

APPROVED

by the Study Accreditation Committee
in the meeting of 20 December 2017, minutes No.16

Designed according to Subparagraph 2.1 of
Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 407
“Regulations on Accreditation of Institutions of
Higher Education, Colleges and Study Directions”
of 14 July 2015

Methodology for Organising the Assessment of Changes in the Accredited Study Direction

I. General provisions

1. The Methodology for Organising the Assessment of Changes in the Accredited Study Direction (hereinafter – Methodology) shall specify the procedure and provide methodological support to assess the changes for organising the assessment of the changes specified in Subparagraph 8.7 of Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 407 “Regulations on Accreditation of Institutions of Higher Education, Colleges and Study Directions” of 14 July 2015 (hereinafter – Cabinet Regulations No. 407) in the accredited study direction in the higher education institution/college¹ (hereinafter – changes).
2. The assessment of the changes shall be organised by the Accreditation Department, hereinafter the Quality Agency for Higher Education (hereinafter – Agency) of the Academic Information Centre (hereinafter – Centre) in compliance with Cabinet Regulations No. 407 and the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 409 “Price-list of Paid Services Provided by the Foundation "Academic Information Centre"” of 14 July 2015 (hereinafter – Cabinet Regulations No. 409).
3. The main parties involved in the assessment process of the changes in their operation shall comply with the following principles:
 - 3.1. unbiased and fact-based findings;
 - 3.2. confidentiality;
 - 3.3. respect towards other parties involved in the assessment process;
 - 3.4. neutrality;
 - 3.5. collaboration.
4. The main parties involved in the assessment process of the changes shall be as follows:
 - 4.1. higher education institution/college;
 - 4.2. Agency;
 - 4.3. Study Accreditation Committee (hereinafter – Committee);
 - 4.4. expert for the assessment of the changes (hereinafter – expert).

¹The term “higher education institution/college” used herein is applicable to all higher education and science institutions referred to in the Law on Institutions of Higher Education in which academic and professional study programmes are implemented, as well as which are engaged in science, research and artistic creation (universities, higher education institutions, academies, institutes, and colleges).

5. The higher education institution/college shall submit to the Committee an application, requesting to approve the changes in the study direction (hereinafter – application), if it wishes to implement the following changes:
 - 5.1. changes to the relevant study programme in the relevant study direction, i.e. change of the name, code, place of implementation, form of implementation, language of the implementation of the study programme, professional qualification to be acquired or degree to be conferred;
 - 5.2. changes to the compliance of the study programme with the study direction;
 - 5.3. changes to the admission requirements set for the relevant study programme of the study direction;
 - 5.4. changes to duration or amount of the study programme that exceed 20% of the amount (in CP) of the mandatory and limited elective part of the relevant study programme in the study direction specified in the application for accreditation;
 - 5.5. changes in the elected academic staff, employed by the higher education institution/college for the relevant study direction or relevant study programme in the study direction since the previous accreditation of the study direction with regard to at least 20% of the total number of the elected academic staff, employed for the respective study direction, or if performance of at least 50% of the total amount of the academic work in the higher education institution/college in the respective study direction (excluding free elective parts of the study programme, implementation of traineeship and final examination) is no longer provided by the academic staff who have been elected in the respective higher education institution/college.
6. The Committee shall:
 - 6.1. decide on feasibility of the changes made by the higher education institution/college to the study direction based on the expert's report and other information available to the Committee;
 - 6.2. approve one expert for assessment of the changes specified in Paragraph 5 of this Methodology;
 - 6.3. consult, if necessary, with the expert who assessed the feasibility of the changes;
 - 6.4. request additional information from higher education institutions/colleges and state institutions necessary for its operation;
 - 6.5. visit, if necessary, the higher education institution/college to inspect the actual circumstances in the higher education institution/college.

II. Assessment of changes in accredited study direction

7. The higher education institution/college shall submit the application addressed to the Committee, justifying the need for the changes and providing information necessary to assess the changes.
8. The Agency shall review the application of the higher education institution/college and request additional information, if necessary.
9. The Agency shall select one expert in compliance with the criteria and principles for the selection of experts in line with the “Criteria and Principles for the Selection of Experts” approved by the Centre and available on the Agency's website².
10. When selecting the expert, the Agency shall also take into account the following additional aspects:
 - 9.1. study direction and the relevant study programmes;

²Criteria and Principles for the Selection of Experts are available at: http://www.aika.lv/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Ekspertu_atlases_kriteriji_principi_LV.pdf

- 9.2. type of a higher education institution (university, academy, higher education institution, college);
 - 9.3. assessment specifics (type of changes);
 - 9.4. non-existence of a conflict-of-interests.³
11. For assessing the changes, the Committee shall approve the expert selected by the Agency who has acquired qualification in the industry of the relevant study direction and/or respective study programme to be assessed.
 12. The Agency shall, within three working days after the expert's approval, inform the higher education institution/college about the expert and the Agency's employee who shall coordinate the assessment process (hereinafter – assessment coordinator).
 13. The higher education institution/college may, within three working days, express rejection towards the expert, by submitting to the Centre a written justified application, which explains the reasons for rejection. The Committee shall, within two weeks, review the application submitted by the higher education institution/college for rejection of the expert, and, if it is recognised as justified, the Agency shall offer another expert to be approved by the Committee to replace the rejected expert, and shall inform the higher education institution/college thereof.
 14. The Centre shall conclude an agreement with the expert on the performing of the assessment process. A confirmation about non-existence of a conflict-of-interest and confidentiality liabilities signed by the expert shall be attached to the agreement.
 15. The Agency shall, before the on-site visit in the higher education institution/college, organise training of the expert. During the training, the Agency shall inform the expert of:
 - 15.1. aims and objectives of the assessment;
 - 15.2. work schedule;
 - 15.3. Methodology and preparation of the expert's report on the changes;
 - 15.4. regulatory enactments that regulate the assessment of the changes to the study direction;
 - 15.5. context of the respective higher education institution/college and study direction, as well as of the respective study programme;
 - 15.6. higher education system in Latvia.
 16. Before the on-site assessment visit, the expert shall complete the following tasks:
 - 16.1. review the application and documents attached hereto as well as other information about the changes to be assessed;
 - 16.2. prepare and submit to the assessment coordinator a list with the additional information which must be obtained from the higher education institution/college.

³Conflict-of-interest does not occur if:

- 1) the expert is not employed and has no other contractual relations with the higher education institution, a study programme of which is being assessed, has not been employed by this higher education institution within the last 2 years before the on-site assessment visit;
- 2) the expert is not a member of a decision-making or advisory institution of the higher education institution, a study programme of which is being assessed;
- 3) the expert does not study in the higher education institution, a study programme of which is being assessed, and has not graduated from this institution within 2 years before the on-site assessment visit;
- 4) the person, involved in the implementation of the study programme and the relevant study direction to be assessed, is not the father, mother, grandmother, grandfather, son/daughter, grandson/granddaughter, adoptee, adoptive parent, brother, sister, stepbrother, stepsister or spouse of the expert.

17. The higher education institution/college shall provide adequate conditions, premises and equipment for organisation of the on-site visit.
18. During the on-site visit, the higher education institution/college shall provide access to informative support/infrastructure of the study direction, including library resources, material and technical provision, final theses (if any), examination materials, and other resources upon the request of the Agency or expert.
19. During the on-site assessment visit, the expert, taking into account the type of the changes, shall meet the management of the higher education institution/college and/or respective structural unit, as well as with the teaching staff, students, graduates, and employers or representatives of professional organisations.
20. At the end of the on-site visit, the expert shall discuss the findings and main conclusions gained during the on-site visit, with the representatives of the higher education institution/college.
21. After the on-site visit, the expert shall prepare the report in compliance with the structure specified in the annex to the Methodology, by justifying the compliance of the changes specified by the higher education institution/college with the requirements of regulatory enactments and assessing the impact of the changes on the study quality, and shall submit it to the Agency within the set deadline.
22. The Agency shall review the expert's report, ask the expert to specify it, if required, and submit it to the higher education institution/college, and inform the higher education institution/college about the date, time and place, the application for implementation of the changes is to be reviewed. The higher education institution/college may delegate not more than two representatives for the participation in the meeting.
23. If the Committee has taken the decision to approve the changes to the study direction and/or to amend the accreditation form of the study direction, the Agency shall, within 10 working days after taking the decision, issue a copy of the decision and the accreditation form of the study direction prepared by the Agency as specified in Annex 11 to Cabinet Regulations No. 407 to the Ministry of Education and Science (hereinafter – Ministry).
24. The Ministry shall, within 10 working days since the copy of the decision taken by the Committee and the accreditation form of the study direction have been received, issue to the Agency the accreditation form of the study direction signed by the Minister for Education and Science. The Agency shall issue the accreditation form of the study direction signed by the Minister for Education and Science to the higher education institution/college, as well as register it.
25. The decision taken by the Committee may be contested in the Centre according to the designed internal appeals procedure for appeals review set out in the Appeals Procedure of the Appeals Committee, designed and approved by the Centre.⁴ The decision taken by the Centre may be appealed in the court in compliance with the procedure set out in the Administrative Procedure Law.

Chairperson of the Study Accreditation Committee

T. Volkova

⁴*Appeals Procedure of the Appeals Committee is available at: http://www.aika.lv/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Apelacijas_komisijas_nolikums_LV.pdf*

REPORT ON ASSESSMENT OF CHANGES
 IN ACCREDITED STUDY DIRECTION
NAME OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION/COLLEGE
NAME OF STUDY DIRECTION
NAME OF STUDY PROGRAMME
(EDUCATION CLASSIFICATION CODE)

Information about expert

Name		Surname	
Workplace		Position	
Degree / professional qualification			
When assessing study programme, I do hereby confirm that I HAVE/DO NOT HAVE conflict-of-interest			<i>Signature</i>

Date of on-site assessment visit:.....

The report has been prepared on the basis of conclusions and observations made during the on-site visit as well as on the basis of the following sources:

[specify documents, regulatory enactments and other sources]

- 1. Information about the changes planned by the higher education institution/college**
- 2. Summary of the on-site visit and meeting with the representatives of the higher education institution**
- 3. Analysis of the planned changes and impact thereof on the study process and study quality as well as compliance of the changes with the requirements set out in regulatory enactments**
- 4. Conclusions**
- 5. Recommendations**

Name, surname/ signature

Date