

Elaborated according to Paragraph 2.5. and 13. of  
Cabinet Regulation No. 793 of 11 December 2018  
“Regulations Regarding Opening and Accreditation of Study Fields”

# **Methodology**

## **for the Inclusion of a Licensed Study Programme on the Accreditation Form of a Study Field**

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# Table of Contents

<b>I. Vispārīgie jautājumi .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>II. Licencētas studiju programmas iekļaušana studiju virziena akreditācijas lapā .....</b>	<b>4</b>
1. Pieteikšanās licencētas studiju programmas iekļaušanai studiju virziena akreditācijas lapā .....	4
2. Ekspertu atlase un apstiprināšana .....	5
3. Novērtēšanas vizīte .....	6
4. Ekspertu kopīgā atzinuma sagatavošana .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5. Lēmuma pieņemšana un apstrīdēšana .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
6. Pēcnovērtējuma aktivitātes.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
7. Sūdzības un apelācija.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<b>1. pielikums – Licencētas studiju programmas iekļaušanas studiju virziena akreditācijas lapā procesa dalībnieku tiesības un pienākumi. ....</b>	<b>12</b>
1. Augstskola/ koledža.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2. Aģentūra.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3. Komisija .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4. Eksperti.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5. Apelācijas komisija .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<b>2. pielikums –Prasību vērtējumu skaidrojums.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>3. pielikums – Novērtēšanas vizīšu organizēšana attālināti.....</b>	<b>16</b>

## I. General Provisions

1. Methodology for the Inclusion of a Licensed Study Programme on the Accreditation Form of a Study Field (hereinafter - Methodology) shall specify the procedure for organising the assessment of study programme for inclusion on the accreditation form of respective study field, which is licensed after the accreditation of respective study field. The Methodology is designed in accordance with the provisions of the Latvian regulatory enactments.
2. The Inclusion of a Licensed Study Programme on the Accreditation Form of a Study Field shall be organised by the Accreditation Department, hereinafter referred to as the Quality Agency for Higher Education (hereinafter – the Agency) of the Academic Information Centre (hereinafter – the Centre) in compliance with the provisions of the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 793 ““Regulations Regarding Opening and Accreditation of Study Fields”” of 11 December 2018 (hereinafter – Regulation No. 793).
3. The process of inclusion of a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field shall last four months from the date of application received.
4. The process of inclusion of a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field is applicable to the study programmes which are licences after the respective study field accreditation and which shall receive assessment within two years since its implementation has started with regard to Paragraph 17 of the Regulation No.793. In cases when study programme, with regard to the term set in Paragraph 2.5. of Regulation No.793, is submitted within the assessment of a respective study field, study programme shall receive an assessment set in Paragraph 17 of Regulation No.793 within the assessment and accreditation of a respective study field.
5. The Agency in its operation shall comply with the following principles:
  - 5.1. unbiased and fact-based findings;
  - 5.2. confidentiality;
  - 5.3. respect towards parties involved in the assessment process;
  - 5.4. neutrality;
  - 5.5. collaboration.
6. The parties involved in the process of inclusion of a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field are as follows:
  - 6.1. higher education institution/college <sup>1</sup>;
  - 6.2. Agency;
  - 6.3. Study Quality Committee (hereinafter – Committee);
  - 6.4. Appeals Committee;
  - 6.5. experts.

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<sup>1</sup> 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 research and artistic creation (universities, higher education institutions, academies, institutes, and colleges).

7. The rights and obligations of the parties involved in the process of inclusion of a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field are set out in Annex 1 of the Methodology.

## **II. Inclusion of a Licensed Study Programme on the Accreditation Form of a Study Field**

### **1. Application for inclusion of a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field**

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- 1.1. To include a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field, higher education institution/college shall submit to the Agency the application and report on the inclusion of a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field (hereinafter - report) prepared in compliance with The Guidelines for the Preparation of the Report of Inclusion of a Licensed Study Programme on the Accreditation Form (hereinafter - guidelines).
- 1.2. The documents shall be submitted in the official state language with a translation in English (translations of documents provided by other organizations may be marked as a “working translation” and do not require a notarization). In case of disputes, the documents submitted in the official language shall prevail.
- 1.3. The Report shall be submitted separately from the annexes thereto. The Report without the annexes thereto shall be published on the e–platform of the Agency (hereinafter – e-platform).
- 1.4. The higher education institution/college shall submit to the Agency the application and documents attached hereto in electronic format and shall sign it with a secure electronic signature in compliance with the provisions set out in the Electronic Documents Law.
- 1.5. The Agency, having received the application, shall review the submitted documents for the compliance with the requirements of regulatory enactments, requirements of this Methodology and Guidelines designed by the Agency.
- 1.6. If the higher education institution/college has not submitted all necessary information, the Agency shall request the higher education institution/college in written to submit the missing information. The requested information shall be submitted by the higher education institution/college to the Agency within 20 calendar days since this has been requested. The invoice for inclusion of a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field and information about the Agency’s employee who shall coordinate the assessment process (hereinafter – assessment coordinator) shall be attached to the request for additional information.

- 1.7. The fee for the inclusion of a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field is set in accordance with the Pricelist<sup>2</sup> developed by the Centre.
- 1.8. The Agency might request and receive information from other institutions, organisations and state officials, if needed.
- 1.9. The Agency shall decline to review the application, informing the applicant thereon, if:
  - 1.9.1 fee for the inclusion of a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field has not been paid within the specified deadline;
  - 1.9.2 all requested information has not been submitted;
  - 1.9.3 documents have not been prepared in compliance with the requirements for the preparation of documents as specified in regulatory enactments.
- 1.10. The assessment procedure shall be started by the Agency when the fee for the inclusion of a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field has been paid, all information which has been requested by the Agency has been received and the submitted documents have been prepared in compliance with the requirements for the preparation of documents set out in regulatory enactments.
- 1.11. The application and report on the inclusion of a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field submitted by the higher education institution/college shall be considered as a commitment to comply with the conditions and obligations set out in this Methodology and legal acts referred to therein.
- 1.12. The Agency has rights to prolong the revision process of application submitted by the higher education institution/college in order to ensure its comprehensive review and objective decision, but not longer than two months.

## **2. Selection and approval of experts**

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- 2.1. The licensed study programme shall be assessed by two experts, of which:
  - 2.1.1. one is an expert of the respective industry of the relevant study programme to be included on the accreditation form of a study field,
  - 2.1.2. one is foreign experts of the respective industry of the relevant study programme to be included on the accreditation form of a study field.
- 2.2 The criteria and principles for the selection of experts are specified in rules “Criteria and Principles for the Selection of Experts” approved by the Centre and available on the Agency's website<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> *Pricelist of Paid Services of the Foundation “Academic Information Centre”*. Available under: [http://aika.flowin.lv/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Nodibinajuma\\_Akademiskas-informācijas-centrs\\_maksas-pakalpojumu-cenradis\\_2019.pdf](http://aika.flowin.lv/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Nodibinajuma_Akademiskas-informācijas-centrs_maksas-pakalpojumu-cenradis_2019.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> *Ekspertu atlases kritēriji un principi [2019] Aģentūras tīmekļvietne*: [https://www.aika.lv/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Ekspertu\\_atlases\\_kriteriji\\_un\\_principi\\_2019.pdf](https://www.aika.lv/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Ekspertu_atlases_kriteriji_un_principi_2019.pdf)

- 2.3 The Agency shall, within three working days after the experts' approval, inform the higher education institution/college about the approved experts.
- 2.4 The higher education institution/college may, within three working days, express rejection towards the approved experts, by submitting to the Agency a written justified rejection, which explains reasons for rejection with regard to each expert.
- 2.5 The Agency shall, within 10 working days since the rejection has been received, review the rejection and, if this rejection is recognised as justified, the Agency shall approve other experts and inform the higher education institution/college thereof.
- 2.6 The Centre shall conclude an agreement with the experts for performing the assessment. An expert's confirmation about non-existence of a conflict-of-interest<sup>4</sup> and about compliance with the confidentiality liabilities shall be attached to the agreement.

### **3. The assessment visit**

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- 3.1. The aim of the visit shall be to obtain as much information on the study programme as possible to perform a comprehensive and unbiased assessment of the study programme in compliance with the requirements specified in Paragraph 16 ad 17 of the Regulation No.793, as well as to obtain justification for the information provided in the report, as well as to make additions to recent findings and observations.
- 3.2. The assessment coordinator shall provide the experts with the application of the higher education institution/college and binding information if no rejection of experts has been expressed by the higher education institution/college within the deadline specified by the Agency and the experts has confirmed the non-existence of a conflict-of-interest.
- 3.3. The assessment coordinator shall prepare a draft agenda of the assessment visit and, after it is coordinated with the experts, shall submit it to the higher education institution/college for approval and any additions.

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<sup>4</sup> Conflict-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, or has not been employed by this higher education institution within the last 2 years before the 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, the study programme of which is being assessed, and has not graduated from this institution within 2 years before the assessment visit.*
- 4) *The person involved in the implementation of the study programme and the relevant study field 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.*

- 3.4. The Agency shall, before the assessment visit to the higher education institution/college, organise training for the experts. The following questions shall be discussed during the training:
  - 3.4.1. aims and objectives of the assessment;
  - 3.4.2. work schedule of the experts and agenda of the visit;
  - 3.4.3. Methodology and Guidelines for the preparation of the joint opinion of the experts;
  - 3.4.4. the regulatory enactments regulating the assessment of study programmes;
  - 3.4.5. context of the respective higher education institution/college, study field and study programme.
- 3.5. The higher education institution/college shall ensure adequate conditions, premises, and equipment for organisation of the assessment visit, as well as provide the access to the informative support (including libraries), study facilities, material and technical, and financial provision of the study programme and the relevant study field, as well as other resources upon the request of the Agency or experts.
- 3.6. The experts shall visit the higher education institution/college (including branches thereof, in which the implementation of the study programme has started or is planned) and assess the inclusion of licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field. During the assessment visit, the experts shall meet the management of the study programme, the management of the higher education institution/college and/or respective structural unit, and other representatives, if necessary (such as teaching staff, students etc). In case of force majeure the assessment visit shall be organised online in line with requirements set in the Annex 3 of this Methodology.
- 3.7. A representative of the higher education institution/college may take part only in sole meeting with the experts, except cases where such an option has been previously discussed and agreed with the assessment coordinator.
- 3.8. During the experts' visit, the higher education institution/college may prepare a presentation if it does not contain the information included in the report attached to the application. If presentations contain the information that was already submitted, the assessment coordinator, subject to an agreement with the experts, may ask the higher education institution/college not to demonstrate such presentations in order to use time allocated for the meeting effectively.
- 3.9. Experts' meeting with the representatives of the higher education institution/college shall include both a question-and-answer session and an interactive discussion between the experts and the representatives of the higher education institution/college. The aim of the meeting is to obtain the necessary information for the analysis of the requirements and the relevant criteria thereof specified in the Guidelines for the preparation of the joint opinion of the experts, and for the preparation of the joint opinion of the experts.

- 3.10. In the end of the visit, the experts shall mutually discuss the outcomes of the visit and findings gained, as well as inform the representatives of the higher education institution/college about the main conclusions.
- 3.11. English shall be the working language during the assessment visit, unless otherwise agreed upon with the Agency.
- 3.12. 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 visit. The interpreter shall not be involved in the implementation of the study programme and relevant study field. The expenses related to the interpreting services shall be borne by the higher education institution/college.
- 3.13. During the assessment visit, the representatives of the higher education institution/college shall not take part in the breaks (coffee breaks, lunches), unless proposed otherwise by the experts.

#### **4. Preparation of joint opinion by the experts**

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- 4.1 After the assessment visit, the experts shall:
  - 4.1.1. prepare the joint opinion of the experts according to the deadline specified by the Agency in compliance with the Guidelines for the preparation of the joint opinion of the experts designed by the Agency<sup>5</sup>;
  - 4.1.2. prepare the joint opinion in English and submit it to the Agency;
  - 4.1.3. mutually agree on the evaluation of the assessment requirements in compliance with the requirements of regulatory enactments;
  - 4.1.4. agree on the wording used in the joint opinion, acceptable for all experts. If experts have different opinion about any of the requirements, it shall be indicated in the respective chapter of the joint opinion, by indicating expert's name, surname, dissenting opinion, requirement and the relevant justification;
  - 4.1.5. in the joint opinion, the experts shall describe both positive and negative aspects, providing a detailed justification for all statements. The experts shall analyse each assessment requirement and formulate conclusions, specifying strengths and weaknesses of the higher education institution/college with regard to the way how the assessment requirement in the study programme has been met;
  - 4.1.6. in the joint opinion, the experts shall provide recommendations for the elimination of the deficiencies found (on a short-term basis) and for the improvement of the study programme (on a long-term basis);
  - 4.1.7. amend the prepared opinion at the instruction of the Agency if the factual errors are found or if the guidelines for the preparation of joint opinion are not followed;
  - 4.1.8. perform other tasks related to the assessment of the study programme.

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<sup>5</sup> *Vadlīnijas ekspertu kopīgajam atzinuma studiju programmas iekļaušanai studiju virziena akreditācijas lapā [2020] Aģentūras tīmekļvietne:*



- 4.2 The correlation and evaluation of requirements is explained in Annex 2 of the Methodology.
- 4.3 The Agency shall review the joint opinion of the experts and may ask the experts to amend it.
- 4.4 The Agency shall send the joint opinion of the experts to the higher education institution/college.
- 4.5 The higher education institution/college may, within 5 working days since the joint opinion by the experts group has been received, provide comments on the factual errors<sup>6</sup> detected therein.
- 4.6 The experts group shall review the comments by the higher education institution/college and may, within 5 working days since they have been received, correct the joint opinion and submit it to the Agency.
- 4.7 The final joint opinion shall be published on the e-platform.

## **5 Procedure for taking decision and appealing**

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- 5.1 The Agency shall inform the respective higher education institution/college about the date, time and place, the application is to be reviewed. The higher education institution/college may delegate not more than two representatives for the participation in the Committee meeting. Upon request by the Committee, the Agency may invite to the Committee meeting the expert/-s who assessed the study programme.
- 5.2 At the request of the chairperson of the Committee, the Agency may invite the representatives of the ministries of the relevant industries or experts delegated by the respective ministries, to the Committee meeting, if the Committee reviews the application for inclusion of a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field in the industry, in which the respective ministry is competent as well as may invite experts of the industries who have advisory rights.
- 5.3 In the event that the experts' joint opinion indicates short-term recommendations that must be implemented before the Committee meeting in order to eliminate the identified deficiencies, the higher education institution/college shall submit information on the implementation of the short-term recommendations to the Agency no later than five days before the Committee meeting.
- 5.4 The Committee shall review the documents submitted by the higher education institution/college, joint opinion of the experts, and other information available to the

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<sup>6</sup> *Faktu kļūda - eksperta atzinumā norādīto datu, ziņu vai pamatojumā izmantoto avotu neatbilstība patiesībai.*

Committee, and shall take the decision on inclusion of a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field or refusal to include it.

5.5 Latvian shall be the working language of the Committee.

5.6 A decision on the inclusion of a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field shall be taken if study programme is not assessed as “poor”<sup>7</sup> and meets the following requirements<sup>8</sup> set for the assessment of study programme:

5.6.1 the study programme meets the requirements specified in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments;

5.6.2 study provision, scientific provision (if applicable), informative provision (including library), material and technical provision, and financial provision meets the conditions for implementing the study programme and ensures the achieving of study results;

5.6.3 the qualification of the academic staff and visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers and visiting assistants meets the conditions for implementing the study programme and requirements of regulatory enactments;

5.6.4 the awarding of master or doctoral degrees is based on the achievements and findings of the relevant scientific field or field of artistic creation.

5.7 If the Committee has taken the decision to include a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field, the Agency, within 10 working days since the Committee’s decision has been taken, shall send the relevant decision to the higher education institution/college, and a copy of the decision to the Ministry of Education and Science. If the Committee has taken the decision to include a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field, the Agency shall send to the higher education institution/college the accreditation form of a study field (Regulation No.793 Annex 2) signed by the Committee’s chairperson together with the decision on the inclusion of a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field.

5.8 If the Committee takes the decision on the refusal to include a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field, the higher education institution/college shall be entitled to submit an application for inclusion of a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field only after the higher education institution/college has eliminated the deficiencies detected by the Committee.

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<sup>7</sup> Ministru kabineta 2018. gada 11. decembra noteikumu Nr. 793 “Studiju virzienu atvēršanas un akreditācijas noteikumi” 30.punkts

<sup>8</sup> Ministru kabineta 2018. gada 11. decembra noteikumu Nr. 793 “Studiju virzienu atvēršanas un akreditācijas noteikumi” 16.punkts

## **6 Follow-up activities**

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- 6.1 After the assessment process and taking the decision on inclusion of a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field, the higher education institution/college shall perform activities, the aim of which is to improve the quality of the study programme, eliminating the deficiencies detected during the assessment process and specified in the joint opinion of the experts, and implementing the recommendations given by the experts or providing justification if it is not possible to implement provided recommendations or providing information on other equivalent improvements.
- 6.2 During the assessment and accreditation process of a study field, the experts shall review and assess whether the deficiencies detected in the process of inclusion of a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field have been eliminated and the recommendations given for the study programme have been implemented.

## **7 Complaints and Appeals**

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- 7.1 If, during the assessment process, the experts or the higher education institution/college detects any violations in the assessment process or unethical conduct of the parties involved in the assessment process, a complaint may be expressed to the assessment coordinator or submitted to the Agency in written prior to the Committee meeting where respective decision on inclusion of a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field shall be taken.
- 7.2 The decision taken by the Committee may be contested in the Appeals Committee by submitting an application to the Centre in accordance with the procedure specified in the [Administrative Procedure Law](#). The decision taken by the Appeals Committee may be appealed in the court in accordance with the procedure specified in the [Administrative Procedure Law](#).
- 7.3 The operating principles and procedure of the Appeals Committee are defined in the Rules of Procedure of the Appeals Committee.

# **Annex 1 – The rights and obligations of the parties involved in the process of inclusion of a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field**

## **1. The higher education institution/college shall:**

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- 1.1 subject to the Cabinet Regulations, Law on Institutions of Higher Education and other regulatory enactments related to the licensed study programme and its inclusion on the accreditation form of a study field, submit to the Agency the application for inclusion of a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field (hereinafter – the application) and the report on inclusion of a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field (hereinafter - report) in compliance with the Guidelines for the Preparation of the Joint Opinion by the Experts for inclusion of a Licensed Study Programme on the Accreditation Form designed by the Agency;
- 1.2 take part in the coordination and organisation of the experts' visit;
- 1.3 may, within three working days, request the rejection of the experts by submitting to the Agency a justified written application, which shall specify the reasons for such rejection with regard to each expert;
- 1.4 provide access to the informative support (including libraries), study facilities, and material and technical provision of the study programme, as well as other resources upon the request of the Agency or experts;
- 1.5 be responsible for provided information that it fully describes the study programme submitted for assessment and for revision of submitted information;
- 1.6 ensure adequate conditions, premises, and equipment for organisation of the assessment visit;
- 1.7 may provide comments on the factual errors detected in the joint opinion by the experts group within 5 working days since the joint opinion by the experts group has been received;
- 1.8 may submit information on the implementation of the short-term recommendations, that must be implemented before the Committee meeting in order to eliminate the identified deficiencies, to the Agency no later than five days before the Committee meeting;
- 1.9 may contest the decision taken by the Committee in the Appeals Committee and may appeal the decision taken by the Appeals Committee in the court in compliance with the procedure set out in the Administrative Procedure Law.

## **2. The Agency shall:**

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- 2.1 design and in its operation use Regulation No. 793 and other relevant regulatory enactments, this Methodology and procedures;
- 2.2 design the Guidelines for the Preparation of the Joint Opinion by the Experts for inclusion of a Licensed Study Programme on the Accreditation Form and publish them on the Agency's website;
- 2.3 approve two experts for the assessment of the study programme to be included on the accreditation form of a study field in accordance with the guidelines for the selection of experts;
- 2.4 the rights and obligations of the Agency are specified in procedural steps and tasks of Part II chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4 of this Methodology;

- 2.5 organise the experts' work, including experts' visits to higher education institutions/colleges, branches thereof, participate in these, as well as ensure obtaining of the necessary information and reviewing of the submitted documents;
- 2.6 organise experts' training both before the assessment visit and during the whole academic year subject to prior announcement thereof;
- 2.7 ensure the documentation and archiving of the assessment process;
- 2.8 publish information on inclusion of licensed study programme inclusion on the accreditation form of a study field and experts' opinion on the Agency's website;
- 2.9 provide information and advice in quality assurance issues with regard to study programmes;
- 2.10 analyse the outcomes of higher education quality assessment and give recommendations for the improvement thereof;
- 2.11 develop criteria for the selection of the members of the Committee and select candidates for the Committee's experts, as well as ensure technical and organisational work of the Committee upon inclusion of a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field;
- 2.12 participate in the work and activities of organisations of the European Higher Education Area in the area of quality assurance in higher education;
- 2.13 perform other activities related to the improvement and quality assurance in higher education.

### **3. The Committee**

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The Committee shall operate in compliance with the Rules of the Study Quality Committee and perform the following tasks:

- 3.1 review the application for inclusion of a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field submitted by the higher education institution/college, the report, and other binding information;
- 3.2 discuss, analyse and evaluate the joint opinion of the experts;
- 3.3 based on the application and documents attached thereto, the joint opinion of the experts, as well as other information available to the Committee, take, within four months since the application of the higher education institution/college for inclusion of a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field has been received, the decision on inclusion of a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field if the study programme meets all the requirements set in Regulation No. 793 and is not assessed as "poor" or the decision to reject the inclusion of a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field if the study programme does not meet any of the requirements set MK regulation No. 793 and is assessed as "poor";
- 3.4 has the right to request from higher education institutions/colleges and relevant state authorities information necessary for the procedure;
- 3.5 provide recommendations for the improvement of the study programme, if necessary;
- 3.6 obtain advice from experts, if necessary;
- 3.7 the chair of the Committee may suggest to invite the representatives of the ministries of the related industry or experts delegated by the ministries to the respective meeting if the Committee reviews an application for inclusion of a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field in the relevant industry within the competence of the respective ministry, as well as may invite industries' experts who have advisory rights;

3.8 has the right to visit the higher education institution/college, including branches thereof, to inspect the actual circumstances in the higher education institution/college within the process of inclusion of a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field the study programme.

#### **4. Experts**

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- 4.1. The rights and obligations of the experts are defined for related procedure steps included in Chapter 3 and 4 of Part II of the Methodology and tasks to be performed, subject to binding regulatory enactments.
- 4.2. In their work, the experts and observers shall also be abide by the following principles:
  - 4.2.1. unbiased and fact-based findings – the expert shall act in an honest and unbiased manner in their efforts to reach the aim of the assessment. When expressing their opinion, formulating conclusions or taking decisions, the expert shall rely on facts, observations and their personal competence;
  - 4.2.2. neutrality – when assessing a study programme, the expert shall act independently. The expert shall not represent the interests of the higher education institution/college, study field or other party;
  - 4.2.3. respect towards the parties involved in the assessment process – within the assessment process, 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, therefore he/she shall rely on facts and observations when referring to the strengths and weaknesses of the study programme;
  - 4.2.4. confidentiality – all information related to the assessment (opinion of the interviewees, description of the study programme, and additional information provided by the higher education institution/college) shall be used exclusively for the assessment process;
  - 4.2.5. collaboration – each expert shall be open to collaboration with other experts. The experts shall develop mutual understanding with the representatives of the higher education institution/college and make efforts to assist the higher education institution/college to enhance the quality system and quality culture.

#### **5. Appeals Committee**

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5.1 The Appeals Committee shall review applications submitted with the aim to contest the decisions taken by the Committee and take decisions in compliance with the procedure set out in the Administrative Procedure Law.

5.2 The Appeals Committee shall act in accordance with its Appeals Procedure.

## Annex 2 – Explanation of the Evaluation of Requirements

1. The joint opinion by the experts group includes requirements set in the Regulation No.793
2. While preparing the joint opinion on the inclusion of a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field, the experts group shall evaluate each applicable requirement, the explanation is given in the table below:

Evaluation	Explanation of evaluation
Fully compliant	The study programme fully complies with the prescribed requirements.
Partially compliant	Whilst assessing the compliance of the study programme with the prescribed requirements, shortcomings and deficiencies have been detected, but they can be eliminated by the day on which the Committee in its meeting is supposed to review the application for the inclusion of a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field, or within the accreditation term of the respective study field.
Non-compliant	Whilst assessing the compliance of the study programmes with the prescribed requirements, significant deficiencies have been detected, and the shortcomings and deficiencies detected in the implementation of the study programme cannot be eliminated within the two-year accreditation term of the study field.

3. While preparing the joint opinion on the inclusion of a licensed study programme on the accreditation form of a study field, the experts group shall agree upon the evaluation of the study programmes by specifying whether the study programme shall be evaluated as “excellent”, “good”, “average” or “poor”<sup>9</sup>.

Evaluation	Explanation of evaluation
Excellent	The study programme complies with the prescribed requirements.
Good	Whilst assessing the compliance of the study programme with the prescribed requirements, minor deficiencies have been detected.
Average	Whilst assessing the compliance of the study programme with the prescribed requirements, shortcomings and deficiencies have been identified, but they can be eliminated within the accreditation term of the study field.
Poor	Whilst assessing the compliance of the study programme with the prescribed requirements, significant deficiencies have been detected, and the shortcomings and deficiencies identified in the implementation of the study programme cannot be eliminated within the two-year accreditation term of the study field.

<sup>9</sup> Paragraph 17 of the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 793 ““Regulations Regarding Opening and Accreditation of Study Fields” of 11 December 2018

## **Annex 3 – Organisation of online visits for assessment**

- 3.1. The purpose of an online visit is to ensure a full-fledged process of assessment also in cases when it is not possible to organize an on-site visit. An online visit shall be organized only in cases of force majeure or due to other reasonably objective exceptional circumstances arising independently of the acts or omissions of the Agency or the higher education institution / college (for example, at the national level Covid-19 restrictions, including travel restrictions and quarantine, regulations, which in any way creates conditions when the possibility to organize an on-site visit, etc. does not exist).
- 3.2. Assessment visits can be organized online in three ways:
  - 3.2.1 Partially online assessment visit — in cases of force majeure or other objectively justified exceptional circumstances justifying the inability of one of the experts to attend the assessment visit, the expert shall participate in the assessment visit at a distance.
  - 3.2.2 Fully online assessment visit — in cases of force majeure or other objectively justified exceptional circumstances which make it impossible for any of the experts to attend the assessment visit, all experts shall participate in the assessment visit at a distance and only the assessment coordinator shall participate in the assessment visit on-site.
  - 3.2.3 Fully online assessment visit - in cases of force majeure or other objectively justified exceptional circumstances which make impossible for any of the experts and assessment coordinator to attend the assessment visit, all experts and assessment coordinator shall participate in the assessment visit at a distance.
- 3.3. The higher education institution / college cannot choose between on-site visit and online visit, it is determined by the Agency on the basis of the external regulatory enactments of the Republic of Latvia and objectively justified circumstances. The higher education institution / college must be able to provide on-site visits, unless otherwise provided by the legislation of the Republic of Latvia or other external regulations (Covid-19 distance restrictions, or insufficient area of premises cannot be the reason for the organization of the online visit).
- 3.4. The assessment coordinator shall organize the online visits according to the same rules and principles as the on-site visits and, in addition, before the online visit, verify that the experts and the higher education institution / college, in accordance with Paragraph 3.5. of Section 3 of this Methodology, have provided technical support and solutions for the online visit.
- 3.5. The coordinator and the higher education institution / college mutually agree, which online platform will be used and the higher education institution / college, for its part, must provide the requirements for the technical support base referred to in Annex 3, Paragraph 3.8.
- 3.6. Before the online visit the assessment coordinator must inform the higher education institution / college about it. If necessary, the coordinator can stipulate it in the Schedule of the expert group.
- 3.7. The higher education institution / college is obliged to provide all technical equipment and resources for full and high-quality provision of the online visit, so that during the online visit the experts could obtain the necessary information for the joint opinion. During the online visit, the higher education institution / college bears full responsibility for the content and truthfulness of



the information provided in any format (visual, oral, written, online platform, etc.), as well as for the provision and use of high-quality and process-appropriate material and technical base.

- 3.8. Provision of the quality material and technical base during the online visit means that the higher education institution / college must ensure the following minimum technical requirements:
  - 3.8.1. A computer or other device able to operate an online platform
  - 3.8.2. Screen / projector
  - 3.8.3. Sound equipment according to the area of the room to ensure the audibility
  - 3.8.4. Stable internet connection, according to the requirements of the online platform
  - 3.8.5. Microphone(s)
- 3.9. In the online visit no other third parties may participate during the scheduled meetings for the purpose of obtaining an objective opinion and ensuring anonymity. The higher education institution / college is prohibited from making audio and / or video recordings of these conversations, including recordings on the online platform.
- 3.10. In case of emergencies when it is not possible for the higher education institution / college, for reasons beyond its control, to provide technical support and solutions for the online visit (internet interruption / absence, power outage / absence, etc.) a partially online visit shall be deemed to have taken place if at least 50% of the expert group have participated in the on-site assessment visit. A fully online visit, on the grounds that it is organized solely on the basis of technical means, shall be deemed not to have taken place in such cases.
- 3.11. During the online visit, the expert must be able to provide himself with technical equipment that is compatible with the online platform chosen for the visit and meets the minimum requirements for its operation.
- 3.12. In order to ensure the identification, all participants of the online visit must register on the online platform with their name and surname during the visit, as well as must have a microphone and a camera to provide a real-time image of the participant.
- 3.13. All participants in the online visit shall notify the coordinator of any significant changes that may affect the Schedule and progress of the online visit in any way. In the event that the above circumstances occur on the part of the Agency, the coordinator shall inform the other participants of the visit.