

## **INTERNAL REGULATION NO. 3/2020**

### **Rules of Procedure for the Review Panel of the Executive Board of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education**

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On 20 February 2020, pursuant to Art. 9 para. 1 letter i) of the Statute of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education, the Executive Board of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (hereinafter referred to as the “Executive Board”) approved the following internal regulation of the Rules of Procedure for the Review Panel of the Executive Board of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (hereinafter referred to as the “internal regulation”):

### **Article 1 Subject**

1. This internal regulation sets the rules of procedure and activities of a review panel of the Executive Board of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (hereinafter the "review panel" and the "Agency"), formed by the Agency's Executive Board from the persons registered in the list of reviewers, according to the Principles for Registration in the List of Reviewers, Removal from the List of Reviewers and the Creation of Executive Board Review Panels to review a given application of a higher education institution or a participant in the proceedings and to review the initiative of the Agency, except in the case of § 24 (6) of Act No. 269/2018 Coll. on Quality Assurance in Higher Education and on Amendments to Act No. 343/2015 Coll. on Public Procurement and on Amendments to Certain Acts, as amended (hereinafter referred to as the “Quality Assurance Act”).

### **Article 2 Activities of the review panel**

1. The review panel shall carry out its activities by following the legal regulations, the internal rules of the Agency, and by using the relevant standards and the Methodology for the Evaluation of Standards according to § 2 of the Quality Assurance Act<sup>1</sup>.
2. The chair and the members of a review panel are appointed and dismissed by the Chair of the Executive Board with the prior agreement of the Executive Board.
3. The review panel shall commence its duties on the date on which a majority of the members of the review panel, including its chair, have been appointed. The work of the review panel shall end when the relevant decision of the Executive Board enters into force or on the date on which the opinion of the Agency becomes final<sup>2</sup>.
4. The review panel shall carry out its activities on behalf of the Agency. In the assignment, the Agency shall specify the type of proceeding under the Quality

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<sup>1</sup> In the case of procedures pursuant to the rules in force until 31 October 2018, the review panel shall apply the relevant criteria issued under these rules.

<sup>2</sup> § 22 (4) and (5) of the Quality Assurance Act.

Assurance Act, determine the subject of the review and may set the requirements for the actions to be taken by the review panel.

5. The review panel shall be managed by its chair.
6. At the request of the Agency and within the time limit set by the Agency, the review panel shall draw up an Evaluation report<sup>3</sup> on the given proceeding and the subject of the evaluation, based on which the Executive Board shall make a decision or issue a statement.
7. The review panel shall base its Evaluation report on its expert evaluation of the supporting documentation, information obtained during its visit to the higher education institution, available data, and consultations with stakeholders.
8. The Evaluation report shall also include the facts that formed the basis of its conclusions, the procedure for evaluating those documents, the evaluation of the level of compliance with each standard, the shortcomings, the recommendations for the proceeding party, the Agency's proposed decision or statements and the names of the review panel members.

### **Article 3**

#### **Duties of review panel members**

1. Members of a review panel
  - a) are required to acquaint themselves with all of the materials and available data, including supporting documentation and stances made available in the Agency's information system;
  - b) are obliged to participate personally and actively in the work of the review panel;
  - c) act independently, on their own behalf, express their personal professional opinions proactively and participate in the conclusions of the review panel and the Evaluation report;
  - d) must comply with the internal regulations of the Agency, in particular, the internal regulation *Conflict of Interests Regulation and the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct*;
  - e) may not provide any information obtained in the course of their work for their own benefit or the benefit of others;
  - f) may not provide any information related to the opinions and stances of review panel members or Agency employees;
  - g) may not give public statements which could have an impact on the outcome of pending cases to ensure that the public or the academic community does not have the impression of bias and a lack of objectivity; this does not apply to closed cases.

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<sup>3</sup> In the case of proceedings whose subject is a report of a higher education institution on the results of the measures implemented by the institution to eliminate the shortcomings stated in the statement of the Accreditation Commission, an advisory body of the Government of the Slovak Republic, the review panel will elaborate their stance.

2. The chair of the review panel
  - a) manages the activities of the review panel and reports on the panel's work to the Chair of the Executive Board;
  - b) cooperates with the assigned Agency staff members who methodically and organizationally coordinate and ensure the activities of the review panel,
  - c) sets the schedule of review panel activities;
  - d) in the case of the evaluation of the institution's quality assurance system, the chair may, with the agreement of the Agency, divide the review panel into teams and assign the members of the review panel to those teams based on their expertise, and in doing so, the chair shall also determine the leaders and the roles of the teams;
  - e) conducts negotiations with the representatives of the party to the proceedings on behalf of the Agency and the review panel;
  - f) approves the report from the review panel meeting;
  - g) on behalf of the Agency, s/he may request further documentation from the higher education institution necessary for the work of the review panel;
  - h) in the case of proceedings with a planned duration of more than three months, he/she shall provide the Agency with a monthly report on the activities of the review panel and the actions taken and submit this report via the Agency's information system or, at the request of the Chair of the Executive Board, inform the Executive Board at its meeting regarding the panel's activities;
  - i) may delegate a panel member to prepare an Evaluation report draft or a part thereof, a report from their meeting or an analytical basis relevant to the subject of the evaluation;
  - j) is responsible for the results of the review panel activities, mainly for the independent, objective and precise evaluation of the compliance of the relevant standards and the timely elaboration of the Evaluation report in the required extent and structure; and
  - k) provides the Agency with the Evaluation report adopted by the review panel through the information system.
3. Any breach of the duties referred to in this Article or in other internal regulations of the Agency by a review panel member or chair shall constitute grounds for their dismissal.

#### **Article 4**

##### **Review panel meetings and drawing conclusions**

1. A review panel meeting is usually conducted in electronic form and the communication takes place via the Agency's information system. However, it may also take the form of a face-to-face meeting.
2. A review panel meeting shall be convened by the chair of the review panel, a member of the review panel authorized by him/her, or the Agency staff at least

seven days prior to the date of the meeting. The meeting may take place at the seat of the Agency or at another place.

3. Review panel meetings are not open to the public; however, Agency employees may attend and review panel members may invite other persons to participate.
4. The delegated review panel member shall draw up a report of the meeting which must contain the names of the review panel members and other persons present at the meeting, a description of the discussed items on the agenda, the review panel's conclusions, the name of the reporter, the place and date of the meeting and the verification of the report by the chair of the review panel.
5. The review panel shall use the Agency's information system to discuss a given proceeding on an ongoing basis, to electronically record the statements and stances of the review panel members, and to draw the conclusions of the review panel by per rollam vote.
6. A proposal for the adoption of a review panel's Evaluation report by per rollam vote shall include the proposal of the Evaluation report, the supporting documentation for the review of the proposal or the information where it is available, and the voting deadline (minimum 3 days).
7. The per rollam vote shall be conducted via the Agency's information system in a way that ensures that the review panel members can only see the final results of the vote and not the partial results. A list of voters who voted by the deadline and their votes shall be compiled in lieu of an attendance sheet. When evaluating the results of the per rollam vote, it is supposed that all of the panel members have taken part in the vote.
8. The conclusions of the review panel's Evaluation report shall be adopted based on the approval of a majority of the review panel members.

## **Article 5**

### **Site visits to higher education institutions**

1. The review panel shall carry out one or more site visits to a higher education institution or the seat and work locations of a party to the proceedings where the higher education is to be delivered if
  - a) the nature of the proceedings so requires, this is to be decided by the chair of the review panel or the majority of the review panel members; or
  - b) the Agency shall ask the review panel to provide an evaluation by means of a site visit or a visit the seat and work locations of the party to the proceedings.
2. During the site visit, the review panel shall obtain the information necessary for the evaluation of the given application of the institution (a proceeding party) or an initiative and for the preparation of the Evaluation report as specified by the Agency. During the site visit, the review panel shall also carry out consultations with stakeholders in order to obtain their opinions concerning the subject of the evaluation.

3. The review panel shall coordinate the planning and organization of the site visit with the designated Agency employee and the higher education institution or the party to the proceedings.

**Article 6**  
**Entry into force**

This internal regulation was approved by the Executive Board on 20 February 2020 and shall enter into force upon its approval.

Bratislava, 20 February 2020

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**prof. Ing. Robert Redhammer, Ph.D.**  
Chair of the Executive Board