RECOMMENDATIONS ON COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRATION OF THE LEARNING OUTCOME ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY INTO THE INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM
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Introduction

“Recommendations on competence development and integration of the learning outcome assessment methodology into the internal quality assurance system” have been prepared in the course of the implementation by Vilnius University of the national project “Development of the National Concept of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS): Credit Harmonisation and Creation and Implementation of the Methodology for Learning Outcomes-Based Degree Programmes through Cooperation and Consensus” (No VP1-2.2-ŠM_08_V-01-001) in 2009–2012. The recommendations are based on the provisions of the Bologna Process, international and national higher education quality assurance theory and practice, Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2005), the ideas and results of Tuning Educational Structures in Europe, and guidelines for the implementation of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). The recommendations have also been formulated on the basis of the conclusions of an analysis of the internal quality assurance situation at Lithuanian higher education institutions carried out during the project and the results of interviews and monitoring studies of groups of project participants.

The purpose of the recommendations is to discuss the main potential challenges in integrating the methodology for the preparation and updating of Tuning methodology-based degree programmes into internal quality assurance systems, to discuss the main quality assurance system efficiency problems and the general principles for solving arising problems, and to provide a self-assessment questionnaire to improve internal quality assurance systems. No specific measures or procedures are proposed, as the authors are of the opinion that the internal quality assurance system of each higher education institution should be improved in view of the context, organisational culture, mission, strategic objectives, community values, and prevailing quality assurance and improvement practices. The purpose of the guidance questionnaire for self-assessment is to encourage communities to consider the quality assurance practices existing in their institutions and evaluate their strengths and weaknesses in the context of ensuring continuous improvement of the quality of competence and learning outcome-based degree programmes.

These recommendations are intended for higher education institution administration managers and staff responsible for the development and improvement of quality assurance systems, as well as for the entire community of an institution.

The authors are grateful to Tuning project experts, consultants Dr. Richard Whewell (University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, United Kingdom), Guido Cuyvers (Kempen Catholic High School, Belgium) and to all project participants who kindly shared their experience during group interviews, monitoring studies and informal conversations.
1. SPECIFICITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

Quality has become a widely used term in higher education theory and practice in the past two decades. The concept of quality in higher education is actually not new: it has always been part of the academic tradition, and the academic community has earlier paid much attention to the quality of performance as well. However, a change in higher education objectives inevitably determines a change in the concept of quality in higher education and quality assurance. These changes are primarily determined by the changing external higher education environment: higher education becoming more massive and diversified, growing and changing public requirements for higher education quality, growing public interest and demand for accountability, changing student expectations and needs for teaching content and methods, change in funding, growing domestic and international competition, higher education internationalisation and globalisation processes, global concern about quality, standards, etc. Particular emphasis is placed on the need for quality, with higher education institutions encouraged to look for new systematic measures to improve higher education quality.

Today, quality in higher education is generally understood as a combination of the following two concepts:

- **Fitness of purpose** of a higher education institution, i.e. t. y. conformity of objectives with the mission of the institution as well as the expressed and perceived expectations and needs of internal and external stakeholders;

- **Fitness for purpose** of the resources available to and conditions created by the higher education institution and the effectiveness of activities for fulfilling the mission and achieving the strategic objectives set.

Higher education quality means the fitness of conditions provided by a higher education institution for the development of personal self-education and acquisition of a required level of qualification, meeting the expressed and perceived expectations and needs of internal and external higher education stakeholders as much as possible.

An institution must be able to ensure and prove the conformity of the resources available, processes performed and results achieved with the objectives pursued and the conformity of the objectives with the needs of stakeholders and the institution’s mission.

In the Bologna Process, higher education quality assurance and improvement is recognised as a priority area of activity and the basis of a common European Higher Education Area. Following the signing of Sorbonne (1998) and Bologna (1999) declarations and the approval of a common Tuning methodology, harmonisation of European education structures has become one of the most important steps towards a common and unified European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Higher education quality assurance has also become a task of not only national but also European importance. The Salamanca Convention (2001) named quality, higher education institution autonomy and accountability among other main principles of the EHEA (public responsibility for higher education, research-based higher education, diversity, trust, relevance, comparability of the qualification degrees of Bachelor and Master, attractiveness).

The Graz Declaration (2003) names the pursuit of quality in university activities, administration and management as one of the Bologna Process priorities. The Berlin Communiqué (2003) highlights the need to create common quality assurance criteria and methodology.
Approved as an annex to the Bergen Communiqué in 2005, the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (hereinafter “ESG”) clearly defined the requirements for the implementation of a common dimension of degree programme and degree quality assurance and quality demonstration methods in European higher education.

There are three levels of higher education quality assurance: international, national and institutional. There are general requirements for quality assurance at international and national level (principles, processes, guidelines, proposed and disseminated examples of good practice, etc.) and external assessment. Determination of internal requirements, self-assessment and improvement is assigned to the internal (institutional) quality assurance level.

Harmony between the international, national and internal institutional quality assurance levels is very important. The European Higher Education Area operates on the basis of national responsibility for higher education, and thus the national and institutional levels become extremely important in ensuring quality in higher education. At the national level, the quality of higher education must be maintained, improved and developed, taking into account international trends. However, primary responsibility for higher education quality assurance lies with the higher education institution itself. This is clearly illustrated by the following basic principles of external and internal higher education institution quality assurance, which are identified in the abovementioned Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG):

- Providers of higher education have the primary responsibility for the quality of their provision and its assurance;
- The interests of society in the quality and standards of higher education need to be safeguarded;
- The quality of academic programmes needs to be developed and improved for students and other beneficiaries of higher education across the EHEA;
- There need to be efficient and effective organisational structures within which those academic programmes can be provided and supported;
- Transparency and the use of external expertise in quality assurance processes are important;
- There should be encouragement of a culture of quality within higher education institutions;
- Processes should be developed through which higher education institutions can demonstrate their accountability, including accountability for the investment of public and private money;
- Quality assurance for accountability purposes is fully compatible with quality assurance for enhancement purposes;
- Institutions should be able to demonstrate their quality at home and internationally;
- Processes used should not stifle diversity and innovation.

The following areas of internal quality assurance are identified in the abovementioned Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG):
- Policy and procedures for quality assurance. Institutions should have a policy and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of their programmes and awards. They should also commit themselves explicitly to the development of...
a culture which recognises the importance of quality, and quality assurance, in their work. To achieve this, institutions should develop and implement a strategy for the continuous enhancement of quality. The strategy, policy and procedures should have a formal status and be publicly available. They should also include a role for students and other stakeholders.

- Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards. Institutions should have formal mechanisms for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of their programmes and awards.
- Assessment of students. Students should be assessed using published criteria, regulations and procedures which are applied consistently.
- Quality assurance of teaching staff. Institutions should have ways of satisfying themselves that staff involved with the teaching of students are qualified and competent to do so. They should be available to those undertaking external reviews, and commented upon in reports.
- Learning resources and student support. Institutions should ensure that the resources available for the support of student learning are adequate and appropriate for each programme offered.
- Information systems. Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes of study and other activities.
- Public information. Institutions should regularly publish up to date, impartial and objective information, both quantitative and qualitative, about the programmes and awards they are offering.

1.1. Learning outcome and competence-based degree programme quality assurance issues

It should be pointed out that the Bologna process implementation progress evaluation report for 2009, which summarised the results of internal quality assurance practices in European Union Member States according to the previously presented internal quality assurance areas (ESG), stated that the main challenge faced by all European countries in this area was the implementation of degree programmes based on learning outcomes and competences as well as the development and application of student achievement assessment procedures. The report also warned of the potential risk that higher education institutions may learn to create and publish technically correct formal descriptors of intended learning outcomes without implementing them in practice².

One of the main reasons why quality assurance of learning outcome and competence-based degree programmes and student achievement assessment is the most problematic area of internal quality assurance is that the assurance of quality as fitness of purpose and quality as fitness for purpose in this case is not a sufficient condition, as quality assurance in the said areas is inseparable from certain cultural changes of an institution (values and attitudes as well as practices based on them).

Quality assurance of learning outcome and competence-based degree programmes is primarily related to a change in objectives and attitudes.

1.1.1. Change in the community's attitudes and approach to higher education and teaching, learning and assessment methods

In terms of the Tuning project, the overall objective of entire higher education is to create, maintain and ensure learning conditions in higher education institutions which students would benefit from as much as possible and which would meet their needs as much as possible. Students find themselves in the centre of the higher education process, with the focus placed on learning outcomes and competences rather than teaching content. Conformity of the competence of specialists trained at higher education institutions with public and labour market needs in terms of the education and qualification structure is about higher education degree programmes based on learning outcomes and competences. This shift from an input oriented degree programme, course unit content, duration and teaching methods to output oriented development of competences (knowledge, skills, abilities, values and attitudes) acquired by students upon the completion of a certain programme or a course unit determines a new approach to students and the need to change and update degree programmes, orientating them towards the needs of internal and external stakeholders (students, business and society in general) and lifelong learning.

Higher education institutions must clearly define their internal and external stakeholders and ensure their active involvement in formulating learning outcomes, as learning outcomes and competences are orientated towards not only requirements for a certain course unit but also employment and citizenship education needs. Clear, accurate and relevant learning outcomes are a prerequisite for quality in higher education.

Learning outcomes may be formulated for individual course units, modules and programmes. At national level, learning outcomes are used to describe national qualification systems. They are based on qualification, study cycle or study field descriptors. All descriptors are formulated in the form of learning outcomes, which show what higher education or qualification level a student has achieved. The use of learning outcomes at international level ensures the transparency and comparability of studies and creates preconditions for comparing and recognising qualifications awarded in various countries. Each reference level of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is described in a way that it clearly reveals the specific features of that level of qualification. It is important to try to define these differences in the level of learning outcomes to make EQF levels clearly progressive. When formulating learning outcomes, the focus is placed on what students learn.

In addition, clearly formulated and published learning outcomes are an important tool of student motivation and empowerment. Defined learning outcomes are the main reference point for the preparation of a degree programme and determine teaching and learning activities, i.e. how intended learning outcomes will be achieved (learning outcomes of individual modules, their sequence in a programme, the content and scope of course units (modules), methods of study and student achievement assessment methods, the duration and schedule of studies).

Learning outcomes are used to design the study content and determine assessment criteria, select assessment methods and prepare assessment tools. This is the most important level of use of learning outcomes, as this is the level of direct study and learning outcomes play an important role in the development of the internal quality culture of an institution and in the development and implementation of the quality assurance system. If the study content and planned teaching/learning and assessment methods have no connection with learning outcomes, it is difficult to
speak about quality in higher education. Quality higher education is higher education where all parameters of study (intended learning outcomes, the study content, learning and assessment methods) are consistent with the defined learning outcomes of a programme or course unit\(^3\) (see Fig. 1).

**Fig 1. Learning outcomes: compatibility of resources, processes and results (Adam, 2004)**

### 1.1.2. Change in the concept of student workload

When planning learning and teaching tasks for certain learning outcomes, higher education institutions must continuously control the time for implementing a degree programme. One of the most important Tuning project innovations is the aim to link learning objectives, competences and student workload-based ECTS credits. Student workload-based ECTS credits facilitate effective planning of learning activities, as they take into account all the time needed to carry out learning, teaching and assessment tasks and are therefore the most important programme planning tool. Credits are obtained only when students prove that they have achieved the learning objectives. Nevertheless, the correlation between credits and learning outcomes is not really unambiguous. The time needed for an average pupil or student to achieve the learning outcomes depends on not only knowledge and skills that need to be developed but also on the context of the learning process. The time needed for an average student to achieve the learning outcomes is determined by the national and institutional learning culture, teaching, learning and assessment methods as well as personal characteristics of students and their level of education. The number of credits must be determined according to the student workload (expressed in time) needed for a student to achieve the learning outcomes in a certain context. In other words, it is necessary to ensure harmony and balance between learning outcomes and credits: credits are a quantitative measure of student workloads, which indicates the scope and duration of study of a typical programme student, and learning outcomes are a qualitative measure of study, as it reveals the content of study and its complexity and assignment to one or another qualification level (see Fig. 2). ECTS

Credits are used in formulating national qualification levels. Credits are defined in view of the qualification level to which they are assigned. Credits are assigned to an appropriate qualification level according to the learning outcomes of a degree programme or course unit. Only a certain level of credits can be accumulated for the acquisition and recognition of a qualification. ECTS credits are also used in dealing with such relevant higher education issues as implementation and improvement of internal quality assurance systems, development of student mobility between different European and world countries, etc.

Fig. 2. Learning outcomes: harmony between content complexity and scope (by Gehmlich, 2010)

1.1.3. The importance of ensuring human and material resources

The ensuring of these changes definitely requires adequate human and material resources. The didactic training of the academic staff preparing a programme is very important: a teacher must be able to not only clearly and accurately form competences expressed in learning outcomes but also select and apply teaching/learning and assessment methods depending on the nature of learning outcomes, student learning experience, needs, motivation, etc. Therefore, investment by a higher education institution in the development of staff competences is very important.

However, teacher competence alone is not enough to ensure the implementation of the abovementioned changes. It is also necessary to ensure necessary support structures, financial resources and the necessary learning environment conditions (classrooms, laboratories, equipment, library resources, etc.) and measures needed to achieve the intended learning outcomes (see Fig. 1).

In this case, it is also necessary to note that the current teacher workload accounting at Lithuanian higher education institutions is not conducive for introducing the ECTS based on a credit as a unit of measurement of student workloads. In order to ensure teachers’ support for the innovations introduced and enhance their motivation, it is necessary to review and harmonise the

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teacher workload accounting system with the ongoing changes.

Thus, the ensuring of relevant resources is definitely one of the main conditions for successful change, but it is equally obvious that the assurance of quality as *fitness of purpose* and quality as *fitness for purpose*, unfortunately, is not a sufficient condition to initiate and successfully implement the said changes. The assurance of quality as *fitness for purpose* and quality as *fitness of purpose* usually involves assessment of what has already been implemented and presentation of summarised evaluations according to the established external and internal assessment standards. A priority in this case is the accountability of higher education institutions\(^5\), which, unfortunately, does not itself ensure continuous improvement of performance. A higher education institution seeking to create a student-oriented learning environment must create an environment favourable for changes in the community’s attitudes and daily practices based on them. In other words, *an institution should first of all be able to change itself*.

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2. RELEVANCE OF THE ASSURANCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY AS TRANSFORMATION

The success of implementation of student-oriented programmes is directly related to the ability of an institution as a system to change itself and change the capacity and self-perception of both internal and external stakeholders. Assurance of compliance with requirements can help to keep the existing quality but does not itself guarantee improvement of performance, including successful implementation of changes.

Conscious perception, recognition and the issue of assurance of quality as transformation, the ability to change oneself and change, definitely become relevant in this case.

The concept of quality as transformation in higher education is associated with a change in the state, transformation6. Studies are not services for consumers but an ongoing process in which participants (students and teachers, scientists) experience a transformation, i.e. a change in personal thinking and activities (transformative learning theory). Students are active participants in the learning process responsible for their learning. The study process enables them to think and act independently. In this case, teachers not only teach but also learn: not only create a learning environment facilitating change in students’ thinking and activities but also learn how to create and continuously improve this environment. Such transformation of students’ thinking and activities definitely requires a change in the institution itself.

Therefore, in order to create a student-oriented higher education system, it is necessary to recognise quality as transformation as a strategic quality dimension of higher education institutions. This was sought to be done by carrying out a European university quality culture study7 (the study involved some 50 European Union universities). In the context of the culture of quality, quality was defined as the ability to:

- identify appropriate targets meeting the expectations of internal and external stakeholders (fitness of purpose);
- pursue objectives using appropriate measures (fitness for purpose);
- identify a strategic dimension of assurance of quality as transformation.

The quality assurance concept used in the abovementioned quality culture study of the European University Association combines quality and culture (see Fig. 3).

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Quality culture

Quality management

Tools and mechanisms to measure, evaluate, assure, and enhance quality

Communication Participation Trust

Quality commitment

Individual level: personal commitment to strive for quality
Collective level: general conception of quality

Top-down Bottom-up

Facilitate

Fig. 3. Quality Culture and Quality Management (EUA, 2006)

The culture of quality is primarily understood and described as recognition of the quality of higher education, research and other activities as a priority of an institution, a commitment of each member of the community to continuous improvement of their competence and activities as well as direct participation in quality improvement processes. Thus, quality as transformation and the ability to change oneself and change must be identified as a strategic quality dimension of an institution. Conscious awareness and recognition of the need to change is inseparable from conscious awareness of one’s own competence and the need for performance improvement and commitment to continuous improvement of activities.

The culture of quality is based on:

1. Common values and the commitment of all members to seek quality of activities.
2. A management system designed for quality improvement and coordination of community efforts.

The quality of activities of a higher education institution depends on the perception of transformation of the higher education institution as a consistent, universal and dynamic process and distribution of quality human (managerial and staff competence, the necessary number of them) and material resources.

2.1. Basic principles for securing and upholding a culture of quality

Leaders’ commitment. Leaders play a distinct role in this case. Leaders must create and maintain an internal organisational environment in which all employees would be brought together to achieve the performance quality assurance and improvement goals of the organisation. Their role is to convince and motivate the community to participate in the performance quality assurance and improvement process, ensure decision-making according to the agreed values, rationally allocate responsibility and ensure resources necessary to implement changes. Time is a very important factor in the successful implementation of changes as well. It is important to find an appropriate time for changes and sufficient time to implement the changes.

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Community involvement and collective and individual commitment. Higher education institutions seeking to create an environment preserving a culture of quality should evaluate the importance of promoting individual and collective commitment. When initiating changes, the leadership of higher education institutions should take into account that the paradigm of a “top-down” relationship implies community resistance to changes. In such cases, there is often a situation in which the community believes that leaders do not have a vision and suggest impracticable changes, while leaders are convinced that the community is stubborn, uncompromising and resists changes. Preservation of a culture of quality is inseparable from the common agreement and understanding by the entire community of what quality is and individual and collective commitment to ensure and improve this quality. In order to encourage change in the community’s attitudes and implement changes, it is necessary to raise community awareness of the existing attitudes and practices based on them. It is advisable to explicate, i.e. formally identify, during public debates the existing attitudes and practices as well as identify and discuss their shortcomings, etc. Next, it is necessary to seek a consensus on a single concept of quality as well as quality assurance and improvement practices based on it. A common understanding of what quality is determines a sustainable and strong culture of quality. A general community consensus on measurable performance indicators sought to be achieved and individual commitment to their successful implementation are also equally important factors determining the sustainability of a quality culture.

Active involvement of students in order to improve quality and conscious awareness and recognition of responsibility for their learning quality are also no less important. A creative and innovative teaching and learning process mainly depends on interaction between teachers and students. When improving the quality assurance system of a higher education institution, it is important to take into account that not all students starting to study are ready for an active learner’s role, which requires a high degree of independence, responsibility and directly depends on prior learning experience. Thus, it is very important that a higher education institution create an appropriate environment that would systematically and consistently encourage students and provide them with the necessary skills to become active participants in the study process responsible for their learning.

Continuous learning through activities and cooperation. The overall involvement of the community is directly related to its readiness for changes, which are inseparable from the culture and nature of the institution’s learning environment. Professional competence improvement is a lifelong learning process. In this case, higher education institutions should evaluate the potential of a learning organisation. The overall institutional culture of a learning organisation is based on common values and principles, and all members seek to achieve common goals, developing their competence individually and collectively, as individuals and as a community, through individual and collective learning. Learning organisations adapt to the constantly changing environment by constantly changing themselves. The key methodological basis of a learning organisation is learning by doing, i.e. learning by reflecting on one’s own practice and changing it, thus making it possible to gain new experience and learn. All employees of a learning organisation are involved in the change process, assume responsibility and are guided by common values or principles in their activities. The community’s ability to learn strongly depends on how a higher

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Education institution has been established, how it is managed, how responsibility is allocated, and how much and what type of cooperation is common\(^{12}\). The structure of the organisation should promote openness and be conducive to cooperation between various groups within the organisation. Cooperation culture encourages critical thinking and diversity of opinions. Universities, which are learning organisations in the rapidly changing environment, have systems and structures enabling all their employees to learn by cooperating and encouraging them to share and take over the good practices as well as apply acquired knowledge in practice. Real cooperation is characterised by team learning, consulting, professional dialogue, planning, monitoring and feedback.

In the context of assurance of the quality of learning outcome and competence-based degree programmes, the effectiveness of cooperation of teachers, administrative staff, students and external stakeholders plays a distinct role. The implementation of continuous improvement of the quality of degree programmes can be promoted by initiating and organising learning communities, which may become essential degree programme quality improvement groups, e.g.:
- Academic staff groups (chairs of degree programme committees of higher education institutions, teachers of study field subjects, etc.);
- Administrative staff groups (academic departments responsible for higher education, assistant deans, degree programme coordinators, etc.);
- As well as students, alumni, study field employers’ groups, etc.

The activities of such groups should be based on the principle of mutual learning, accumulation and dissemination of experience as well as cooperation.

### 2.2. The challenge of assurance of quality as transformation faced by the internal quality assurance system

Quality assurance processes oriented exclusively towards compliance with requirements and performance assessment have the potential to turn into tiresome bureaucratic processes limiting community creativity, innovation and initiative.

It is very important to ensure that quality assurance does not become a periodic summative assessment process oriented towards accountability and compliance with minimum requirements, and that it is perceived, developed and improved as a system oriented towards continuous performance improvement.

So, what the quality assurance system should be like to ensure continuous improvement of the competence and performance of an institution and each of its members?

In this case, one of the main challenges is compatibility of two main quality assurance objectives, namely accountability for implemented activities and continuous performance improvement\(^{13}\). How to improve quality assurance processes, which are by nature retrospective (i.e. based on accumulation, analysis and assessment of data on activities already carried out), in order to promote and support changes (creativity and innovativeness) and ensure continuous performance improvement?

First of all, quality assurance should be perceived as a process of promotion and improvement highlighting the ability to change rather than as assurance. In terms of external


\(^{13}\) EUA. 2009. Improving quality, enhancing creativity: change process in European higher education institutions.
and internal quality assurance, quality should be perceived as a constantly changing rather than finite process\textsuperscript{14}.

In order to prevent quality assurance from being narrowed to data collection and assessment and from becoming just a tiring bureaucratic process, it should become an integrated part of strategic management\textsuperscript{15}. This is inseparable from the understanding and realisation of the concept of quality as transformation. Quality measurement and assessment are certainly important elements of the quality management system, but they cannot be treated as a guarantee of quality.

Preservation of a culture of quality, which directly links quality with the values of an organisation and operating practices based on them, is of particular importance in this case. In such a case, both quality and quality assurance are treated as part of strategic management of the organisation rather than as an individual process controlled through data collection, analysis and assessment.

The core characteristics of a well-functioning internal higher education quality assurance system: linkages with strategic planning, top management’s commitment, participation or involvement of staff and students, participation or involvement of external stakeholders, and a well-organised data collection and analysis system\textsuperscript{16}. These characteristics clearly indicate that quality assurance activities should not be treated as individual activities and responsibility of a specific employee or structural unit, that commitment to continuous improvement of their performance is mandatory to each member of the community, and all activities are based on the quality priority.

Continuous performance quality improvement must be based on the general collective concept of quality and perception of its importance, and must be ensured by the personal commitment of each member of the community to seek quality as well as a quality management system designed to ensure continuous quality improvement activities.

Assessment plays a distinct role in quality assurance and improvement processes. It requires not only periodic summative quality assessment oriented towards accountability and compliance with minimum requirements and often promoting conformism but also quality assessment promoting reflection on activities and focused on continuous improvement of performance. An assessment system highlighting and recognising the ability to improve competence and activities as well as the provision of necessary support help to strengthen individual motivation and are definitely more effective in encouraging the creativity and initiative of individuals than a critical summative assessment.

In summary, the internal system of assurance of quality as transformation has the following main features:

- Is created and improved by the efforts of the whole community depending on the context, the culture and mission of an institution as well as the needs of stakeholders;
- Encourages creativity, innovation and diversity;
- Promotes reflection on the community’s activities and learning from experience, cooperation and sharing of good practices;
- Ensures assessment promoting reflection on activities and continuous improvement;
- Ensures active participation of all members of the community in quality assurance processes and division of responsibility.


2.2.1. Main stages of continuous performance improvement

The quality assurance system is based on:
• Established requirements and standards for the quality of performance;
• Ability to ensure and prove the compliance of the resources available, processes performed and results achieved with the established requirements.

Quality assurance requires information and mechanisms for achieving definite quality. Firstly, it is necessary to determine what is sought to be ensured, i.e. quality requirements. Secondly, it is necessary to collect information (by measuring) on whether the process meets the established requirements. This is done through quality assessment. Thirdly, if the assessment shows that the process does not meet the established requirements, quality needs to be improved.

Quality improvement is the pursuit of better results (indicators) than prescribed in the existing requirements and standards.

The process of improvement of any activity (course unit, teacher and staff competence, degree programme, assessment system, etc.) is based on a cycle of four operational phases: planning, implementation, assessment and adjustment (see Fig. 4).

Planning. The quality assurance and improvement cycle of any activity starts with planning. The purpose of the planning phase is to identify the objectives and processes necessary to fulfil the established requirements. An analysis of stakeholders’ needs and conformity of the objectives with the mission is also carried out in this phase. The planning phase includes strategic action plans, human resource development plans, the necessary resources, selection of tools and methods, process descriptions and allocation of responsibility. In addition, in this phase, it is necessary to plan how the necessary improvements will be made, describing them directly in the plan or providing references to specific existing procedures or other documents.

![Fig. 4. Continuous improvement process model (PDCA or Deming Cycle)](image-url)
When formulating goals, it is advisable to follow 5 SMART goal criteria\(^{17}\). Goals should be:

1. **S** – specific – accurately define a specific goal to be pursued;
2. **M** – measurable – have specific measurable targets;
3. **A** – achievable – 50% likelihood that a task will be implemented;
4. **R** – realistic – corresponding to the resources (human and material) available to an institution or department;
5. **T** – timed – have reasonable and specific deadlines.

The objective of the *implementation* phase is to implement a plan. This phase also involves necessary targeted training designed to acquire specific skills required to assure the quality of certain processes or performance.

The objective of the *evaluation* phase is to evaluate the effectiveness of the processes carried out and the results achieved. This phase involves feedback, performance evaluation and decision-making. Feedback is received from students, employers, graduates, colleagues, external evaluators, administrators, etc. It is particularly important to evaluate the level of achievement of strategic objectives according to identified targets. In this case, particular importance is attached to the direct participation of top management in targeted discussions or seminars, evaluation of the targets achieved and feedback results with the faculty leadership and communities, and, depending on the results, discussion of applicable adjustment or improvement measures.

The objective of the *adjustment* phase is to make a correction in processes before starting a new cycle, introducing measures and taking steps needed to achieve the set performance improvement targets. The results of this phase are used as a basis for further planning of a new quality improvement cycle.

The quality assurance system itself must also be periodically evaluated and improved.

There must also be an effective system of quality information management and communication to internal and external stakeholders, which would ensure active involvement of all members of the community. Information management and communication is of exceptional importance in quality culture, as both accountability and continuous performance improvement assurance requires a large amount of information. The accuracy, availability and timeliness of information are no less important. An effective information system can help to ensure intensive information dissemination in the community, promote active search for and use of information, as well as ensures immediate access to information facilitating fast decision-making.

Therefore, a quality assurance system should be based on information technology. Such a system allows making higher education management improvement-related decisions on the basis of timely, reliable and traceable information on the implementation of degree programmes: qualifications awarded, ensuring of resources, monitoring of the potential of teachers and researchers, monitoring of student progress and changes in student workloads, etc. The system not only provides administrative capabilities but also makes it possible to provide all the parties concerned and the public with information on the availability of higher education, quantitative and qualitative information on the higher education quality improvement strategy and tools, degree programmes, their internal, external evaluation and accreditation results, qualifications awarded, opinions of students, graduates and other parties concerned on quality in higher education, graduate career indicators, etc.

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2.2.2. Specificity of continuous improvement of the quality of degree programmes

A district role of the Tuning project is to promote improvement of the quality of degree programmes and provide appropriate tools for this purpose. Prepared during the Tuning project, a dynamic quality assurance cycle in the development, provision and implementation of degree programmes\(^\text{18}\) is a student-oriented degree programme development and improvement model.

It is important to note that the Tuning model is based on the assumption that degree programmes can and should be improved on the basis of not only feedback from students, graduates, teachers and others but also feed-forward changes in the public and relevant academic area. The purpose of feedback is to identify and eliminate deficiencies in the teaching and/or structure of a degree programme, while feedforward is intended to identify probable changes, which should be taken into account when improving and/or preparing degree programmes (see Fig. 5).

In the context of the Bologna Process, any degree programme must meet the needs of society, create conditions for employment, develop citizenship, be recognised by the scientific community, be sufficiently transparent and comparable with other programmes to facilitate student mobility and recognition of learning outcomes in other countries. In addition, a degree programme should be understandable, valuable and attractive enough to most good students of a particular country and foreign countries. Additional programme quality criteria are a properly chosen methodology helping to achieve the goals set as well as the consistency and coherence of programme elements.

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Fig. 5. Tuning dynamic quality assurance cycle (Wagenaar, 2008)

It is necessary to develop an assessment system for controlling and checking the effectiveness of a degree programme. Assessment should be an essential tool for determining whether a particular higher education programme has been successfully mastered. The assessment should be carried out to check whether a student has managed to achieve the planned goals. Whereas the goals are formulated as learning outcomes expressed as competences, the assessment structure
and procedures should facilitate evaluation of the level of development of these competences.

According to Tuning experts’ recommendations, the assessment system should consist of three main parts:

- Assessment of the study process;
- Assessment of learning outcomes;
- Assessment of the resources and tools necessary for the implementation of the programme.

The criteria for the areas of assessment proposed by the Tuning experts are detailed in the checklist for the assessment of degree programmes (see Annex 1). The Tuning project experts recommend using the checklist and a list of key questions intended to help to prepare, implement, maintain and assess degree programmes in the course of the implementation of Bologna Process reforms as a practical tool designed to help to assure and improve the quality of degree programmes (see Annex 2).

Since the public and academic areas are continuously evolving, the study process must be dynamic. Therefore, in the opinion of Tuning project participants, in order to achieve and maintain a really high quality, a periodic quality assessment performed by external or internal specialists alone is not enough. It is necessary to ensure continuous improvement and updating of degree programmes.

In terms of the Tuning project, quality improvement means continuing efforts to improve the programme structure and content, introduction and realisation. This requires a continuous process based on internal quality improvement mechanisms and awareness of its importance, in other words, a culture of quality. Particular emphasis is placed on the importance of active direct participation of teachers and students: “If teachers and students are not sufficiently involved in the quality development and improvement process, do not participate in it sincerely and have no interest in it, they will not be able to prepare and implement quality programmes, and external evaluators will only be able to state problems.”

However, it should be pointed out that application of the dynamic quality assurance cycle in the development, provision and implementation of degree programmes proposed by Tuning (see Fig. 5) and the abovementioned checklist for the assessment of degree programmes (see Annex 1) and the list of key questions intended to help to prepare, implement, maintain and assess degree programmes in the course of the implementation of Bologna Process reforms (see Annex 2) can be effective tools for carrying out a comprehensive periodic assessment of degree programmes of an institution and ensuring the effectiveness of the assessment.

However, in order to ensure continuous degree programme quality assurance, a periodic assessment alone is, unfortunately, not enough. Continuous performance improvement tools and procedures should include each stage of a degree programme: preparation, implementation, assessment and improvement. It is the development and effective application of these tools that continuous degree programme quality improvement assurance depends on.

Such an innovative integrated continuous degree programme quality improvement model, which facilitates effective response to changes at any stage of preparation, implementation or improvement of a degree programme, was proposed by J. Cowanas and co-authors19 (see Fig. 6).

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Fig. 6. Continuous degree programme quality improvement model (Cowan et al., 2004)

In order to achieve continuous degree programme quality improvement assurance, this model can be combined with the abovementioned list of key questions intended to help to prepare, implement, maintain and assess degree programmes in the course of the implementation of Bologna Process reforms (see Annex 2).
3. DEGREE PROGRAMME QUALITY ASSURANCE IN LITHUANIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: ADVANTAGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

An analysis of the present internal quality assurance situation at Lithuanian higher education institutions was carried out to substantiate the recommendations on competence development and integration of the learning outcome assessment methodology into the internal quality assurance system.

Data collection criteria include programme quality monitoring and assessment by institution departments, effectiveness of the assessment, involvement of students and social stakeholders, responsibility for programme improvement and allocation of the responsibility.

Part “Internal higher education quality assurance” of summaries of self-evaluations of degree programmes was analysed in order to identify the internal quality assurance situation at Lithuanian higher education institutions. Higher education institutions were asked to describe by 2009 how programme quality was checked and assessed by departments of the institutions, indicate the frequency of assessment and student involvement, describe how assessment results are used, indicate the persons responsible for updating the programmes and define that responsibility; provide evidence that proposals and comments on the previous external assessment had been taken into account; from 2009, they were asked to describe internal higher education quality assurance, i.e. to describe the appropriateness of programme quality assessment and the effectiveness of programme quality improvement and the participation of social stakeholders.

The texts of Part “Internal higher education quality assurance” were processed by a content analysis method: the authentic content of each degree programme self-evaluation summary was divided into analytical units, i.e. shortened and abstracted, with data sorted into categories. The interpretation of the text was carried out according to higher education institution internal higher education quality assurance criteria and formulated categories. In addition, the analysis of the results of this study is based on the provisions of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), the concept of quality culture, the concept of a learning organisation and Tuning project methodology.

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22. Šapranis G. 2010. SKVC. Vykdomų studijų programų vertinimo eigos aprašas ir metodiniai nurodymai. 2009. SKVC.


A total of 13 categories (see Annex 4) were identified in 45 degree programme self-evaluations (see Annex 5), which revealed the internal higher education quality assurance characteristics defined by the Lithuanian higher education institutions themselves. They are dominated by six categories:

1. Effectiveness of the internal higher education quality assurance system and degree programme assessment (self-evaluation);
2. Internal higher education quality assurance management;
3. Involvement and empowerment of the academic community in order to implement changes;
4. Organisation of degree programme assessment (self-evaluation);
5. Dissemination of degree programme assessment (self-evaluation) results;
6. Relationship with external stakeholders.

The dominant category – effectiveness of the internal higher education quality assurance system and degree programme assessment (self-evaluation) – includes such aspects as higher education stakeholder-oriented assessment and improvement actions, improvement and change assessment tools, elimination of deficiencies discovered during the previous assessment, the reflection of improvement of degree programmes in action plans, specific actions and measures for eliminating deficiencies (see Table 1). Specific subcategories revealed that the higher education institutions had formal mechanisms for the monitoring, periodic assessment and improvement of degree programmes (see Table 1). This made it possible to effectively ensure the assurance and improvement of the quality of newly created and updated degree programmes. A more marked difference in this area was noticed between universities and colleges. The self-evaluations of degree programmes of the latter much more frequently described regular monitoring of the quality of degree programmes, their orientation to higher education users and specific actions for eliminating deficiencies.

Another frequent category identified in the self-evaluations is the category of internal higher education quality assurance management, which includes aspects such as formulation of a degree programme assessment strategy, ensuring of assessment objectivity, transparency, reliability and progressiveness measures, and the internal assessment culture of a higher education institution (see Table 1). Specific subcategories revealed that the majority of the higher education institutions had a quality assurance policy and/or strategy, procedures, degree programme monitoring and periodic assessment procedures, which were validated and quite clearly regulated. Most of them had established quality assurance divisions or appointed administrative staff responsible for the development and/or implementation (improvement) of the internal higher education quality management system. This demonstrated organisational structures necessary for the continuous maintenance of the quality assurance and improvement system. Some of the institutions had introduced or started to introduce an internal higher education quality management system in accordance with international quality management standards. This shows that academic communities comply or seek to comply with certain quality assurance standards or requirements and procedures as measures ensuring that students acquire knowledge and skills provided for in programme aims. Regulation of responsibility for the quality of a degree programme and allocation of the responsibility also reveal the characteristics of higher education institutions as learning organisations, when members of the academic community are empowered to make decisions and implement changes. No major difference in this area has been observed between colleges and universities.

28 From 45 degree programme self-evaluations (see Annex 5).
A category found half as frequently as the discussed ones but dominating the overall analysis is *involvement and empowerment of the academic community in order to implement changes* (see Table 1). It covers such aspects as the number of higher education institution staff involved in the assessment (self-evaluation) of degree programmes, the number and variety of stakeholders participating in the self-evaluation, teamwork and a cooperation network, staff participation in decision-making and planning of assessment (self-evaluation), and degree programme assessment levels. Specific subcategories have shown that higher education institutions have procedures and formulate and implement an academic policy which facilitates preservation and development of quality culture, i.e. most of the members of a higher education institution’s community are involved in quality improvement processes and they are empowered to take responsibility for their activities. It also reflects an important element of internal quality assurance, namely student participation in degree programme quality assessment. Subcategories identified in this area reveal existing and introduced higher education institution internal communication mechanisms, which are a very important precondition for the desired quality in higher education, i.e. cooperation among all members of the organisation and accumulation and dissemination of good practice. This also shows the characteristics of a learning organisation, i.e. teamwork and cooperation culture promoting critical thinking and diversity of opinions. A more marked difference in this area has been observed between colleges and universities. The facts provided in university degree programme self-evaluations also suggest that many more members of the university academic community are involved in order to carry out changes, responsibility is allocated and based on teamwork and project activities more than in colleges.

Another category found one-third as frequently as the abovementioned ones but still frequent, *dissemination of degree programme assessment results*, includes aspects such as publication of summarised degree programme assessment data on the website of a higher education institution, articles in higher education institution press publications, etc. (see Table 1). The analysis has revealed that higher education institutions accumulate, analyse and use information helping to manage the quality of degree programmes. This enables all internal and external stakeholders of a higher education institution or those interested in its activities to familiarise themselves with the current situation and identify problems or changes. This also shows the characteristics of a learning organisation, i.e. an atmosphere of openness where there is open communication among members of the organisation, discussion of problems and mistakes and learning from them. No major difference in this area has been observed between colleges and universities.

Another category similar to that described above in terms of frequency is *relationship with the external environment*. It includes aspects such as the entire academic community’s care of relations with the environment, building of public relations, and higher education institutions’ regard for the interests of external stakeholders (see Table 1). Specific subcategories have shown that some higher education institutions receive regular structural feedback from the groups concerned (employers, professional organisations, etc.), and attract social partners to improve the training of specialists. This also shows the characteristics of a learning organisation, i.e. the organisation’s curiosity, interest in new ideas, practices, technologies, techniques, etc. Identified subcategories reveal that the higher education institutions are open to new ideas and new ways of thinking. This is in line with the methodological principles of quality culture development and enhancement. No major difference in this area has been observed between colleges and universities. The self-evaluations of both university and college degree programmes reflect care for the relationship with the environment.
Recommendations on competence development and integration of the learning outcome assessment methodology into the internal quality assurance system

A category least frequently identified in the analysis of self-evaluations of degree programmes but one of the more frequent categories in the general context, **organisation of degree programme assessment (self-evaluation)**, has revealed the frequency of consideration by a higher education institution (its departments) of aspects to be improved identified in the self-analysis (see Table 1). The subcategory of **periodicity of internal assessment of a degree programme** has revealed that some Lithuanian higher education institutions regularly evaluate themselves in a systematic manner, collecting, analysing and using information to improve the quality of higher education. The ability to carry out a self-evaluation in a planned manner according to a certain cycle and a certain system, monitor their activities and evaluate results enables them to always see the advantages and disadvantages of their activities and make timely changes. No major difference in this area has been observed between colleges and universities.

Other categories identified in 45 degree programme self-evaluations were marked 9 times to 1 time and were therefore not extrapolated as very important features showing internal higher education quality assurance characteristics defined by Lithuanian higher education institutions themselves.

Table 1. Higher education institution internal quality assurance culture indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effectiveness of the internal higher education quality assurance system and assessment (self-evaluation) of degree programmes</th>
<th>Management of internal higher education quality assurance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key indicators</strong></td>
<td><strong>Key indicators</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Orientation of assessment and improvement actions towards higher education stakeholders.</td>
<td>• Institutionalisation of the higher education quality assurance system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Elimination of deficiencies discovered during the previous assessment.</td>
<td>• Documentation of internal higher education quality assessment and assurance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Improvement / change assessment tools.</td>
<td>• Formulated degree programme quality assurance and assessment strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reflection of improvement of degree programmes in action plans.</td>
<td>• Substantiation of the degree programme quality assessment and assurance strategy with quality management standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Specific actions and measures for eliminating deficiencies.</td>
<td>• Regulation of responsibility for the quality of degree programmes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Degree programme internal assessment planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Degree programme assessment monitoring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Improvement of the internal higher education quality assurance system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Assurance of conditions and resources for the implementation of a degree programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Measures to ensure improvement / change of the higher education quality system.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Recommendations on competence development and integration of the learning outcome assessment methodology into the internal quality assurance system**

- Involvement and empowerment of the academic community in order to implement changes
  - **Key indicators**
  - The scope of the involvement of higher education institution staff in the performance of internal assessment (self-evaluation of degree programmes).
  - The number and variety of stakeholders involved in the self-evaluation.
  - Teamwork and cooperation network.
  - Staff participation in decision-making and internal assessment (self-evaluation) planning.
  - Internal degree programme assessment levels.
  - **Subcategories**
  - Variety of degree programme assessment and updating levels by organisational structure.
  - Student participation in degree programme assessment.
  - The role of teachers in assessing a degree programme and ensuring of their direct participation.
  - Internal degree programme assessment cooperation network.

- Dissemination of internal degree programme assessment results
  - **Key indicators**
  - Publication of summarised internal degree programme assessment results on the website of a higher education institution, articles in higher education institution press publications, etc.
  - **Subcategories**
  - Presentation of internal degree programme assessment results to the academic community.

- Relationship with external stakeholders
  - **Key indicators**
  - Care of the entire academic community for the relationship with the environment.
  - Formation of public relations.
  - Regard for the interests of external stakeholders.
  - **Subcategories**
  - Presentation of degree programme assessment results to external stakeholders.
  - Participation of social partners in the assessment of degree programmes.
  - Cooperation with social partners.
  - Feedback.
  - Monitoring of learning outcomes.

- Organisation of internal degree programme assessment
  - **Key indicators**
  - Ensuring of progress of the implementation of aspects to be improved identified in a self-evaluation.
  - **Subcategories**
  - Periodicity of internal degree programme assessment.

**Advantages and opportunities for improvement**

The analysis has shown that there are sufficient preconditions at Lithuanian higher education institutions for successful implementation of competence and learning outcome-based degree programmes and the ECTS:

- Most higher education institutions seek to formulate and implement an academic policy facilitating preservation and development of quality culture, i.e. they seek collective and personal commitment of each member of the community to continuous improvement of their performance.
- Many Lithuanian higher education institutions have created continuous quality assurance system support structures and appointed administrative staff responsible for
the creation and/or implementation (improvement) of the internal higher education quality management system. Some institutions have introduced or started to introduce a quality management system in accordance with international quality management standards.

- Higher education institutions have quite clear formal mechanisms for the monitoring, periodic assessment and improvement of degree programmes. Regulation of responsibility for degree programme quality assurance and improvement creates a background for the commitment and responsibility of members of the academic community for the improvement of the quality of their performance.
- Most higher education institutions develop relations with external stakeholders according to the internal quality assurance system.

The following changes (steps) are necessary in order to successfully integrate degree programmes based on competences and learning outcomes and the ECTS in internal quality assurance systems at Lithuanian higher education institutions:

- The assurance of quality and continuous improvement of degree programmes based on competences and learning outcomes must be reflected in the strategy of a higher education institution.
- There must be strong and visible involvement of the management of an institution and their positive attitude to changes in a study area, namely development of a quality competence-based programme content. The role of managers is to convince and motivate the community to take responsibility for the quality and continuous improvement of performance, ensure decision-making according to agreed values, rationally allocate responsibility and ensure resources needed to implement changes.
- Self-assessment of the entire community’s performance at the level of students, teachers, degree programmes and structural units must be promoted and carried out. The assessment must be based on reflection on activities, learning from experience, pooling and dissemination of good practice as well as promote and ensure continuous performance improvement.
- Data collection, monitoring, analysis and assessment procedures should be supplemented with adequate quality assessment criteria, parameters and their quantitative and qualitative indicators for assessing the quality of competence and learning outcome-based degree programme resources, implementation and results achieved, making timely programme improvement decisions and ensuring continuous programme improvement.
- Higher education quality criteria and indicators must be integrated in external degree programme and institution quality assessment areas to facilitate assessment of whether the internal higher education quality assurance system of a higher education institution performs the monitoring, assessment and improvement of competence and learning outcome-based degree programme implementation parameters.
4. GUIDANCE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE SELF-ASSESSMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Article 41 of the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Higher Education and Research (2009) obliges each higher education institution to have an internal higher education quality assurance system based on European higher education quality assurance provisions and the performance quality improvement strategy approved by a higher education institution itself, plan operating methods and measures helping to assure the quality of education provided by it.

Integration of a competence development and learning outcome assessment methodology in the internal quality assurance system also requires implementation of internal quality assurance guidelines and regulations set out in the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (see Annex 3). These recommendations do not duplicate the guidelines provided in the standards and are formulated on the basis of the conclusion (see chapter 3 “Degree programme quality assurance in Lithuanian higher education institutions: advantages and opportunities for improvement”) that higher education institutions have formal mechanisms the approval, monitoring and periodic assessment of degree programmes and qualifications awarded to assure the quality of degree programmes.

In this case, additional attention is paid to the realisation of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, highlighting the exceptional importance of the principle of compatibility of quality assurance for accountability and quality assurance for improvement for ensuring continuous improvement of the quality of degree programmes based on competences and learning outcomes.

The internal quality assurance system of each higher education institution must be improved in view of the context, organisational culture, mission, strategic objectives, community values, and prevailing quality assurance and improvement practices.

The main purpose of the guidance questionnaire is to stimulate the academic community’s reflection on quality assurance practices existing at the institution and encourage self-assessment of its strengths and weaknesses in the context of assurance of continuous improvement of the quality of degree programmes based on competences and learning outcomes.

The national higher education funding structure, the nature of accountability, legislative acts, external assessment objectives and the system itself definitely have a direct effect on the development of internal quality assurance culture of higher education institutions. Therefore, some questions are also presented for joint discussion by the Government, external assessment structures and higher education institutions.

4.1. The context of a higher education institution

4.1.1. Ensuring linkages between strategic management and preservation of quality culture

- Does the higher education institution have a continuous performance quality improvement strategy and well-defined, measurable and declared continuous performance quality improvement objectives?
- Is the community’s participation in the development of a continuous quality improvement strategy and formulation of objectives encouraged and ensured? How is
it encouraged and ensured? Is the implementation of a continuous quality improvement strategy ensured? *How* is it ensured?

- Is the collective and individual commitment of all members of the community to continuous performance quality improvement and their direct participation in quality assurance and improvement processes ensured? *How* is it ensured?
- Is the general strategy of the higher education institution linked with competence-based degree programme quality assurance and ECTS concept implementation? *How* is it linked?
- Is active community discussion and agreement on the improvement of degree programmes on the basis of competences and learning outcomes and on the implementation of a credit system based on student workloads ensured? *How* is it ensured? Is the participation of students, alumni and representatives of external stakeholders in this discussion ensured? *How* is it ensured?
- Is the higher education institution *able to ensure and prove* the conformity of the resources available, processes performed and results sought to be achieved with the objectives set and the conformity of the objectives with the needs of stakeholders and the mission of the institution? *How* does it ensure and prove this?
- Is the transformation of degree programmes based on learning outcomes linked with institutional planning and targeted resource allocation processes? *How* is it linked?
- Does the higher education institution ensure the necessary structures, financial resources and technical means (classrooms, laboratories, equipment) to achieve the intended learning outcomes? *How* does it ensure this?
- Is the higher education institution able to ensure and prove the conformity of the resources available, processes performed and results sought to be achieved with the objectives set and the conformity of the objectives with the needs of stakeholders and the mission of the institution? *How* does it ensure and prove this?
• Is the information used for degree programme quality management used in benchmarking the quality of the process and results of competence-based degree programmes against other higher education institutions operating in the European Higher Education Area? 
How is it used?

4.1.2. Improvement of the quality of degree programmes

• Is the relevance of degree programmes for not only present but also future market and social needs ensured? How is it ensured?
• Is the cooperation of teachers, students and social partners in defining and updating learning outcomes ensured? How is it ensured?
• Is the consistent teamwork of degree programme committees and division of responsibility ensured? How is it ensured?
• Is sufficient competence of degree programme managers and committee chairs ensured? How is it ensured?
• Is the announcement and availability of clear intended learning outcomes to students, teachers and external stakeholders ensured? How is it ensured?
• Is the compatibility and comparability of the level of competences defined with the degree (cycle) level provided for in the national and European Qualifications Framework, study field descriptors and relevant European control parameters of specific subject areas ensured? How is it ensured?
• Is a connection between the learning outcomes of a degree programme and module (course unit) ensured? How is it ensured?
• Is a connection between learning outcomes, teaching, learning and assessment methods ensured? How is it ensured?
• Is a connection between learning outcomes, student workload and credit allocation ensured? How is it ensured?
• Is the suitability of the assessment methodology (criteria, assessment methods and assessment tools) for the assessment of learning outcomes ensured? How is it ensured?
• Is the conformity of student achievements with the intended learning outcomes ensured? How is it ensured?
• Is student workload monitoring performed? How is it performed? Where and how are the monitoring results used?
• Is student learning progress monitoring performed? How is it performed? Where and how are the monitoring results used?
• Is the participation of a wider circle of teachers in both continuous degree programme quality improvement and periodic programme assessment ensured? How is it ensured?
• Is the use of the results of feedback from students, alumni and external stakeholders for the improvement of the quality of degree programmes and the learning environment ensured? How is it ensured?
• Is the provision of information on the feedback results and their use for the improvement of degree programme quality to the entire community of the institution and external stakeholders ensured? How is it ensured?
• Is the continuous improvement of a degree programme and harmony between its individual elements ensured? How is it ensured?
4.1.3. Increasing the potential of student thinking and operational independence

- Are students enabled to actively participate in higher education quality improvement processes? *How* are they enabled?
- Is student participation in quality assurance and improvement activities ensured? *How* is it ensured?
- Is a balanced student workload ensured in each learning period in terms of learning, teaching and assessment? *How* is it ensured? Are students involved in these activities? *How* are they involved?
- Does the assessment methodology applied promote student self-assessment and reflective learning? *How* does it promote this?
- Is adequate learning and other support for students and student consulting and mentoring ensured? *How* is it ensured?
- Is the assessment and self-assessment of students and the ratio of their learning outcomes to the time given to them is promoted and ensured? *How* is it promoted and ensured?
- Is the receipt of feedback from students regarding the course units (modules) studied, degree programmes, learning experience, the suitability of the learning environment, etc. and the use of the results for the improvement of degree programmes and the quality of the learning environment endured? *How* is it ensured?

4.1.4. Development of the potential of teachers

- Has the higher education institution defined good teaching components?
- Is sufficient didactic competence of teachers for the development, implementation and improvement of learning outcome-based degree programmes ensured? *How* is it ensured?
- Are possibilities for the improvement of the educational competence of the staff – (new) learning, teaching and assessment methods – ensured? *How* are they ensured?
- Is the self-assessment of the academic community’s performance promoted? *How* is it promoted?
- Is cooperation among teachers in updating course units (modules) and degree programmes ensured? *How* is it ensured?
- Does the academic community member motivation and recognition system encourage them to continuously improve their competence and performance quality? *How* does it encourage them?
- Does the academic community member motivation system encourage members of the academic community to present competence (ECTS)-based higher education quality improvement ideas, see and solve problems? *How* does it encourage them?
4.1.5. Information system and dissemination of information

- Does the information system ensure the accumulation of the necessary data and access to them according to the established strategic quality improvement parameters? How does it ensure this?
- What is the degree programme information updating system and how is the updating of such information endured?
- Does the information system facilitate the basing of degree programme quality improvement solutions on accurate, reliable and timely information on the implementation of degree programmes? How does it facilitate this? Does the system ensure the accuracy and timeliness of and immediate access to information? How does it ensure this?
- Does the information system ensure intensive information dissemination in the community and promote active search for and use of information? How does it do this?
- Does the information system facilitate effective provision of reliable, accurate and relevant information on the assurance and improvement of the quality of degree programmes to external stakeholders? How does it facilitate this?

4.2. National context

- Does the existing higher education funding and accountability system encourage higher education institutions to continuously improve their performance? How does it encourage them?
- Does the external degree programme and institutional assessment methodology encourage higher education institutions not to be contented with the fulfilment of minimum requirements and to seek continuous improvement of performance? How does it encourage them? Are higher education institutions encouraged to develop and improve higher education systems orientated towards student needs? How are they encouraged?
- Is cooperation between the Government, external assessment structures and higher education institutions in seeking to facilitate continuous improvement of the higher education system ensured? How is it ensured?
- Do national higher education legislative acts promote and facilitate the implementation of competence and learning outcome-based degree programmes and the ECTS? How do they do this?
- Is cooperation between higher education institutions in implementing the ECTS credit and transfer methodology promoted? How is it promoted?
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## Annexes

### Annex 1. TUNING List of Key Questions for Programme Design and Programme Delivery, Maintenance and Evaluation in the Framework of the Bologna Reform

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Programme Design. Key questions</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Degree Profile</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Has the need for and the potential of the (new) degree programme been established comprehensively fully and clearly?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Does it aim to satisfy established or new professional and/or social demands?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Was there a consultation with stakeholders? Did they identify the need for the degree programme?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Was the approach used for the consultation adequate? Were the groups selected the relevant ones for the degree programme considered?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are the definition of the profile, the identification of the target groups to be addressed and its place in the national and international setting clear?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is there convincing evidence that the profile will be recognized in terms of future employment? Is it related to a specific professional or social context?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is this profile academically challenging for staff and students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is there awareness of the educational context in which the programme is offered?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Learning Outcomes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Have clear and adequate learning outcomes been identified at the level of the programme as a whole and of each of its components?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Will they result in the profile identified? Are they adequately distributed over the various parts of the programme?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Is the progression and coherence of the programme and its units sufficiently guaranteed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are the learning outcomes formulated in terms of subject-specific and generic competences covering knowledge, understanding, skills, abilities and values?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What guarantee is there that the learning outcomes will be recognized and understood within and outside Europe?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Competences</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are the competences to be obtained by the student clearly identified and formulated, both subject-specific and generic?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Is the level of the competences to be obtained appropriate for this specific degree programme?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are the competences to be gained expressed in such a way that they can actually be measured?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Is progression guaranteed in the development of the competences?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Can the competences obtained be assessed adequately?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Is the methodology of assessment of the competences clearly specified and suitable for the expressed learning outcomes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are the approaches chosen for learning and teaching the competences clearly specified? What evidence is there to assure that the results will reached?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are the approaches chosen sufficiently varied and innovative / creative?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are the competences identified comparable and compatible with the European reference points relative to the subject area? (if applicable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Has the entrance level of potential students been taken into consideration when identifying their learning needs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Does the level of learning outcomes and competences correspond to the level(s) of the degree (cycle) foreseen in the European and National Qualification Framework?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• If sublevels are included, are these described in terms of learning outcomes expressed in competences?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are levels described in terms of:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◦ acquiring knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◦ applying knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities in practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◦ making informed judgments and choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◦ communicating knowledge and understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◦ capacities to continue learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Credits and Workload | • Is the degree programme ECTS based? Is it in alignment with the ECTS key features?  
• Have credits been allocated to the programme? How is the adequacy of this allocation guaranteed?  
• How are credits related to the learning outcomes of this programme?  
• How is the correlation between workload and credit allocation checked?  
• How is a balanced student workload guaranteed during each learning period in terms of learning, teaching and assessment activities?  
• What mechanisms are used for revision of credit allocation and learning, teaching and assessment activities? How are the students involved in this process?  
• Is information on the programme (modules and/or course units) presented as described in the ECTS Users’ Guide?  
• How is student mobility facilitated in the programme?  
• How are students advised about mobility?  
• How are the key documents of ECTS used for mobility?  
• Who is responsible for recognition and which are the procedures used?  |
| Resources | • How is the formal acceptance of the programme and the resources required to deliver it, guaranteed?  
• Is the staffing (academic and supporting staff and workplace supervisors) for delivering the programme guaranteed? Does the programme require the use of teaching staff from outside the department/institution?  
• Is staff development foreseen in terms of (new) approaches to learning, teaching and assessment?  
• How are the necessary structural, financial and technical means (class rooms, equipment, health and safety procedures etc.) guaranteed?  
• In the case of workplace learning/placements, are there sufficient and suitable placements guaranteed?  |
| Monitoring | • How is the quality of delivery of the programme and its components monitored?  
• How is staff quality and motivation for the delivery of the programme monitored?  
• Are there systems in place to evaluate the quality of the learning environment in workplace learning/placements?  
• Is the quality of class rooms and the equipment (including workplace environments) required to deliver the programme sufficient?  
• How is the entrance level of potential students monitored?  
• How is student performance monitored in terms of quality of learning outcomes to be obtained / competences to be achieved and time required to complete the programme and its components?  
• In what way is the employability of graduates monitored?  
• How is the alumni database organized?  
• Are data collected on the graduates’ satisfaction with the programme?  |
| Updating | • How is the system for updating / revision of the degree programme organized?  
• In what way can changes related to external developments in society be incorporated in the programme?  
• How is staff development related to programme updating organized and guaranteed?  |
| Sustainability and Responsibility | • How is the sustainability of the programme guaranteed?  
• How is it guaranteed that the relevant bodies take responsibility for sustaining and updating of the programme?  |
| Organisation and Information | • How is the updating of information regarding the degree programme organized and guaranteed?  
• How is the adequacy of the system of student support, advising and tutoring ensured?  
• Is a Diploma Supplement issued to the students automatically and without charge in a widely spoken European language?  |
Annex 2. Tuning project checklist for curriculum evaluation

The curriculum assessment consists of three main parts: the educational process, the educational outcome and the means and facilities required for programme delivery.

**Educational Process:**
- degree profile (aims educational programme)
- learning outcomes and competences to be achieved
- degree/educational programme build-up and order of programme components (to realize progression)
- coherence of degree / educational programme
- division of workload over the semester and academic year
- feasibility of programme
- teaching, learning and assessment methods
- connection of secondary and higher education
- international cooperation and student mobility

**Educational product / outcome:**
- study rate, cessation of study and switch-overs (output)
- output of 1st and 2nd cycle
- employability

**Means and facilities required:**
- structural and technical facilities
- staff and material means
- student support: student counsellors

**Educational process**

1. **Degree / programme profile**
   **Premises:**
   The degree programme has a clearly defined profile which is based on the demands set by an academic degree on the one hand, and by the needs of society on the other hand by taking the future labour-market of graduates (of that particular programme) into consideration.
   **Questions:**
   To what extent do the available data show that the programme profile meets the demands set to it? If necessary, which adjustments are thought to be desirable?

2. **Learning outcomes and competences at programme level**
   **Premises:**
   The degree programme has clearly defined learning outcomes that reflect the programme profile. The learning outcomes are described in terms of competences to be attained by the students (knowledge, understanding and skills).
   **Questions:**
   To what extent do the learning outcomes and competences to be attained by the students correspond with the programme profile? If necessary, which adjustments are thought to be
desirable?

3. Learning outcomes and competences of the (separate) programme components

Premises:
For each degree programme component a total of about five learning outcomes has been formulated, which clearly contribute to realizing the learning outcomes at programme level. The learning outcomes are described in terms of competences to be attained (knowledge, understanding and skills)

Questions:
Are the learning outcomes (explicitly) mentioned in the course syllabus of each programme component (module or course unit), and explained further when required? To what extent is it clear from the descriptions that specific competences are practiced? Is indicated which level of the competences is aimed for.

4. Curriculum set-up and the sequence of programme components / educational modules

Premises:
The curriculum is structured in such a way that coherence is assured within the total programme, in the various phases of the programme, and the separate programme components, and continuous progression is made with regard to the generic and subject-specific competences that have to be attained in terms of knowledge, understanding and skills.

Questions:
To what extent is it clear in practice that the programme is structured in such a way that coherence is assured and that progression is made with regard to knowledge, understanding and skills in relation to the learning outcomes and competences to be attained? If necessary, which adjustments are thought to be desirable?

5. (Division of) workload

Premises:
The programme is structured in such a way that a well-balanced division of the total workload is realized for the programme as a whole, for and within the separate academic years, and for and within both semesters. The calculated workload per programme component must correspond with the time that a typical student needs to attain the required learning outcomes.

Questions:
To what extent is it shown in practice that the total workload is divided according to the premises in the above? If necessary, which adjustments are thought to be desirable?

6. Feasibility of degree programme

Premises:
The programme is set up in such a way that it is feasible for a typical student (to complete the programme within the given time frame). This implies a good mixture of teaching, learning and assessment methods, no unnecessary impediments between programme components, and sufficient supervision/tutoring by the teaching staff.

Questions:
To what extent are guaranteed that a well-balanced combination of teaching and learning and assessment methods is applied, sufficient supervision by teaching staff is available, and entrance requirements for programme components are only required when a motivation with regard to educational content can be given? If necessary, which adjustments are thought to be desirable?
7. Teaching, learning and assessment methods

Premises
The teaching, learning and assessment methods used are varied and have been chosen because they are particularly well-suited to achieving the formulated learning outcomes and competences.

Questions
To what extent does the available information, in particular the educational and assessment regulations and course syllabi, assure that the formulated premises are being met? If necessary, which adjustments are thought to be desirable?

8. Connection of secondary and higher education

Premises
The programme has been set up so that it takes into consideration the entrance level of students. For first cycle programmes it concerns the connection to secondary education, and for second cycle programmes it concerns the connection to first cycle programmes (that give entrance to the second cycle programmes).

Questions
To what extent is made certain that the programme is set up in such a way that a good transition is provided with regard to entrance qualifications for first and second cycle? If necessary, which adjustments are thought to be desirable?

9. International cooperation

Premises
There is structural cooperation with foreign partner institutions. This cooperation can be joint degree programmes and/or facilitating student exchanges and recognizing the academic achievements undertaken at the partner institutions.

Questions
In what way is it guaranteed that students do not get behind schedule if they take part of their programme at a foreign partner institution, except when they are responsible for it themselves (e.g. because they have changed their programme without consultation, or because they have not completed programme components successfully). If necessary, which adjustments are thought to be desirable?

10. (Realized) output of 1st or 2nd cycle

Premises
The Faculty/School aims to achieve the following aims: successful completion of the first year of study xx% (maximum two years after starting the programme), completion of a first cycle degree based on a completed first year xx% (four years after starting the educational programme), completion of a second cycle degree xx% (two or three years after starting the educational programme).

Questions
Does the programme realize the set percentages? If not, why? Which suggestions are made in that case to bring about improvement?
11. **Employability**

*Premises*

The degree programme meets a need in society as can be concluded from the fact that the transition to the labour market in a broad sense is good.

*Question*

Do graduates find (suitable) employment within a reasonable period of time that fits the profile and level of the degree programme?

**Required facilities and means**

12. **Structural and technical facilities**

*Premises*

Sufficient structural and technical facilities and provisions are available for the delivery of the degree programme.

*Question*

Are any bottlenecks apparent in practice in the delivery of the programme with regard to facilities and provisions?

13. **Material and personnel means**

*Premises*

For the delivery of the programme sufficient quantitative and qualitative personnel means are made available in terms of teaching and supporting (administrative and technical) staff. Each programme / organizational unit has sufficient means for the delivery of the programme (guest lecturers, materials etc.)

*Question*

To what extent are the assigned means sufficient in practice to deliver the programme according to its original premises and set-up?

14. **Student support, advising and tutoring**

*Premises*

A system for student support, student advising and tutoring is available to students.

*Question*

In what way is the demand/need met for an adequate system of student support, advising and tutoring?

PART 1: EUROPEAN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

1.1 Policy and procedures for quality assurance

Standard

Institutions should have a policy and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of their programmes and awards. They should also commit themselves explicitly to the development of a culture which recognises the importance of quality, and quality assurance, in their work. To achieve this, institutions should develop and implement a strategy for the continuous enhancement of quality. The strategy, policy and procedures should have a formal status and be publicly available. They should also include a role for students and other stakeholders.

Guidelines

Formal policies and procedures provide a framework within which higher education institutions can develop and monitor the effectiveness of their quality assurance systems. They also help to provide public confidence in institutional autonomy. Policies contain the statements of intentions and the principal means by which these will be achieved. Procedural guidance can give more detailed information about the ways in which the policy is implemented and provides a useful reference point for those who need to know about the practical aspects of carrying out the procedures.

The policy statement is expected to include:

• the relationship between teaching and research in the institution;
• the institution’s strategy for quality and standards;
• the organisation of the quality assurance system;
• the responsibilities of departments, schools, faculties and other organisational units and individuals for the assurance of quality;
• the involvement of students in quality assurance;
• the ways in which the policy is implemented, monitored and revised.

The realisation of the EHEA depends crucially on a commitment at all levels of an institution to ensuring that its programmes have clear and explicit intended outcomes; that its staff are ready, willing and able to provide teaching and learner support that will help its students achieve those outcomes; and that there is full, timely and tangible recognition of the contribution to its work by those of its staff who demonstrate particular excellence, expertise and dedication. All higher education institutions should aspire to improve and enhance the education they offer their students.

1.2 Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards

Standard

Institutions should have formal mechanisms for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of their programmes and awards.
Guidelines

The confidence of students and other stakeholders in higher education is more likely to be established and maintained through effective quality assurance activities which ensure that programmes are well-designed, regularly monitored and periodically reviewed, thereby securing their continuing relevance and currency.

The quality assurance of programmes and awards are expected to include:

• development and publication of explicit intended learning outcomes;
• careful attention to curriculum and programme design and content;
• specific needs of different modes of delivery (e.g. full time, part-time, distance learning, e-learning) and types of higher education (e.g. academic, vocational, professional);
• availability of appropriate learning resources;
• formal programme approval procedures by a body other than that teaching the programme;
• monitoring of the progress and achievements of students;
• regular periodic reviews of programmes (including external panel members);
• regular feedback from employers, labour market representatives and other relevant organisations;
• participation of students in quality assurance activities.

1.3 Assessment of students

Standard

Students should be assessed using published criteria, regulations and procedures which are applied consistently.

Guidelines

The assessment of students is one of the most important elements of higher education. The outcomes of assessment have a profound effect on students’ future careers. It is therefore important that assessment is carried out professionally at all times and that it takes into account the extensive knowledge which exists about testing and examination processes. Assessment also provides valuable information for institutions about the effectiveness of teaching and learners’ support.

Student assessment procedures are expected to:

• be designed to measure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes and other programme objectives;
• be appropriate for their purpose, whether diagnostic, formative or summative;
• have clear and published criteria for marking;
• be undertaken by people who understand the role of assessment in the progression of students towards the achievement of the knowledge and skills associated with their intended qualification;
• where possible, not rely on the judgements of single examiners;
• take account of all the possible consequences of examination regulations;
• have clear regulations covering student absence, illness and other mitigating circumstances;
• ensure that assessments are conducted securely in accordance with the institution’s stated procedures;
• be subject to administrative verification checks to ensure the accuracy of the procedures.
In addition, students should be clearly informed about the assessment strategy being used for their programme, what examinations or other assessment methods they will be subject to, what will be expected of them, and the criteria that will be applied to the assessment of their performance.

1.4 Quality assurance of teaching staff

Standard
Institutions should have ways of satisfying themselves that staff involved with the teaching of students are qualified and competent to do so. They should be available to those undertaking external reviews, and commented upon in reports.

Guidelines
Teachers are the single most important learning resource available to most students. It is important that those who teach have a full knowledge and understanding of the subject they are teaching, have the necessary skills and experience to transmit their knowledge and understanding effectively to students in a range of teaching contexts, and can access feedback on their own performance. Institutions should ensure that their staff recruitment and appointment procedures include a means of making certain that all new staff have at least the minimum necessary level of competence. Teaching staff should be given opportunities to develop and extend their teaching capacity and should be encouraged to value their skills. Institutions should provide poor teachers with opportunities to improve their skills to an acceptable level and should have the means to remove them from their teaching duties if they continue to be demonstrably ineffective.

1.5 Learning resources and student support

Standard
Institutions should ensure that the resources available for the support of student learning are adequate and appropriate for each programme offered.

Guidelines
In addition to their teachers, students rely on a range of resources to assist their learning. These vary from physical resources such as libraries or computing facilities to human support in the form of tutors, counsellors, and other advisers. Learning resources and other support mechanisms should be readily accessible to students, designed with their needs in mind and responsive to feedback from those who use the services provided. Institutions should routinely monitor, review and improve the effectiveness of the support services available to their students.

1.6 Information systems

Standard
Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes of study and other activities.

Guidelines
Institutional self-knowledge is the starting point for effective quality assurance. It is important that institutions have the means of collecting and analysing information about their own activities. Without this they will not know what is working well and what needs attention, or the results of innovatory practices.
The quality-related information systems required by individual institutions will depend to some extent on local circumstances, but it is at least expected to cover:

- student progression and success rates;
- employability of graduates;
- students’ satisfaction with their programmes;
- effectiveness of teachers;
- profile of the student population;
- learning resources available and their costs;
- the institution’s own key performance indicators.

There is also value in institutions comparing themselves with other similar organisations within the EHEA and beyond. This allows them to extend the range of their self-knowledge and to access possible ways of improving their own performance.

### 1.7 Public information

**Standard**

Institutions should regularly publish up to date, impartial and objective information, both quantitative and qualitative, about the programmes and awards they are offering.

**Guidelines**

In fulfilment of their public role, higher education institutions have a responsibility to provide information about the programmes they are offering, the intended learning outcomes of these, the qualifications they award, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used, and the learning opportunities available to their students. Published information might also include the views and employment destinations of past students and the profile of the current student population. This information should be accurate, impartial, objective and readily accessible and should not be used simply as a marketing opportunity. The institution should verify that it meets its own expectations in respect of impartiality and objectivity.
### Appendix 4. Frequency of categories identified in 45 degree programme self-evaluations, which show internal higher education quality assurance characteristics defined by the Lithuanian higher education institutions themselves

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Colleges</th>
<th>Universities</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of the assessment (self-evaluation) of the internal higher education quality assurance system and degree programmes</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management of internal higher education quality assurance</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement and empowerment of the academic community in order to implement changes</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissemination of degree programme assessment (self-evaluation) results</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with the external environment</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation of degree programme assessment (self-evaluation)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coherence between internal higher education quality assurance and external assessment</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determination of the level of staff knowledge and skills and identification of the need for education</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationality of the functioning of the internal higher education quality assurance system</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course unit quality assurance system</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education process quality assurance</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissemination of information on degree programmes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff skill improvement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 5. Part “Internal higher education quality assurance” of summaries of degree programme self-evaluations analysed by study area and programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study area</th>
<th>Study programme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Biomedical Sciences</strong></td>
<td>KMU <em>medicine</em> summary of degree programme self-evaluation (2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kaunas College <em>cosmetology</em> summary of degree programme self-evaluation (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kaunas College <em>cosmetology</em> summary of degree programme self-evaluation (2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>KMU <em>public health management</em> summary of master degree programme self-evaluation (2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>KMU <em>public health</em> summary of bachelor and master degree programme self-evaluation (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>KU <em>public health</em> summary of bachelor degree programme self-evaluation (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>KU <em>public health</em> summary of bachelor degree programme self-evaluation (2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LKKA <em>health and fitness</em> summary of master degree programme self-evaluation (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LŽŪU <em>biosocial environment and nutrition</em> summary of bachelor degree programme self-evaluation (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vilnius College <em>biomedical diagnostic</em> summary of professional bachelor degree programme self-evaluation (2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vilnius College <em>biomedical diagnostic</em> summary of professional bachelor degree programme self-evaluation (2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vilnius College <em>prophylactic and decorative cosmetology, dietology, biomedical diagnostic</em> summary of professional bachelor degree programme self-evaluation (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VU <em>public health</em> master degree programme (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LVA <em>veterinary food safety</em> bachelor degree programme (2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vilnius College <em>biomedical diagnostics</em> professional bachelor degree programme (2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Sciences</strong></td>
<td>VU <em>biochemistry</em> master degree programme (2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VPU <em>chemistry</em> summary of master degree programme self-evaluation (2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>KTU <em>informatics</em> bachelor degree programme (2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>KU <em>informatics</em> summary of bachelor and master degree programme self-evaluation (2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VU <em>informatics and software systems, computer simulation</em> summary of bachelor and master degree programme self-evaluation (2005)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Humanities

- **VU English philology** summary of bachelor and master degree programme self-evaluation (2007)
- **SU English philology** summary of bachelor degree programme self-evaluation (2007)
- **SU English and Russian philology** summary of bachelor degree programme self-evaluation (2007)
- **VDU English philology** summary of bachelor degree programme self-evaluation (2007)

### Creative arts and design

- Marijampolė College *teaching fine arts and technology* summary of professional bachelor degree programme self-evaluation (2007)
- **KU design style of appearance** summary of professional bachelor degree programme self-evaluation (2007)
- Vilnius College *teaching fine arts and technology* professional bachelor degree programme (2007)
- Vilnius College of Technologies and Design *interior and graphic design* summary of professional bachelor degree programme self-evaluation (2007)
- Žemaitija College *teaching fine arts and technology* summary of professional bachelor degree programme self-evaluation (2007)

### Social Sciences

- **VDU social work** master degree programme (2010)
- **MRU social work** bachelor degree programme (2008)
- Panevėžys College *social work* professional bachelor degree programme (2010)
- Kaunas College *social work* summary of degree programme self-evaluation (2005)
- Klaipėda College *social work* summary of degree programme self-evaluation (2005)
- **KU social work** summary of bachelor and master degree programme self-evaluation (2008)
- Marijampolė College *social work* summary of degree programme self-evaluation (2008)
- Panevėžys College *social work* summary of degree programme self-evaluation (2008)
- Šiauliai State College *social work* summary of degree programme self-evaluation (2010)
- **VPU social work** summary of master degree programme self-evaluation (2005)
- **VU social work** summary of bachelor and master degree programme self-evaluation (2005)