

Standards and other legislation

One of the main tasks of the Agency as a Slovak HEI quality assurance regulatory authority is to grant accreditations to HEIs. The Agency issues 3 types of accreditation:

- study programme accreditation
- internal quality assurance system (IS) accreditation
- habilitation proceedings and inauguration proceedings accreditation.

Full proceedings last up to 180 days and include a review panel’s site visit of the HEI (usually 2 days). During this visit the review panel has a unique opportunity to see the HEI and talk to its representatives, teaching staff, students etc. in person, and to request further proofs of the compliance of a study programme, etc. with the law and the given Standards.

Figure 1 below shows the procedure for study programme accreditation proceedings from the moment a HEI sends its application, to the delivery of the SAAHE verdict to the HEI. Should the HEI raise objections, these are dealt with by the Board of Appeal.

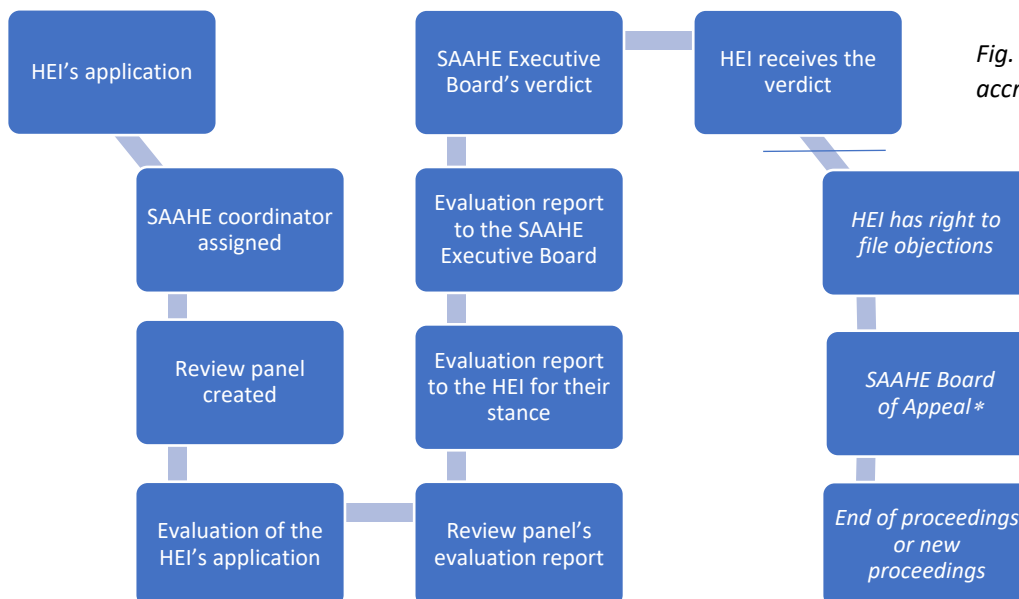


Fig. 1 Study programme accreditation

* *The Agency’s Board of Appeal examines the procedures of the Executive Board and review panels and checks whether all the binding regulations have been followed.*

On top of these full proceedings there are partial proceedings which call for a 3-member review panel. They usually take 90 days to complete. The partial proceedings deal with HEI’s applications for a study programme modification, evaluation of corrective measures taken by a HEI or monitoring proceedings after a completion of a study cycle.

To some degree, the different types of accreditation proceedings share the same legislative framework. There are, however, variations as Table 1 below shows.

	Study programme accreditation	Habilitation and inauguration proceedings accreditation	Internal quality assurance system accreditation
ESG 2015	✓		✓
Act No. 269/2018 Coll.	✓	✓	✓
Methodology for the Evaluation of Standards	✓	✓	✓
Standards for Study Programmes	✓		✓
Standards for Habilitation and Inauguration Proceedings		✓	
Standards for the Internal System			✓

Tab. 1 Types of proceedings and corresponding legislation

Depending on the type of proceedings for which you have been selected as a panellist, you will be expected to become familiar with the relevant standards and parts of the legal framework. Please see the hypertextual links to them below.

[Act No. 269/2018 Coll. on Quality Assurance in Higher Education](#)

The act covers the internal system of quality assurance in a higher education institution and its evaluation, the establishment and the standing of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education and its activities, the accreditation of study programmes and the granting of accreditation for habilitation proceedings and inauguration proceedings.

The Act defines the internal system of quality assurance at a HEI, its aim, scope of influence, and the means. It determines rules for designing, approving, delivering and modifying study programmes.

The second part of the Act defines the procedures for individual proceedings the Agency deals with (internal system evaluation, granting accreditation for a study programme and granting accreditation for habilitation and inauguration proceedings).

Act No. 131/2002 Coll. on Higher Education

This is a general act concerning higher education in Slovakia, defining the role of HEIs, scope of their rights, organisational structure, internal regulations, financing, types of HEIs, study programmes, fields of study, studying at a HEI, final exams, students' rights and duties, staff etc.

[ESG 2015 – Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area](#)

The ESG standards should be considered in a broader context that also includes qualifications frameworks, ECTS credits and a diploma supplement that also contribute to promoting the transparency and mutual trust in higher education in the European Higher Education Area.

Methodology for the Evaluation of Standards

The Methodology is a set of procedures, criteria and indicators through which the Agency’s review panels and the Agency’s staff evaluate compliance with the standards and measures. The document specifies:

- procedures for evaluation
- criteria for evaluation
- indicators for evaluation
- the methodology for the evaluation of research, artistic and other activities.

Standards for Study Programmes

They are a set of requirements whose fulfilment is a condition for obtaining the accreditation of a study programme and for the Agency’s decision to authorise a higher education institution to design, deliver and modify study programmes in a given field and a level of study. The Standards for SP deal with the following:

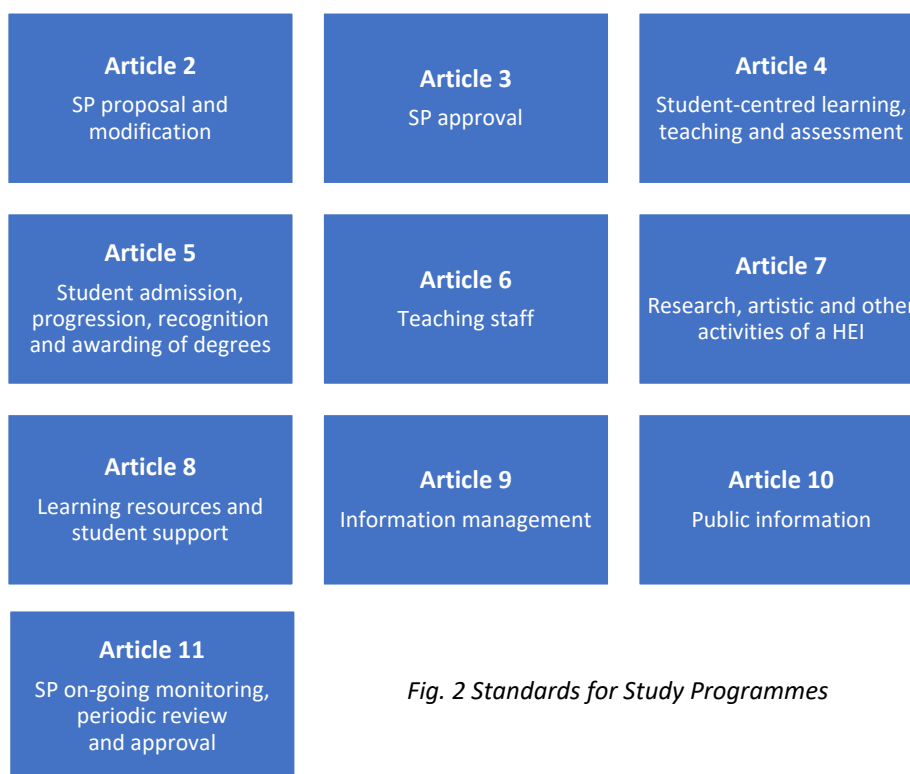


Fig. 2 Standards for Study Programmes

Articles in brief:

Proposals and modifications (Article 2)

- SP is elaborated in compliance with the HEI’s IS & its mission;
- HEI has designated persons responsible for the SP;
- students, employers and other stakeholders are involved in the preparation of a SP;
- SP defines the level of qualification and the graduate’s profile;
- learning outcomes meet sector- specific professional expectations;

- SP includes the standard length of study and the specified workload for each course, expressed in ECTS credits.

Approval of study programmes (Article 3)

- SP is approved in accordance with the HEI's IS;
- the approval is independent, unbiased, objective, professional, transparent and fair;
- the persons reviewing and approving the SP must be different from the persons preparing the SP proposal.

Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment (Article 4)

- enables the achievement of learning outcomes;
- respects the diversity of the students and their needs;
- there is flexibility in learning paths and in the achievement of learning outcome;
- domestic and foreign mobility is supported;
- students take an active role in the process of learning and developing their academic careers;
- a sense of autonomy, independence and self-evaluation is reinforced within a SP;
- adequate guidance and support are provided to students;
- assessment methods and criteria are known to students in advance;
- assessment includes feedback on the fulfilment of learning outcomes;
- students can appeal against assessment result.

Student admission, progression, recognition and awarding of academic degrees (Article 5)

- criteria & requirements for applicants are specified, easily accessible & known in advance;
- admission procedure is reliable, fair and transparent;
- domestic and foreign student mobility is promoted;
- the study or parts of the study outside a HEI are recognized;
- scientific integrity is ensured;
- dealing with academic fraud is guaranteed;
- there are claim mechanisms for students seeking the protection of their rights or legally protected interests;
- upon successful completion of a SP students are awarded an academic title, issued with a university diploma or any further documentation explaining the qualifications obtained.

Teaching staff (Article 6)

- the HEI has a sufficient number of teaching staff with the required qualifications, workload allocation, research, artistic and other activities, practical, teaching and transferable skills;
- qualifications of teachers are at least one degree higher than the qualifications of students achieved by the completion of a SP; this requirement may be waived in justified cases, such as foreign language lecturers, in-service teachers, specialists and doctoral candidates;
- profile courses are usually provided by staff members holding the position of professors or associate professors in the relevant field of study or in a related field; they are employed full time at the HEI;
- in professionally oriented programmes, profile courses are also provided by experienced professionals from the relevant economic or social fields; they work at the HEI part-time of full-time;
- sustainability of the teaching staff in profile courses is guaranteed in terms of the age of the teachers;

- the HEI has a designated staff member who has the necessary competencies to guarantee responsibility for the delivery, development and quality assurance of the study programme, and who is also responsible for profile courses. This person holds the position of a professor in the relevant field of study and is employed full time; in the case of a bachelor's degree programme, s/he is a professor or associate professor in the relevant field of study and employed full time at the HEI. This person cannot also be responsible for the delivery, development and quality assurance of a SP at another university in Slovakia. The same person may have primary responsibility for the delivery, development and quality assurance of up to three study programmes. This does not include cases of concurrence according to Art. 7 (3), letters b) to h) of the Standards;
- staff supervising final theses are active in research, artistic and other activities or in professional practice at the level corresponding to the degree of the study programme in the field of the professional and thematic scope of the supervised theses;
- teaching staff develop their professional, language, pedagogical, digital and transferable skills;
- in the case of teacher training combination SPs, the HEI employs 3 teachers responsible for each specialization of the combination and 3 staff members responsible for teacher training foundations (9 teachers altogether responsible for the profile courses);
- in the case of translation combination study programmes, the HEI employs 3 teachers responsible for each specialization of the language combination and 3 teachers responsible for translation studies foundations (9 teachers altogether responsible for the profile courses);
- in the case of programmes combining two fields of study or two first-level study programmes delivered as interdisciplinary studies, the HEI employs 5 teachers responsible for each field of study in which its graduates receive a degree;
- in the case of joint study programmes, the HEI employs 5 teachers responsible for profile courses for the part of the study programme which the HEI provides;
- if the HEI delivers SPs in a given field of study at several faculties or at several seats, it employs a full set of teachers responsible for profile courses separately for each faculty and separately for each address where the study programme is delivered.

Research, artistic and other activities of a higher education institution (Article 7)

- teachers providing profile courses demonstrate the outputs of their research, artistic and other activities in the relevant field(s) of study in which the SP is delivered:
 - a) at least at an internationally significant level in the case of a third-level SP;
 - b) at least at an internationally recognized level in the case of a second-level SP or a SP combining the first and second levels; and
 - c) at least at a nationally recognized level in the case of a first-level SP.
- the HEI's outputs of research, artistic and other activities are demonstrated by the most important outputs of the teachers in charge of the profile courses of the SP:
 - a) the HEI selects the teachers and their outputs. It submits 5 outputs per teacher, of which at least 2 date from the 6 years prior to the application submission;
 - b) the HEI ensures the availability of records of submitted outputs and responses to such outputs in bibliometric and citation databases, registries of records of publishing and artistic activities or in other search systems that are accepted as relevant in the given field of study;
 - c) the HEI submits a total of 25 outputs in the case of a SP, or 15 outputs in the case of the individual assessment of one of the specializations, teacher training foundations or translation studies foundations;
 - d) the same output may only be submitted once within a given evaluation;

- e) the same person submits outputs only within one evaluation of research, artistic and other activities;
 - f) in the case of co-authored outputs, the same output may be submitted and attributed to other persons up to 3 times in other evaluations of research, artistic and other activities;
 - g) evaluation of research, artistic and other activities will be carried out by a review panel using the holistic peer-review procedure stated in the Methodology for the Evaluation of Research, Artistic and Other Activities.
- if a HEI delivers several SPs in a given field of study, it demonstrates the outputs of its research, artistic and other activities according to Art. 7 (1 to 2) of the Standards separately for each SP, except for the concurrence with the following cases under Art. 7 (3):
 - a) a follow-up higher-level SP in a given field of study delivered in the same part of the institution;
 - b) another form or a language mutation of an identical SP;
 - c) a part of the joint SP content based on the given field of study;
 - d) a part of the SP in a combination of two fields of study based on a given field of study and delivered in the same part of the institution;
 - e) the specialization content of a teacher training combination SP based on the given field of study;
 - f) the specialization content of the translation combination SP based on the given language;
 - g) the content of a conversion SP based on the SP in the given field and level of study;
 - h) a part of the first-level SP delivered as interdisciplinary studies whose content is based on the given field of study.
 - if the HEI delivers several study programmes in a given field of study at different seats, it demonstrates the outputs of its research, artistic and other activities for each seat separately;
 - in the case of a third-level study programme delivery, the HEI demonstrates its long-term continuous research or artistic activities in the field of the study programme. The workplace must show the existence of long-term and continuous success in receiving financial grants for research or artistic projects, and the existence of follow-up or new projects from domestic and international grant schemes or other sources;
 - compliance with the requirement according to Art. 7 (5) of the Standards may be replaced by an institution undergoing a periodic review of research, artistic and other activities in each field of research every six years, and if, on the basis of the latest assessment, it has been granted to right use the label “research university”.

Learning resources and student support (Article 8)

- the HEI has sufficient spatial, material, technical and information resources for a SP and their corresponding funding;
- if educational activities are provided by distance or combined methods, the HEI has systems for the management of the course content and such education; students are guaranteed access to the course content and other study materials;
- the HEI has sufficient professional support staff to meet the needs of students and teachers;
- the HEI maintains binding partnerships that enable relevant stakeholders to participate in the quality assurance, delivery and development of the SP;
- the HEI has sufficient teaching staff, spatial, material, technical and information resources for the study programme, separately for each seat at which the SP or a part thereof is to be delivered;

- the HEI responds effectively to the diversity of students' needs and interests;
- the HEI provides students with support for their successful study progression and career guidance;
- the HEI provides students with appropriate social security, sport, cultural, spiritual, and social activities during their studies;
- students are provided with support for and access to domestic and foreign mobility, and internships;
- the HEI provides individualized support and suitable conditions for special needs students;
- in a professionally oriented SP, the programme has contractual partners – organizations providing professional practice and practical training for students. These organizations have sufficient spatial, material and technological conditions and staff to ensure that the planned learning outcomes can be achieved.

Information management (Article 9)

- the HEI collects, analyses and makes use of relevant information for the effective management of the SP and other activities;
- the HEI monitors & evaluates the following: indicators of teaching and learning performance, applicant and student profiles, students' progression, success and drop-out rates, the satisfaction of students, the employability of graduates, feedback from students and employers, information about learning resources and support available to students;
- students, teachers, employers and other stakeholders are involved in the collection and analysis of information and follow-up measures.

Public information (Article 10)

- the HEI provides accessible and clearly structured information about a study programme such as: intended learning objectives and learning outcomes, requirements for applicants, selection criteria, recommended personality requirements, the level of the national qualifications framework, the field of study, the qualifications it awards, teaching and learning rules, the programme's completion conditions, assessment procedures and criteria, programme resources, pass rates, learning opportunities available to students, and information about available jobs for successful graduates and their employability;
- this information is easily accessible to students, their supporters, prospective students, graduates, other stakeholders and to the public in all the languages in which the SP is delivered;
- information is available to special needs applicants & students.

On-going monitoring and periodic review and approval of study programmes (Article 11)

- the HEI regularly monitors, reviews and appropriately modifies a SP in order to comply with the Standards to ensure that the learning objectives and learning outcomes are in line with the needs of students, employers, other stakeholders, latest knowledge the field of study and the technological possibilities to ensure that the level of the graduates, by means of the achieved learning outcomes, is in line with the required level of the National Qualifications Framework and the stakeholders' expectations;
- the monitoring and reviewing of a SP include obtaining relevant feedback from the programme stakeholders, who also participate in the preparation of the feedback methodology;
- at least once a year, students have an opportunity to comment on the quality of teaching and the teachers of the study programme in an anonymous questionnaire;

- the feedback results are reflected in improvement measures. Students are guaranteed a role in the design of such measures;
- the feedback results, implemented measures, and any planned or follow-up activities resulting from the evaluation of the SP should be discussed with the stakeholders and interested parties and are accessible to the public;
- the SP is periodically approved in compliance with the formalized processes of the internal system at a period corresponding to its standard length of study.

Standards for the Internal System

The Standards are a set of requirements for the HEI’s internal quality assurance system. They require a HEI to adopt and apply quality assurance policies, and to have formalized policies, structures and processes for such quality assurance.

In terms of topics covered and their content, the Standards for the Higher Education Internal Quality Assurance System (IS) are analogous to the Standards for Study Programmes and they both draw from the ESG 2015. The main difference between the Standards for the IS and the Standards for SP is that the former apply to the institutional aspects of higher education quality assurance which formulates quality assurance criteria for the entire institution, whereas the latter apply to criteria for a given study programme. Once a HEI has its IS accredited by the Agency, the HEI can design, modify and deliver its own study programmes, the Agency no longer accredits the HEI’s study programmes.

ESG 2015	Standards for the Higher Education Internal Quality Assurance System	Standards for Study Programmes
1.1 Policy for quality assurance	Article 2 Quality assurance policies	
1.2 Design and approval of programmes	Article 3 Design, modification, and approval of study programmes	Article 2 Proposals and modifications
		Article 3 Approval of study programmes
1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment	Article 4 Student-centered learning, teaching, and assessment	Article 4 Student-centered learning, teaching, and assessment
1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification	Article 5 Student admission, progression, recognition and awarding of academic degrees	Article 5 Student admission, progression, recognition, and awarding of academic degrees
1.5 Teaching staff	Article 6 Teaching staff	Article 6 Teaching staff
		Article 7 Research, artistic and other activities of a higher education institution
1.6 Learning resources and student support	Article 7 Learning resources and student support	Article 8 Learning resources and student support
1.7 Information management	Article 8 Information management	Article 9 Information management
1.8 Public information	Article 9 Public information	Article 10 Public information

1.9 Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes	Article 10 Ongoing monitoring and periodic review and approval of study programmes	Article 11 Ongoing monitoring and periodic review and approval of study programmes
1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance	Article 11 Periodic external quality assurance	

Tab. 2 Relationship between the ESG 2015 and standards

Standards for Habilitation Proceedings and Inauguration Proceedings

The Standards for Habilitation and Inauguration Proceedings state the requirements for the evaluation of habilitation and inauguration proceedings of Slovak HEIs. The Standards define:

- the persons responsible for the proceedings;
- the level of research, artistic, and other activities of these persons;
- the criteria for reviewing the compliance of conditions for obtaining the titles of “associate professor” and “professor”;
- the rules and procedure for habilitation and inauguration proceedings.