

APPROVED  
by Baiba Ramaņa, Chairperson of the Board  
of the Foundation “Academic Information Centre”,  
in Riga, on 31 January 2019

COORDINATED  
by Andrejs Rauhvargers, Head of the Accreditation Department  
of the Foundation “Academic Information Centre”,  
in Riga, on 31 January 2019

## **The Guidelines for the Preparation of the Joint Opinion by the Experts Group on the Assessment of the Higher Education Institutions/ Colleges**

The guidelines for the preparation of the joint opinion by the experts group on the assessment of higher education institutions/ colleges (hereinafter – the guidelines) are developed in accordance with Subparagraph 2.4 of Cabinet Regulation No. 794 of 11 December 2018 “Regulations Regarding Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Colleges” and are subject to the provisions set forth in this regulation.

The purpose of the guidelines is to provide the experts group with a structured framework to prepare the joint opinion for the assessment of a higher education institution/ college<sup>1</sup>. The experts group shall, within the assessment of a higher education institution/ college, prepare the joint opinion in English.

### **The experts group shall prepare the joint opinion:**

- in accordance with 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; and
- providing recommendations for the elimination of the deficiencies identified (on a short-term basis) and for improving the performance of the higher education institution/ college (on a long-term basis).

Preparing the opinion, the experts group shall evaluate all requirements, the criteria, and compliance with the regulatory enactments, as specified in the guidelines.

If the opinion of the experts regarding any requirement or criteria differs, it shall be specified below in Chapter X “Recommendations” of the joint opinion.

The expert group’s evaluation on compliance is provided for each requirement with the following grading: “fully compliant”, “partially compliant”, and “non-compliant”, by taking into account the evaluation of the relevant criteria.

<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>Explanation of evaluation</b>
Fully compliant	The criteria relevant to the requirement have been evaluated as “excellent” or “good”.
Partially compliant	The criteria relevant to the requirement have been evaluated as “excellent”, “good”, and “average”.
Non-compliant	At least one criterion relevant to the requirement has been evaluated as “poor”.

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<sup>1</sup> The term “higher education institution/ college” 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, institutes, and colleges).

The experts group shall evaluate each criterion as follows: “excellent”, “good”, “average” or “poor”. Evaluating each criterion, the experts group shall analyse the available information by providing specific examples and references to the self-assessment opinion prepared by the higher education institution/ college and information obtained during the visit. The experts group shall analyse each criterion and make conclusions, by specifying strengths and weaknesses of the higher education institution/ college in meeting the relevant criterion.

Evaluation	Explanation of evaluation
Excellent	The higher education institution/ college has developed a regulatory framework, which is documented, implemented, logical and effective, as well as revised and improved on a regular basis, in accordance with the criterion to be evaluated, and the staff and stakeholders are aware of it and take part in its implementation. Specific methods and solutions, which are adapted to the study directions (study fields), are used for the implementation of the criterion. These methods and solutions significantly improve the study quality and can be used as examples of best practice for other institutions of higher education in Latvia and around the world. Proper fulfilment of the criterion to be evaluated significantly contributes to the development of the society.
Good	A regulatory framework for the fulfilment of the criterion to be evaluated is in place. It is documented and implemented, and the staff of the higher education institution/ college and the stakeholders are aware of it. Regulatory framework, procedures, processes, etc. are revised and improved on a regular basis. Methods for developing and improving the study quality are used for the implementation of the criterion. Minor deficiencies regarding the implementation of the criterion to be evaluated have been identified at the higher education institution/college, and these deficiencies can be easily eliminated.
Average	A regulatory framework for the fulfilment of the criterion to be evaluated is in place. However, it is not fully implemented, and the staff of the higher education institution/ college and/or the stakeholders are not aware of it and do not take part in its implementation, provision, improvement, and other stages. Even though, in general, the higher education institution/ college formally complies with the criterion to be evaluated, it is not fully applied, and deficiencies in its implementation are significant and affect the study quality, and their elimination requires planned long-term activities, support by the stakeholders, and additional resources.
Poor	The higher education institution/ college does not apply the criterion to be evaluated or applies it poorly, without a clear aim, structure, and implementation strategy. The management principles and processes are not clearly defined, implemented, and known to the staff of the higher education institution/ college and/or the stakeholders. The performance of the higher education institution/ college does not comply with the best practice in Latvia and around the world. The existing provision of the higher education institution/college against the specific criterion is evaluated as critical, and it does not promote the quality of studies or even poses threat to it.

In Chapter X “Assessment” of the experts’ joint opinion, the experts group shall justify the recommendation on the accreditation of the higher education institution/ college. In Chapter XI “Recommendations for the Higher Education Institution/ College”, the experts group shall provide recommendations for the elimination of the deficiencies identified on a short-term basis, as well as recommendations for further improvement of the performance of the higher education institution/ college on a long-term basis.

The joint opinion by the experts group shall be prepared in English in a computer readable form and submitted electronically.

After the procedure for the accreditation of the higher education institution/ college is completed, the joint opinion by the experts group shall be published in the Study Direction Register.

## **Structure of the Opinion**

- I. Aims, objectives, and management of the higher education institution/ college
- II. Internal quality assurance system
- III. Resources
- IV. Teaching staff
- V. Scientific research or artistic creation
- VI. Cooperation and internationalisation
- VII. Activities of students' self-governance
- VIII. Compliance of the activities of the higher education institution/ college with the provisions of regulatory enactments
- IX. Summary of the compliance with the requirements for the assessment of the higher education institution/ college
- X. Assessment
- XI. Recommendations for the higher education institution/ college

JOINT OPINION BY THE EXPERTS GROUP  
ON THE ASSESSMENT OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION OR COLLEGE

Name of the higher education institution/ college

The experts group recommends / does not recommend to accredit the higher education institution/ college.

Experts group:

1. Expert, degree/ professional qualification, name, surname \_\_\_\_\_
2. Expert, degree/ professional qualification, name, surname \_\_\_\_\_
3. Expert, degree/ professional qualification, name, surname \_\_\_\_\_
4. Expert, degree/ professional qualification, name, surname \_\_\_\_\_
5. Expert, degree/ professional qualification, name, surname \_\_\_\_\_
6. Expert delegated by the Employers' Confederation of Latvia or the Sectoral Expert Board,  
name, surname \_\_\_\_\_
7. Expert delegated by the Student Union of Latvia, name, surname \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ (date)

# I. Aims, Objectives, and Management of the Higher Education Institution/ College

## Criteria:

1. The aims and objectives of the higher education institution/ college are clearly defined and attainable, as evidenced by the strategic planning documents.
2. The higher education institution/ college has developed a management structure and mechanisms, which are efficient in reaching the aims of the higher education institution/ college. The process management is development-oriented, the stakeholders are involved in the decision-making process, and the decisions are made efficiently.
3. The principles and aims of the higher education institution/ college for the cooperation with the employers and sectoral representatives have been defined, and their attainment contributes to the achievement of the aims of the higher education institution/ college and the implementation of its strategy.
4. The graduates of the higher education institution/ college are employed corresponding to the acquired qualification/ degree or in another sector, and the higher education institution/ college develops forecast prospects with regard to the employment of graduates.
5. The feedback mechanisms and other mechanisms for data collection and analysis, as implemented by the higher education institution/ college, are efficient, and the higher education institution/ college conducts surveys the outcomes of which are evaluated and taken into consideration when improving its own performance and study programmes.
6. A support system related to education and career development to promote students' employment, a social and/or emotional support system, residence and scholarship offer, and a support system for foreign students are in place, implemented, and available.
7. The information published on the website of the higher education institution/ college regarding the offered study programmes complies with the information available in the official registers. It provides important information for candidates and students and is published in all languages in which the study programmes are implemented.

## Analysis

*The analysis of the criteria shall include justifications and evidence for the evaluation of each criterion.*

## Conclusions by specifying strengths and weaknesses of the described criteria

*Strengths and weaknesses of each criterion shall be specified based on the analysis.*

Criterion	Evaluation			
	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				

## II. Internal Quality Assurance System

**Criteria:**

1. The quality policy has been defined and is publicly available. The stakeholders are involved in defining the policy. The aims of the quality policy are associated with the strategic directions and aims of the higher education institution/ college.
2. A mechanism for the implementation of the quality policy has been developed and it ensures the implementation of the policy. Persons responsible for the implementation of the policy have been appointed.
3. The internal quality assurance system and its procedures are effective. Indicators for achieving the aims and objectives of the higher education institution/ college have been determined.
4. The internal quality assurance system has been developed in compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).
5. Study programmes are developed, approved, and reviewed in compliance with the strategy and internal regulatory enactments of the higher education institution/ college by involving the teaching staff, students, representatives of employers, and other stakeholders.
6. The study process at the higher education institution/ college has been developed and is organised by applying the principles of student-centred learning and ensuring the recognition of competences acquired outside formal education or through professional experience and the learning outcomes achieved in prior learning.

**Analysis**

*The analysis of the criteria shall include justifications and evidence for the evaluation of each criterion.*

**Conclusions by specifying strengths and weaknesses of the described criteria**

*Strengths and weaknesses of each criterion shall be specified based on the analysis.*

Criterion	Evaluation			
	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				

### III. Resources

**Criteria:**

1. The infrastructure<sup>2</sup> of the higher education institution/ college is suitable for the needs and specific features of the higher education institution/ college, and it contributes to achieving the aims of the higher education institution/ college. The infrastructure is available for the students and the teaching staff to achieve the learning outcomes. The higher education institution/ college uses a systematic approach to long-term development of the infrastructure resources.
2. The material and technical provision of the higher education institution/ college is suitable for the needs and specific features of the higher education institution/ college, and it contributes to achieving the aims of the higher education institution/ college. The material and technical provision is available for the students and the teaching staff to achieve the learning outcomes and it is provided on a long-term basis. The higher education institution/college plans the development of the material and technical provision.
3. Financial resources required to ensure the performance of the higher education institution/ college are available for the higher education institution/ college, and they are sufficient to ensure a high-quality study process. The availability of the financial resources is being ensured. The higher education institution/ college uses a systematic approach to long-term development of the financial resources.
4. The methodological support of the higher education institution/ college required for the implementation of the study process is suitable and sufficient for the purpose of implementation of the study programmes relevant to the study directions (study fields). It is actively applied in the study process, and its availability on a long-term basis is ensured.
5. The informative provision of the higher education institution/ college is available, and the higher education institution/ college uses a systematic approach to long-term development of the informative provision.

\* If study programmes are implemented in the form of distance learning and/or in the branches of the higher education institution/ college, the analysis of the criteria 1 to 4 shall be provided in view of the form of distance learning and/ or the branches.

**Analysis**

*The analysis of the criteria shall include justifications and evidence for the evaluation of each criterion.*

**Conclusions by specifying strengths and weaknesses of the described criteria**

*Strengths and weaknesses of each criterion shall be specified based on the analysis.*

Criterion	Evaluation			
	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

<sup>2</sup> The term “infrastructure” used herein refers to the study provision of the higher education institution/ college.

## IV. Teaching Staff

### Criteria:

1. The aims, objectives, and planning documents of the higher education institution/ college with regard to the policy of the development and motivation of the academic staff are clearly defined and attainable.
2. The attraction and selection of the teaching staff of the higher education institution/ college, including the teaching staff from abroad, are regulated procedures implemented in practice, which are complied with and ensure the selection of qualified and suitable teaching staff.
3. The teaching staff's professional and didactic needs for improvement are identified in a target-oriented manner. Appropriate improvement measures are offered and implemented. The outcome and efficiency of the taken measures is being assessed.
4. A support system for the teaching staff, including local and from abroad, has been developed and implemented in an efficient manner.

### Analysis

*The analysis of the criteria shall include justifications and evidence for the evaluation of each criterion.*

### Conclusions by specifying strengths and weaknesses of the described criteria

*Strengths and weaknesses of each criterion shall be specified based on the analysis.*

Criterion	Evaluation			
	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				

## V. Scientific Research or Artistic Creation

### Criteria:

1. A structure and management system have been developed and implemented for activities in the field of scientific research and/or artistic creation, it is well-considered and effective, and it contributes to the attainment of the aims and objectives of the higher education institution/ college.
2. The established directions of the higher education institution/ college in the field of scientific research and/or artistic creation comply with the strategy, the study directions (study fields), and the relevant study programmes implemented at the higher education institution/ college, and they are in line with the contemporary trends of the sector, the labour market needs, and scientific trends.



Analysis

*The analysis of the criteria shall include justifications and evidence for the evaluation of each criterion.*

Conclusions by specifying strengths and weaknesses of the described criteria

*Strengths and weaknesses of each criterion shall be specified based on the analysis.*

Criterion	Evaluation			
	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
1.				
2.				

## VI. Cooperation and Internationalisation

**Criteria:**

1. The strategy and directions of international cooperation and internationalisation are defined, and they comply with the strategy and aims of the higher education institution/ college.
2. The forms of international cooperation implemented by the higher education institution/ college and stakeholders for cooperation contribute to the attainment of the aims set by the higher education institution/ college and comply with the internationalisation strategy.
3. There is a system of incoming - outgoing mobility of students and staff in place, the teaching staff and students are aware of it and avail of this opportunity, and it brings added value to the implementation of the study process and study quality.

Analysis

*The analysis of the criteria shall include justifications and evidence for the evaluation of each criterion.*

Conclusions by specifying strengths and weaknesses of the described criteria

*Strengths and weaknesses of each criterion shall be specified based on the analysis.*

Criterion	Evaluation			
	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
1.				
2.				
3.				

## VII. Activities of Students' Self-Governance

### Criteria:

1. A students' self-governance has been established, and, in terms of the structure and performance, it is efficient. The students are aware of the self-governance and its functions, and they are involved in the activities of the self-governance. The management of the higher education institution/ college provides support to facilitate students' representation and activities of students' self-governance.
2. In terms of performance, the students' self-governance complies with the provisions set forth in the Law on Institutions of Higher Education. Whilst carrying out its activities, it represents the students in issues related to the academic, material (social), and cultural life. There are procedures in place that allow students to be elected to collegiate authorities of the higher education institution/ college.
3. The procedures for financing of the students' self-government comply with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

### Analysis

*The analysis of the criteria shall include justifications and evidence for the evaluation of each criterion.*

### Conclusions by specifying strengths and weaknesses of the described criteria

*Strengths and weaknesses of each criterion shall be specified based on the analysis.*

Criterion	Evaluation			
	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
<b>1.</b>				
<b>2.</b>				
<b>3.</b>				

## VIII. Compliance of the Activities of the Higher Education Institution/ College with the Provisions of Regulatory Enactments

No.	Compliance with regulatory enactments, arising out of the provisions	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Non-compliant	Justification
1.	Decision-making bodies have been established at the higher education institution/ college, a rector has been elected or acting rector has been appointed, or the director of the college has been appointed in accordance with the procedure provided for in the <a href="#">Law on Institutions of Higher Education</a> .				

2.	The <a href="#">constitution</a> of the higher education institution or by-laws of the college have been approved.				
3.	The sample of the diploma and its supplement to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme complies with the regulations specifying the procedure according to which State-recognised documents of higher education are issued.				
4.	The number of visiting foreign lecturers among the academic staff members complies with the provisions set forth in the <a href="#">Law on Institutions of Higher Education</a> .				
5.	The remuneration of the academic staff members complies with the regulations on remuneration to educators.				
6.	The sample study agreement complies with the regulations on mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.				
7.	The students' self-governance receives financing in accordance with the provisions set out in <a href="#">Section 53, Paragraph four of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education</a> .				
8.	The results of the inspections performed by the State Education Quality Service within the reporting period have been taken into consideration and the deficiencies have been eliminated.				
9.	The academic staff members of the study programme are proficient in the official language in accordance with the regulations on the level of the official language knowledge and the procedures for testing official language proficiency for performing professional duties and office duties.				
10.	Teaching staff members, involved in the implementation of the study programme, have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language according to European language levels (see the levels under <a href="http://www.europass.lv">www.europass.lv</a> ), if study programmes or any parts thereof are to be implemented in a foreign language, or at least B2-level knowledge of the Latvian language, if the study programmes or any parts thereof are to be implemented in the Latvian language, and a teaching staff member has not acquired the secondary or higher education in the Latvian language.				
11.	At least five staff members with doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a doctoral study programme, at least three of which are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council in the respective field of science. At least five staff members with doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a professional doctoral study programme in arts.				
12.	The academic staff of an academic study programme complies with the provisions set out in <a href="#">Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education</a> .				

13.	There are procedures for the recognition of competences acquired outside formal education or through professional experience and learning outcomes achieved in previous learning in place at the higher education institution/ college.				
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## **IX. Summary of the Compliance with the Requirements for the Assessment of the Higher Education Institution/ College**

The assessment of the compliance with the requirements shall be carried out in view of the assessment of the criteria.

No.	Requirement	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Non-compliant	Justification
R1	The qualification of the academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants complies with the provisions set forth in the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.				
R2	The academic staff development policy and incentive system developed by the higher education institution/ college comply with the aims and objectives set by the higher education institution/ college.				
R3	The study provision, informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision comply with the requirements for the implementation of a study programme.				
R4	The higher education institution/ college ensures constant improvement, development, and efficient performance, whilst implementing the internal quality assurance system, as provided for in Section 5, Paragraph 2, Clause 1 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.				
R5	The provisions regarding autonomy, financing, and rights of the students' self-government are complied with.				
R6	<i>The data contained in the education quality monitoring system of the higher education institution/ college indicates improvement and development of the performance of the higher education institution/ college (in force as from 1 July 2019).</i>				

R7	The higher education institution/ college carries out the activities in compliance with the requirements set in the legislation on higher education.				
R8	The non-compliances with the provisions set forth in the regulatory enactments as identified by the competent authorities and regarding the performance of the higher education institution/ college in the previous year have been eliminated prior to the decision in line with the deadline set by the mentioned authorities.				

## **X. Assessment**

Justification for the recommendation on the accreditation of the higher education institution/ college.

## **XI. Recommendations for the Higher Education Institution/ College**

Recommendations for the elimination of the identified deficiencies on a short-term basis.

Recommendations for the improvement of the performance of the higher education institution/ college on a long-term basis.