study programmes of the study direction? / Is it effectively applied in the study process? / Is there long-term availability of this support?);*
- *Support from the administrative and technical staff for the implementation of the study direction;*
- *Support system for students (Are needs of the support system identified? / Is it officially introduced and functioning?);*
- *Provision for distance learning (Is infrastructure, material and technical provision, methodological and informational support sufficient and in compliance with the specific features of distance learning?) (if applicable);*
- *Provision of the resources required for the study process in the branches (Are financial resources, infrastructure, material and technical provision, methodological and informational support and support from the administrative and technical staff sufficient?) (if applicable);*
- *Procedures for selection and employment of the teaching staff (Are the procedures officially determined and implemented in practice? / Are they observed? / Do they ensure that qualified and appropriate members of the teaching staff are employed?);*
- *Professional and didactic improvement of the teaching staff (Are needs of the teaching staff for professional and didactic improvement determined in a target-oriented manner? / Are the appropriate improvement measures are taken and used? / Is the result and efficiency of the taken measures assessed?);*
- *Compliance of the qualification, professional and academic experience of the teaching staff with the implementation of the relevant study programmes of the study direction;*

² The definition “teaching staff” used herein is applicable to the academic staff of the relevant higher education institution and its visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers and visiting assistants.

- *Mobility of the teaching staff (Does the teaching staff take part both in outgoing and ingoing mobility? / Does the mobility provide added value for the implementation of the study process and study quality?).*

Analysis

Conclusions, specifying strengths and weaknesses

Evaluation of criterion

Poor	Average	Good	Excellent
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K5. Scientific research, and, if the study direction “Arts” is assessed – also artistic creation

[organisation within the study direction and the scientific research work of the academic staff and students of the HEI, and, if the study direction “Arts” is assessed – also the work of artistic creation]

Assessing the criteria, please analyse the following aspects:

- *Directions of scientific research and/or artistic creation of the study direction (Are they in compliance with the study direction and the relevant industry, as well as with the development aims of the HEI?);*
- *Relation between scientific research and/or artistic creation and study process (Is the relation defined, ensured, and effective? / Are scientific research and/or artistic creation and their results integrated in the study process (in the study programmes of all levels)?);*
- *Both national and international activities of the academic staff in scientific research and/or artistic creation (within the study direction); application of the obtained information in the study process;*
- *International cooperation in scientific research and/or artistic creation (Is there any cooperation? / What type of cooperation is implemented? / How has cooperation developed? / How does it influence on the relevant study programmes of the study direction?);*
- *Students’ involvement in scientific research and/or artistic creation (Is a system created? Is it functioning? / Is it effective? / Are students of all levels involved in scientific research and/or artistic creation?);*
- *Innovative solutions in the study process.*

Analysis

Conclusions, specifying strengths and weaknesses

Evaluation of criterion

Poor	Average	Good	Excellent
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K6. Cooperation and internationalization

[compliance with achieving the development aims of the study direction, and with the implementation of the relevant study programmes of the study direction and with associated research, and, if the study direction “Arts” is assessed – also the compliance with artistic creation]

Assessing the criteria, please analyse the following aspects:

- *Aims and management of cooperation and internationalization (Are these aims in compliance with the development aims of the HEI and aims of the study direction? / Does management help to achieve the aims?);*
- *Description and assessment of the cooperation forms and types (except for cooperation with employers) (Is there any practical cooperation, if yes, what is it? / How does it contribute to improving the study quality? / Are cooperation partners chosen according to the aims of the study direction?);*
- *Cooperation with employers and employers’ organisations of the relevant industry;*
- *Provision of places for traineeship for students and organisation of traineeship (if applicable);*
- *Attraction of foreign students and teaching staff within the study direction;*
- *Students’ outgoing and ingoing mobility;*
- *Joint study programmes implemented by Latvian and foreign HEIs (Justification of creation of the joint study programmes and of selection of partnering HEIs / Is the process of creation and implementation of the joint study programmes defined and efficient?) (if applicable);*
- *Study direction in the international environment (Does the HEI take part in the international organisations associated with the relevant study direction) (if applicable).*

Analysis

Conclusions, specifying strengths and weaknesses

Evaluation of criterion

Poor	Average	Good	Excellent
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K7. Work of students' self-governance

Assessing the criteria, please analyse the following aspects:

- *Work principles of students' self-governance (Is there self-governance? / Are students informed about self-governance and its functions? / Do they actively take part in activities of students' self-governance?);*
- *Compliance of the work of students' self-governance with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (Does students' self-governance, carrying out its activities, represent students in academic, material (social), cultural life matters? / Is there a procedure defined that allows students to be elected for collegiate entities of HEI);*
- *Support provided by the management of the HEI to facilitate students' representation development and activities of students' self-governance.*

Analysis

Conclusions, specifying strengths and weaknesses

Evaluation of criterion

Poor	Average	Good	Excellent
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K8. The implementation of the recommendations (if such had been given) provided for a particular study programme within the previous accreditation of the study direction (if such had been conducted) or licensing of a study programme

Assessing the criteria, please analyse the following aspects:

- *Completion of the plan for the implementation of recommendations given during the previous accreditation of the study direction or licensing of study programmes (if applicable) (Are the recommendations implemented fully/partially? / Is there any contribution from the HEI to analysis of the recommendations and to their adaptation to the specific features of the study direction?).*

Analysis

Conclusions, specifying strengths and weaknesses

Evaluation of criterion

Poor	Average	Good	Excellent
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Recommendations for the study direction

This section must include the recommendations that are binding on the whole study direction. The recommendations shall be indicated in two parts:

- *Recommendations for elimination of the deficiencies found (in the short-term period)*
- *Recommendations for improving the study quality in the long-term period.*

Assessment of the study direction

- *Justification of the recommendation about the accreditation term of the study direction (taking into account the criteria for assessing the study direction and study programmes).*
- *If the opinion of experts regarding any of the assessment criteria differs, specify expert's name and surname, different opinion, assessment criterion and justification of the different opinion, as well as its influence on evaluating the assessment criterion and on recommendation about the accreditation term.*

1. STUDY PROGRAMME “Name”

K9. The reciprocal compliance between the name of the study programme, the degree to be acquired, professional qualification or degree and professional qualification, aims and objectives, and terms of admission

Assessing the criteria, please analyse the following aspects:

- *The reciprocal compliance between the name of the study programme, the degree to be acquired, professional qualification or degree and professional qualification, aims and objectives, and terms of admission.*

Analysis

Conclusions, specifying strengths and weaknesses

Evaluation of criterion

Poor	Average	Good	Excellent
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K10. The content of studies

Assessing the criteria, please analyse the following aspects:

- *Content of the study courses/modules (Is it relevant and in compliance with the relevant industry, needs of the labour market and scientific trends?);*
- *Compliance of the study courses/modules with the aims of the study programme and study results to be achieved (Does the study course form an integral whole and help to achieve the determined study results of the study programme? / Is the layout of the study courses in the curriculum is logical and consecutive? / Are descriptions of the study courses developed in a detailed and qualitative manner?);*
- *Study implementation methods (including evaluation methods) (Do the methods contribute to achieving the results of the study courses and the set aim of the study programme? / Are student-centered education principles taken into account?);*
- *Students' traineeship (Do students obtain the required skills in the course of traineeship according to the study results to be achieved in the study programme?);*
- *Topics of the students' final works (Are they relevant and in compliance with the needs of the labour market and scientific trends?);*
- *Results of the students' opinion surveys (Are the results used for improvement of the study quality, if yes, to what extent?);*

- *Results of the graduates and employers' opinion surveys (Are the results used for improvement of the study quality, if yes, to what extent?).*

Analysis

Conclusions, specifying strengths and weaknesses

Evaluation of criterion

Poor	Average	Good	Excellent
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K11. Resources and provision of the study programme

Assessing the criteria, please analyse the following aspects:

- *Teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme (Is the teaching staff chosen according to the specific features of the study programme? / Do the qualification and mutual cooperation of the teaching staff ensure achievement of the aims/results of the study programme?);*
- *Teaching staff in the branches (Does teaching staff in the branches differ from provision in the main place of the implementation? If yes, does it ensure the implementation of a qualitative study process? (if applicable).*

Analysis

Conclusions, specifying strengths and weaknesses

Evaluation of criterion

Poor	Average	Good	Excellent
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K12. Employment opportunities of the graduates of the study programme

Assessing the criteria, please analyse the following aspects:

- *Employment of the graduates of the study programme. (Are the graduates employed in the field of the acquired degree/professional qualification or in other field?);*
- *Employment forecast and opportunities of the graduates of the study programme.*

Analysis, specifying strengths and weaknesses

Conclusions

Evaluation of criterion

Poor	Average	Good	Excellent
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Recommendations for the study programme “”

This section must include the recommendations that are binding on the respective study programme. The recommendations shall be indicated in two parts:

- *Recommendations for elimination of the deficiencies found (in the short-term period)*
- *Recommendations for improving the quality of the study programmes in the long-term period.*

Summary of the criteria for assessing the study direction

No.	Criteria	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent
K1.	The relevance, aims and objectives of the study direction and its relevant study programmes as a whole and their clarity, attainability, and compliance with the general strategic development of the HEI				
K2	The management of the study direction				
K3	The effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system with regard to achieve the development aims of the study direction, by assessing aspects in the internal quality assurance system				
K4	Resources and provision of the study direction				
K5	The organisation of scientific research, and, if study direction “Arts” is assessed – also the organisation of artistic creation, within the study direction and the scientific research work of the academic staff and students of the HEI, and, if study direction “Arts” is assessed – also the work of artistic creation				
K6	The compliance of cooperation and internationalisation with achieving the development aims of the study direction, and with the implementation of the relevant study programmes of the study direction and with associated research, and, if the study direction “Arts” is assessed – also the compliance with artistic creation				
K7	Activities of students’ self-governance				
K8	The implementation of the recommendations (if such had been given) provided for a particular study programme within the previous accreditation of the study direction (if such had been conducted) or licensing of a study programme				

Summary of the criteria for assessing the study programmes

Table references: poor – 1, average – 2, good – 3, excellent – 4

No.	Criteria	SP1	SP2	SP3	SP4
K9	The reciprocal compliance between the name of the study programme, the degree to be acquired, professional qualification or degree and professional qualification, aims and objectives, and terms of admission				
K10	The content of studies				
K11	Resources and provision of the study programme				
K12	Employment opportunities of the graduates of the study programme				