

Drafted in accordance with Sub-Paragraph 2.1 of
Cabinet Regulation No. 794 of 11 December 2018
“Regulations Regarding Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Colleges”

Methodology for Organising the Assessment of Higher Education Institutions and Colleges

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I. General Provisions

1. The methodology for the assessment of higher education institutions and colleges (hereinafter – Methodology) sets forth the procedures for organising the assessment of higher education institutions and colleges (hereinafter – higher education institution/college) and provides methodological support in the assessment of higher education institutions/colleges. The procedures described in the Methodology ensure the quality assessment of studies in accordance with the national regulatory framework and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (hereinafter – ESG).
2. The assessment of higher education institutions/colleges shall be organised by the Accreditation Department of the Academic Information Centre (hereinafter – Centre), hereinafter referred to as Quality Agency for Higher Education (hereinafter – Agency), in accordance with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, Cabinet Regulation No. 794 of 11 December 2018 “Regulations Regarding Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Colleges” (hereinafter – Cabinet Regulation No. 794), and Cabinet Regulation No. 778 of 11 December 2018 “Pricelist of the Paid Services of the Foundation “Academic Information Centre””.
3. The duration of the accreditation process of the higher education institution/college shall be six months as from the date of receiving of the application.
4. The main parties involved in the accreditation process of the higher education institution/college shall be as follows:
 - 4.1. Higher education institution/ college.¹
 - 4.2. Agency.
 - 4.3. Council for Higher Education (hereinafter – Council).
 - 4.4. Experts group for the assessment of the higher education institution/college (hereinafter – experts group).
5. The parties involved in the accreditation process of the higher education institution/college, whilst carrying out their activities, shall observe the following principles:
 - 5.1. Objectivity and relying on facts.
 - 5.2. Confidentiality.
 - 5.3. Respect towards parties involved in the assessment process.
 - 5.4. Impartiality.
 - 5.5. Collaboration.
6. The rights and obligations of the parties involved in the accreditation process of the higher education institution/college are summarised in the Annex to this Methodology.

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

II. Assessment of the Higher Education Institution/College

1. Application for the Assessment of the Higher Education Institution/College

- 1.1. The higher education institution/college shall submit to the Agency an application, which shall be drawn up in accordance with the guidelines for the preparation of a Self-Assessment Report of higher education institutions or colleges² (hereinafter – Guidelines) and signed by the rector of the higher education institution or the director of the college.
- 1.2. The application shall include:
 - 1.2.1. Self-Assessment Report of the higher education institution or college prepared in accordance with the Guidelines.
 - 1.2.2. Sample of the Study Agreement.
 - 1.2.3. Documents prescribing the status of the students' self-governance and its financing procedure.
 - 1.2.4. Additional information required for the assessment of the higher education institution/college in accordance with the criteria for the assessment of the requirements of a higher education institution or college³ and requirements set forth in Paragraph 19 of Cabinet Regulation No. 794.
- 1.3. The higher education institution/college shall carry out the self-assessment in accordance with internally developed procedures and have the responsibility to prepare a comprehensive and in-depth self-assessment within the specified time-limit. The content and structure of the Self-Assessment Report shall comply with the requirements set forth in the Guidelines.
- 1.4. The higher education institution/college shall submit the application electronically, and it shall be signed with a secure electronic signature, in compliance with the provisions of the Electronic Documents Law.
- 1.5. The application and documents attached thereto shall be submitted in the official language accompanied by a translation into English (translations of documents provided by other organisations may contain a reference “Provisional translation”). In the event of disputes, the documents submitted in the official language shall prevail.
- 1.6. The Self-Assessment Report of the higher education institution/college without the annexes shall be published on the e-platform of the Agency.⁴

² Guidelines for the Preparation of a Self-Assessment Report of Higher Education Institutions or Colleges [31 January 2019]. Available at: http://aika.flowin.lv/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Augstskolu-vai-koledzu-pasnovertejuma-zinojuma-izstrades-vadlinijas_2019.pdf

³ Criteria for the Assessment of the Requirements of a Higher Education Institution or College [31 January 2019]. Available at: http://aika.flowin.lv/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Kriteriji-augstskolas-vai-koledzas-prasibu-novertesanai_2019.pdf

⁴ E-platform to ensure the accreditation and licensing process. Available at: <https://eplatforma.aika.lv/>

2. Review of the Submitted Documents

- 2.1. The Agency shall review the application and the documents attached thereto and, if necessary, request additional information in writing, which the higher education institution/college shall submit within 30 days after the additional information has been requested.
- 2.2. Whilst requesting additional information, the Agency shall inform the higher education institution/college about the employee of the Agency who is to coordinate the assessment (hereinafter – assessment coordinator).
- 2.3. The Agency shall invoice the higher education institution/college in accordance with Cabinet Regulation No. 778 of 11 December 2018 “Pricelist of the Paid Services of the Foundation “Academic Information Centre””.
- 2.4. The application shall be left without consideration, informing the higher education institution/college thereof, in the following cases:
 - 2.4.1. The higher education institution/college has failed to make a payment within the time-limit specified by the Centre.
 - 2.4.2. The higher education institution/college has failed to submit some of requested information.
 - 2.4.3. The documents have not been drawn up in accordance with the requirements for drawing up documents, as specified in the relevant laws and regulations.
- 2.5. The Agency shall commence the assessment procedure once the payment for the accreditation has been made in accordance with Paragraph 2.3 of the Methodology, all the information requested by the Agency has been submitted, and the submitted documents have been drawn up in accordance with the procedure for drawing up documents, as specified in the relevant laws and regulations.

3. Request for Opinions from Other Organisations

- 3.1. The Agency shall request the State Education Quality Service (hereinafter – IKVD) to provide, within 10 working days, information on the detected violations of laws and regulations and whether the violations of laws and regulations detected in the operation of the higher education institution/college during the previous year before taking the decision have been remedied within the specified time-limit.

4. Establishment of the Experts Group

- 4.1. The Agency shall approve the experts to be included in the experts group, its head and the secretary, as well as the participation by Students Union of Latvia (LSA) and Latvian Trade Union of Education and Science Employees (LIZDA) observers in the work of the experts group.
- 4.2. The criteria and principles for the selection of experts are specified in the rules of procedure “Criteria and Principles for the Selection of Experts”⁵, as approved by the Centre, that are available on the website of the Agency.

⁵ *Criteria and Principles for the Selection of Experts*. Available at: https://www.aika.lv/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Ekspertu_atlases_kriteriji_un_principi_2019.pdf

- 4.3. Seven experts shall be included in the experts group, one of which shall be a representative delegated by LSA, one – a representative delegated by the Employers' Confederation of Latvia (hereinafter – LDDK) or a representative delegated by the sectoral expert board relevant to the strategic specialisation of the higher education institution/college, or a representative delegated by a professional sectoral organisation, if an appropriate sectoral expert board has not been established, and at least two foreign experts.
- 4.4. The head of the experts group may be a person with international experience in the assessment of institutions of higher education. Each expert shall have experience in one of the areas listed below, whereas the experts group in overall shall have experience in the areas as follows:
- 4.4.1. Experience in quality assessment within the accreditation process of higher education institutions, colleges, study directions (study fields), and study programmes or licensing process of study programmes.
- 4.4.2. Experience in the management of a higher education institution.
- 4.4.3. Knowledge relevant to the study directions (study fields) implemented at the higher education institution or college.
- 4.4.4. Experience in the assessment of quality assurance systems in higher education.
- 4.4.5. Experience in the evaluation of scientific activity or artistic creation of a higher education institution.
- 4.4.6. Experience in the evaluation of the collaboration between a higher education institution or college and an employers' organisations.
- 4.4.7. Experience in the processes of the European Higher Education Area (Bologna Process) or other international processes in higher education.
- 4.5. In establishing the experts group and approving the experts for the specific assessment, the Agency shall additionally take into account the aspects as follows:
- 4.5.1. Type of the institution of higher education (university, academy, higher education institution or college).
- 4.5.2. Study direction(s) (study fields).
- 4.5.3. Study programmes in the relevant study directions (study fields) (their level, type and form of implementation, degree, qualification, and other characteristics).
- 4.5.4. Specificity of the assessment (first, ordinary or extraordinary accreditation).
- 4.5.5. Experience of the experts in the quality assessment of studies.
- 4.5.6. Absence of conflict of interest.⁶
- 4.6. The Agency shall request the LSA and LDDK or the sectoral expert board relevant to the strategic specialisation of the higher education institution or college, or a professional sectoral organisation, if an appropriate sectoral expert board has not been

⁶ A conflict of interest shall arise in the situations as follows:

- 1) The expert is employed by the higher education institution subject to the assessment, has other contractual relationship with this higher education institution or has been employed by this higher education institution during the 2 years preceding the on-site visit.
- 2) The expert forms part of a decision-making or advisory body of the higher education institution subject to the assessment.
- 3) The expert studies at the higher education institution subject to the assessment or has graduated from it during the 2 years preceding the on-site visit.
- 4) A person, who is the father, mother, grandmother, grandfather, child, grandchild, adoptee, adopter, brother, sister, half-brother, half-sister or spouse of the expert, is involved in the implementation of the study programmes and the relevant study directions (study fields) of the higher education institution subject to the assessment.

established, to delegate, within 10 working days, an expert for the assessment of the higher education institution/ college.

- 4.7. The Agency shall request the LSA and LIZDA to delegate observers within 10 working days.
- 4.8. The Agency shall, within three working days after approving the experts group, inform the higher education institution/college about the composition of the experts group and the employee of the Agency, who shall coordinate the assessment (hereinafter – assessment coordinator).
- 4.9. The higher education institution/college may, within three working days after receiving information about the approved experts, reject the members of the experts group, submitting to the Centre a justified application in writing, which specifies reasons for the rejection of each rejected member of the experts group. The Centre shall review the application of the higher education institution/ college within 10 working days. If it is found justified, the Centre shall approve the new composition of the experts group and inform the higher education institution/ college thereof.
- 4.10. The Centre shall enter into agreement on conducting the assessment with each of the experts. The agreement shall be accompanied by a confirmation of absence of conflict of interest and compliance with the obligation of confidentiality.
- 4.11. The observers shall sign the confirmation of absence of conflict of interest and compliance with the obligation of confidentiality.

5. Obligations of the Members of the Experts Group Prior to and During the On-Site Visit

- 5.1. The head of the experts group shall:
 - 5.1.1. Be responsible for the work of the experts group in general, including the submission of the joint opinion by the experts within the specified time-limit.
 - 5.1.2. Prior to the on-site visit by the experts group, organise communication⁷ between the members of the experts group after getting acquainted with the relevant documents.
 - 5.1.3. Prior to the on-site visit by the experts group, discuss the agenda of the experts with the Agency.
 - 5.1.4. Prior to the on-site visit by the experts group, distribute the duties amongst the members of the experts group.
 - 5.1.5. Chair the meetings of the experts group.
 - 5.1.6. During the on-site visit, chair the meetings with target groups or also delegate another member of the experts group to chair the meeting.
- 5.2. The secretary of the experts group shall:
 - 5.2.1. Be responsible for the preparation of the joint opinion by the experts group in collaboration with other members of the experts group.
 - 5.2.2. Prior to the on-site visit, collect opinions and observations of all members of the experts group gained while getting themselves acquainted with the relevant documents.
 - 5.2.3. Collect opinions and observations of all members of the experts group during the on-site visit.
 - 5.2.4. Submit to the Agency the joint report by the experts group prepared in accordance with the guidelines for the preparation of the joint opinion by the experts group.

⁷ *By video conferencing, telephone conferencing, e-mail, etc.*

- 5.3. The members, including the head and the secretary, of the experts group, shall:
 - 5.3.1. Get acquainted with the documents that regulate the accreditation of higher education institutions/colleges and prior to the assessment on-site visit participate in the training organised by the Agency.
 - 5.3.2. Get acquainted with the Self-Assessment Report of the higher education institution/college and other related information.
 - 5.3.3. Formulate an opinion on different aspects, including also matters that need to be specially addressed during the assessment on-site visit, and send it to the head of the experts group and the assessment coordinator electronically, preferably no later than one week prior to the commencement of the on-site visit.
 - 5.3.4. Prepare and submit to the assessment coordinator information to be additionally acquired from the higher education institution/college.
 - 5.3.5. Carry out other tasks related to the assessment process according to the distribution of duties amongst the members of the experts group.
 - 5.3.6. Take part in the assessment on-site visit.
 - 5.3.7. Take part in the preparation of the joint opinion of the experts group.
 - 5.3.8. Take into account the comments of the assessment coordinator while preparing the opinion.
- 5.4. The assessment coordinator shall:
 - 5.4.1. Organise the assessment process, including:
 - 5.4.2. Communication with the experts group and the higher education institution/college.
 - 5.4.3. Addressing of legal matters together with the experts group.
 - 5.4.4. Addressing of matters regarding travelling and accommodation of the experts group.
 - 5.4.5. Organising training for the experts prior to the assessment on-site visit.
 - 5.4.6. Ensuring that the experts group has access to the Self-Assessment Report, preferably no later than one month prior to the on-site visit at the higher education institution/college. In cases where the composition of the experts group changes due to reasons not attributable to the Agency, the new members of the experts group shall be granted the access to the Self-Assessment Report immediately after they have been included in the experts group.
 - 5.4.7. Prepare the agenda of the assessment on-site visit and coordinate it with the experts group and the higher education institution/college.
 - 5.4.8. Engage in the planning of the work of the experts group.
 - 5.4.9. Request additional information from the higher education institution/college.
 - 5.4.10. Review the joint opinion of the experts group and, if necessary, request to make the necessary corrections therein.
 - 5.4.11. Provide support to the experts group in matters related to the assessment.
- 5.5. Prior to the assessment on-site visit at the higher education institution/college, the Agency shall organise training for the experts, which shall be open also to the observers. During the training, the Agency shall acquaint the experts with the following:
 - 5.5.1. Aims and objectives of the assessment.
 - 5.5.2. Agenda of the experts group.
 - 5.5.3. Methodology and guidelines for the preparation of the joint opinion of the experts group.
 - 5.5.4. Laws and regulations regulating the assessment of a higher education institution/college.
 - 5.5.5. Context of the respective higher education institution/college.

5.5.6. Higher education system of Latvia and the regulatory framework.

6. Assessment On-Site Visit

- 6.1. The aim of the on-site visit is to gain as much information as possible on the higher education institution/college in order to carry out a comprehensive and unbiased assessment in accordance with the requirements specified in Paragraph 19 of Cabinet Regulation No. 794, the criteria specified in the guidelines for the preparation of the joint opinion of the experts group, and the Methodology. During the on-site visit, the experts shall confirm the information provided for in the Self-Assessment Report of the higher education institution/college, as well as complement the insights and observations gained during the assessment on-site visit.
- 6.2. The assessment coordinator shall hand over the application of the higher education institution/college and the related information to the experts provided that the higher education institution/college has not rejected the experts within the time-limit specified by the Agency and the experts have confirmed the absence of conflict of interest and compliance with the obligation of confidentiality.
- 6.3. The assessment coordinator shall prepare the draft agenda of the on-site visit and send it to the higher education institution/college for its completion and coordination. The experts shall provide comments on the draft agenda of the on-site visit and coordinate it.
- 6.4. During the on-site visit, the higher education institution/college shall, upon request by the Agency or the experts group, provide access to the informative resources/infrastructure, including the library resources, the material and technical provision, the final theses (if any), the examination materials, and other resources. The higher education institution/college shall provide adequate premises and equipment required during the assessment on-site visit.
- 6.5. During the assessment on-site visit, the experts group shall meet with the management of the higher education institution/college and/or the respective department, the team that has prepared the Self-Assessment Report, the teaching staff⁸, students, graduates, and the representatives of the employers and/or professional organisations.
- 6.6. During one assessment on-site visit, each representative of the higher education institution/college may attend only one meeting of the experts group, except the final meeting and individual cases, where this option has been previously discussed and coordinated with the assessment coordinator.
- 6.7. The meetings with the teaching staff and the students shall take place in the absence of the representatives of the managerial staff of the higher education institution/college. In addition, while the meetings with the students, no list of students shall be drawn up.
- 6.8. As for the meetings with the graduates and the representatives of the employers and/or professional organisations, the persons studying and/or employed at the respective higher education institution/college shall not be allowed to attend these meetings.
- 6.9. At the end of each working day, the experts group shall mutually discuss and summarise the obtained information and observations. On the final day of the on-site visit, the experts group shall mutually discuss the outcomes of the on-site visit, formulate a joint opinion on the compliance with the requirements and criteria, and discuss the insights

⁸ The term "teaching staff" used herein shall refer to the academic staff, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants of the relevant higher education institution/college.

gained and main conclusions made during the on-site visit with the management of the higher education institution/college and the representatives of the academic staff and students.

- 6.10. English shall be the working language during the assessment on-site visit, unless otherwise agreed upon with the Agency.
- 6.11. If necessary, the higher education institution/college may use the services of an interpreter, subject to coordination thereof with the Agency at least five working days prior to the on-site visit. The interpreter may not be involved in the activities of the higher education institution/college subject to the assessment. The expenses related to the interpreting services shall be borne by the higher education institution/college.
- 6.12. During the assessment on-site visit, the breaks (coffee breaks, lunch, and dinner) shall be organised separately from the representatives of the higher education institution/college.
- 6.13. The meeting of the experts with the representatives of the higher education institution/college shall involve an interview, interactive discussion, and exchange of opinions between the representatives of the higher education institution/college and the members of the experts group, with the aim to obtain sufficient information to analyse the requirements set forth in Paragraph 19 of Cabinet Regulation No. 794 and the criteria included in the joint opinion of the experts and to prepare the joint opinion of the experts.
- 6.14. Upon hosting the experts group, the higher education institution/college does not have to prepare presentations on the content already included in the Self-Assessment Report. In cases where such presentations have been prepared, the assessment coordinator may, upon agreement with the head of the experts group, ask the higher education institution/college to dispense with the presentations in order to ensure efficient use of the time intended for the meeting.

7. Preparation of the Joint Opinion of the Experts Group

- 7.1. After the assessment on-site visit, the experts group shall:
 - 7.1.1. Within the time-limits specified by the Agency, prepare the joint opinion of the experts group in compliance with the guidelines for the preparation of the joint opinion of the experts group.⁹
 - 7.1.2. Prepare the joint opinion in compliance with the guidelines for the preparation of the joint opinion of the experts group, taking into account the Methodology, the application and Self-Assessment Report of the higher education institution/college, additional information, information provided by IKVD, information provided by security services and observers regarding the activities of the higher education institution/college, if any, as well as outcomes of the on-site visit and opinions and decisions of the experts for the accreditation of study directions (study fields) and licensing of study programmes.
 - 7.1.3. Request additional information, if the experts group does not have sufficient information to prepare a comprehensive and unbiased joint opinion.

⁹ Guidelines for the Preparation of the Joint Opinion of the Experts Group for the Assessment of Higher Education Institutions or Colleges [31 January 2019]. Available at: http://aika.flowin.lv/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Augstskolu-vai-koledzu-novertesanas-ekspertu-grupas-kopiga-atzinuma-izstrades-vadlinijas_2019.pdf

- 7.1.4. Assess all assessment criteria and requirements set forth in the guidelines for the preparation of the joint opinion of the experts group, while preparing the joint opinion.
 - 7.1.5. Provide in the joint opinion recommendations for the rectification of the deficiencies detected (on a short-term basis) and for the improvement of the higher education institution/college (on a long-term basis).
 - 7.1.6. Mutually agree upon the evaluation of the criteria and requirements, subject to the assessment, in the joint opinion of the experts group, while taking into account the guidelines for the preparation of the joint opinion of the experts group for the assessment of higher education institutions or colleges, as developed by the Centre, and Part I of the ESG “Standards and Guidelines for Internal Quality Assurance”.
 - 7.1.7. While evaluating each assessment criterion in the joint opinion, the experts group shall analyse the available information, providing specific examples and references to the Self-Assessment Report of the higher education institution/college and information obtained during the on-site visit.
 - 7.1.8. Analyse each assessment criterion and formulate conclusions, indicating the strengths and weaknesses of the higher education institution/college.
 - 7.1.9. Agree upon a wording acceptable to all experts (consensus). In the event that the opinion of the members of the experts group on any of the criteria differ, the dissenting opinion shall be indicated in the relevant chapter of the joint opinion, specifying the name and surname of the expert, the dissenting opinion, the assessment criterion, and justification of the dissenting opinion,
 - 7.1.10. Provide detailed justification for all statements, especially if the quality criterion has been evaluated negatively.
 - 7.1.11. Make corrections in the joint opinion in accordance with the comments provided by the Agency.
 - 7.1.12. Review the comments of the higher education institution/college on the factual errors detected in the joint opinion and may correct the joint opinion according to the procedures provided for in Paragraph 17 of Cabinet Regulation No. 794.
 - 7.1.13. Carry out other tasks related to the assessment procedure, according to the distribution of duties amongst the members of the experts group.
- 7.2. The secretary of the experts group shall:
 - 7.2.1. Prepare the joint opinion of the experts group, taking into account that the joint opinion represents the opinion of the entire experts group.
 - 7.2.2. Ensure the compliance of the joint opinion with the guidelines for the preparation of the joint opinion of the experts group.
 - 7.2.3. Send the opinion to the Agency within the specified time-limit.
 - 7.2.4. If necessary, make corrections in accordance with the comments provided by the Agency.
- 7.3. The Agency shall review the joint opinion of the experts group and, if necessary, request the experts group to make the necessary corrections. The experts group shall accordingly make corrections in the joint opinion and submit it to the Agency.
 - 7.4. The Agency shall send a copy of the joint opinion to the higher education institution/college within 10 working days after receiving it.
 - 7.5. The higher education institution/college may, within 10 working days after the joint opinion has been received, provide comments on the factual errors detected in the joint opinion of the experts group. The comments on the factual errors and their justification

shall be submitted to the Centre electronically, attaching the respective translation into English.

- 7.6. The Agency shall forward the comments by the higher education institution/college on the factual errors to the experts group.
- 7.7. The experts group shall review the comments by the higher education institution/college and may, within 10 working days after they have been received, correct the joint opinion and submit it to the Agency. The Agency shall send the corrected joint opinion to the higher education institution/college.
- 7.8. The Agency shall forward the joint opinion of the experts group and the comments by the higher education institution/college on the factual errors detected in the joint opinion of the experts to the Council.

III. Procedures for Taking, Contesting, and Appealing a Decision

1. The decision on the accreditation of the higher education institution/college or refusal to accredit the higher education institution/college (hereinafter – decision) shall be taken by the Council. The Council shall take the decision in accordance with the rules of procedure of the Council (approved by the decision of the Council of 3 January 2019 No. 1.10/01 (3 January 2019, Minutes No. 1)).
2. The Council shall inform the higher education institution/college and the Agency about the date, time, and place the application for accreditation is to be reviewed. The higher education institution/college may delegate no more than two representatives for the participation in the meeting. Upon request by the Council, the Agency may invite a representative(s) of the experts group to attend the Committee meeting.
3. The Council shall get acquainted with the documents submitted by the higher education institution/college, the joint opinion of the experts group, the comments of the higher education institution/college on the factual errors detected in the joint opinion of the experts group (if any), as well as, if necessary, with the actual circumstances at the higher education institution/college and other information available to the Council.
4. During the assessment of the higher education institution/college, the Council shall assess the requirements set forth in Paragraph 19 of Cabinet Regulation No. 794.
5. The Council shall, within the time-limit specified in the Law on Higher Education Institutions, take a decision on the accreditation of the higher education institution/college or refusal to accredit the higher education institution/college:
 - 5.1. The Council shall take a decision to accredit the higher education institution/college if the higher education institution or college complies with all requirements set forth in Paragraph 19 of Cabinet Regulation No. 794 and, at the date of taking the decision, at least half of the study directions (study fields), in which the higher education institution or college implements their study programmes, have been accredited.
 - 5.2. If the higher education institution or college does not comply with any of the requirements set forth in Paragraphs 19 and 21 of Cabinet Regulation No. 794, the Council may take a decision on refusal to accredit the higher education institution/college.
6. If the Council has taken the decision on refusal to accredit the higher education institution or college, the higher education institution or college may re-submit the

application no earlier than six months after the abovementioned decision has been taken.

7. The Council shall prepare the decision, which shall be signed by the Chairperson of the Council.
8. The Council shall, within 10 working days after the decision has been taken, send the decision to the higher education institution/college and a copy of the decision to the Ministry of Education and Science (hereinafter – the Ministry) and the Centre.
9. If the Council has taken the decision to accredit the higher education institution/college, the Agency shall, within 5 working days after receiving the copy of the decision, prepare and send to the Council the accreditation form of the higher education institution/college (Annex to Cabinet Regulation No. 794).
10. The Council shall, within 10 working days after receiving the accreditation form of the higher education institution/college, send to the Agency the accreditation form of the higher education institution/college signed by the Chairperson of the Council. The Agency shall register the accreditation form of the higher education institution/college signed by the Chairperson of the Council and issue it to the higher education institution/college. The Agency shall publish the information on the accreditation of the higher education institution or college and the joint opinion of the experts group on the website of the Centre.
11. The decision on the accreditation of the higher education institution/college or refusal to accredit the higher education institution/college may be contested before the Ministry. The decision of the Ministry may be appealed before the court, in accordance with the procedures set forth in the Administrative Procedure Law.

IV. Follow-Up Activities

1. After the assessment has been completed and the decision on the accreditation of the higher education institution/college has been taken, the higher education institution/college shall carry out activities aimed at improving the quality of its operation, rectifying deficiencies detected during the accreditation process of the higher education institution/college, and implementing recommendations provided by the experts group and the Council.
2. The higher education institution/college shall, within 12 months after taking the decision, prepare and electronically submit to the Centre a plan for the implementation of the recommendations of the experts, to rectify the deficiencies, signed by the rector of the higher education institution or the director of the college.
3. The Agency shall get acquainted with the progress and plan for the implementation of the recommendations of the experts, as developed by the higher education institution/college. In the event of significant deficiencies, the Agency shall inform the Council thereof.

Rights and Obligations of the Parties Involved in the Accreditation Process of Higher Education Institutions/ Colleges

1. The higher education institution/college shall:
 - 1.1. Submit to the Centre the application for the accreditation of the higher education institution/college (hereinafter – application), in accordance with Cabinet Regulation No. 794. The application shall be accompanied by the Self-Assessment Report of the higher education institution/college prepared in accordance with the guidelines for the preparation of a Self-Assessment Report of higher education institutions/colleges, as developed by the Agency, complying with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other laws and regulations regarding the accreditation of higher education institutions/colleges and their operation, as well as the requirements set forth in the Methodology regarding the accreditation of higher education institutions/colleges.
 - 1.2. Upon request by the Agency, submit the missing information within 30 days after it has been requested.
 - 1.3. May, within three working days after receiving information on the approved experts and observers, reject the experts by submitting a written justification to the Centre, specifying the reasons for each rejected expert and observer.
 - 1.4. Take part in the coordination and organisation of the on-site visit by the experts group.
 - 1.5. Upon request by the Agency or the experts group, provide access to the resources of the study provision, informative provision (including the library), the material and technical provision, as well the final theses (if any), the examination materials, and other resources of the higher education institution/college.
 - 1.6. Be responsible for the fact that the information submitted by it provides an in-depth description of the operation of the higher education institution/college.
 - 1.7. Ensure adequate conditions, premises, and equipment required during the assessment on-site visit.
 - 1.8. During the on-site visit by the experts group, be ready to present evidence of the information provided in the Self-Assessment Report.
 - 1.9. May, within 10 working days after receiving the joint opinion, submit to the Centre comments on the factual errors detected in the joint opinion of the experts group.
 - 1.10. Carry out follow-up activities within the time-limit specified in the Methodology.
2. The Agency shall:
 - 2.1. Develop and, while carrying out its activities, adhere to the Methodology and procedures complying with the ESG.
 - 2.2. Develop guidelines for the preparation of a Self-Assessment Report and the guidelines for the preparation of the joint opinion of the experts group, and publish them on the website of the Agency.
 - 2.3. For the purpose of the assessment of higher education institutions/colleges, establish and approve the experts group consisting of seven experts, including the head and secretary of the experts group.

- 2.4. Approve the representatives of LSA and LIZDA as observers (without voting rights) for the participation in the on-site visits of the experts group at higher education institutions/colleges and their branches.
 - 2.5. Organise the work of the experts group, including on-site visits by the experts group at higher education institutions/colleges and their branches, and participate in them, as well as ensure acquisition of the necessary information.
 - 2.6. Organise training for the experts group both prior to the assessment on-site visit and during the academic year, subject to previous notification thereof.
 - 2.7. Ensure documentation and archiving of the accreditation process.
 - 2.8. Request and receive information from the State registers.
 - 2.9. Provide information and consultations in matters related to the quality assurance of the operation of higher education institutions/colleges.
3. The Council shall perform the following tasks:
- 3.1. Review the application and other documents related to the accreditation of the higher education institution/college.
 - 3.2. Take a decision on the accreditation of the higher education institution/college or refusal to accredit the higher education institution/college, based on the application and documents attached thereto, the joint opinion of the experts group, comments of the higher education institution or college on the factual errors detected in the joint opinion, if any, as well as other available information.
 - 3.3. If necessary, visit the higher education institution/college to get acquainted with the actual circumstances at the higher education institution/college.
 - 3.4. Submit to the Minister for Education and Science a proposal on extraordinary accreditation of the higher education institution/college.
4. While carrying out its activities, the experts shall follow these principles:
- 4.1. Objectivity and relying on facts – the expert shall be honest and objective in his/her efforts to achieve the aim of the assessment. While expressing his/her opinion, formulating conclusions or taking decisions, the expert shall rely on facts, observations and personal competence.
 - 4.2. Impartiality – during the assessment of the higher education institution/college, the expert shall act independently. The expert may not represent the interests of the higher education institution/college or any other party.
 - 4.3. Respect towards the parties involved in the assessment process – during the assessment, the expert shall act in good faith as a professional. The expert shall not exceed his/her powers, as specified in his/her tasks. The expert shall treat the parties involved in the assessment process as persons capable of taking responsibility for their actions. The expert shall rely on facts and observations when referring to the strengths and weaknesses of the higher education institution.
 - 4.4. Confidentiality – all information related to the assessment (opinions of interviewees, the Self-Assessment Report, and additional information provided by the higher education institution/college) shall be used only for the purpose of the assessment process.
 - 4.5. Collaboration – each expert as a member of the experts group shall be open to the collaboration with the remaining experts group. The collaboration between the experts shall be coordinated by the head of the experts group. The members of the experts group shall develop mutual understanding with the representatives of the higher education institution/college and make efforts to assist the higher education institution/college in enhancing the quality culture.