



INTERNAL REGULATION NO 1/2022

INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM OF ACTIVITIES

On 24 February 2022, pursuant to Section 7(10)(d)(5) of Act No 269/2018 on quality assurance of higher education and amending Act No 343/2015 on public procurement and amending certain acts, as amended ('the Quality Assurance Act'), the Executive Board of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education ('the Executive Board' and 'the Agency') approved:

Article 1

Scope and definition of the internal system of the Agency

1. The internal system of the Agency shall cover all activities carried out by the Agency.
2. The Agency's internal system shall accordingly apply to the Agency's staff, members of the Agency's collective bodies and other stakeholders involved in the Agency's activities.
3. The Agency's internal system is based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area¹ (ESG 2015) and the Quality Assurance Act.
4. The internal system of the Agency shall consist of interlinked policies, structures and procedures to ensure and develop the quality of the activities carried out by the Agency in accordance with its development strategy.

Article 2

Status and mission of the Agency

1. The Agency is an independent public institution whose task is to carry out external quality assurance activities of higher education in the Slovak Republic. It was established by the Quality Assurance Act in 2018 as a legal entity based in Bratislava.
2. The Agency's mission is to contribute to improving the quality of higher education in the Slovak Republic through external quality assurance tools according to ESG 2015 and in line with the expectations of stakeholders. The Agency provides universities with a professional and independent view of the quality of education and strengthens a quality culture. The Agency shall, in particular, decide on matters relating to the granting of authorisations to higher education institutions on the basis of their applications and shall also carry out other related tasks.

Article 3

Agency's strategic objectives and work plans

1. The Agency fulfills its mission by achieving the strategic objectives of the Agency's development. The strategic development objectives of the Agency are set out in the Agency's development strategy, which shall be drawn up for a period of five years.
2. The strategic objectives are specified in the different actions set out in the Agency's work plan. The Agency's work plan shall be drawn up for a period of one year, with a view to the

¹[Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area \(ESG 2015\)](#)

following year.

Article 4

Internal System Policies of the Agency

1. In pursuing its mission, principles and strategic objectives, the Agency shall apply policies of independence, transparency, integrity, cooperation and improvement.
2. The Agency shall maintain its organizational, operational and decision-making **independence** in accordance with the Quality Assurance Act, pursuing in particular the public interest by:
 - a) the Agency's bodies shall have full responsibility for the Agency's activities and their results;
 - b) the Agency shall develop and use external quality assurance procedures and methods on its own, without interference by third parties, in accordance with the legislation in force;
 - c) the Agency shall set up review panels of the Executive Board of the Agency without interference by third parties. Although external experts included in the list of reviewers are involved in the external quality assurance process, independence of their reviews from the opinions of the home institution is required, i.e. they are processed solely on the basis of their expertise;
 - d) the final results of external quality assurance always remain within the competence of the Executive Board of the Agency;
 - e) the Agency's activities are financed from a number of sources.
3. The Agency shall promote the principle of integrity in all activities. Members of the bodies of the Agency, reviewers and Agency staff shall carry out their duties honestly, conscientiously and impartially, knowing that they are pursuing a public interest. The principle of integrity is pursued by fulfilling the following requirements:
 - a) Any person involved in the activities of the Agency shall have sufficient competence to carry out the tasks entrusted to it. The professional expertise of the Agency's bodies, reviewers and staff is developed.
 - b) Members of the Agency's bodies, reviewers, employees and contractors are required to behave in accordance with the Agency's ethical standards and regulations, generally binding legislation and ESG 2015.
 - c) All activities related to external quality assurance shall avoid possible bias and conflicts of interest.
 - d) Attention shall be paid to respecting the principle of equal treatment and protection against intolerance and discrimination of any kind, and the Agency shall act in accordance with the principle of legitimate expectations in such a way that in factually similar cases there are no unjustified differences between procedures and decisions.
4. The basic principle of the Agency's work is openness and the highest possible degree of transparency. The Agency shall:
 - a) develop appropriate means of communication of its activities, the conduct and

- results of external quality assurance.
- b) it shall ensure public access to the standards, procedures and results of external quality assurance in order to maintain high trust among all stakeholders and the public.
 - c) it shall make public the objectives, policies and procedures of its internal system and reports on its activities.
 - d) it publishes thematic reports on the development of the higher education system.
 - e) it publishes examples of good practice in quality assurance in higher education.
5. In its activities, the Agency shall cooperate with stakeholders and other similarly focused institutions at national and international level. In doing so:
- a) The provision and development of the Agency's internal procedures and processes shall be based on effective internal cooperation and communication between the Agency's organisational units.
 - b) The development of efficient communication channels is key for the development of the Agency
 - external stakeholders, in particular public authorities, relevant authorities, universities; foreign partners;
 - stakeholders and the general public to monitor the changing conditions, requirements and expectations of society and to strengthen and disseminate awareness of the need to develop a quality culture in higher education.
6. Improvement is a key principle of the Agency's work. In relation to its implementation, the Agency shall:
- a) systematically monitors developments in higher education and quality assurance systems in higher education.
 - b) develops internal and external feedback mechanisms in order to continually improve the activities it performs.
 - c) regularly adapts and innovates internal and external quality assurance standards and practices and makes recommendations for innovation to stakeholders so that the synergy of these efforts is to improve quality and strengthen the position and recognition of higher education institutions.
 - d) points to good practices in order to develop a culture of quality in higher education.
 - e) regularly monitors, evaluates and revises the policies, procedures and processes of its internal system, with the involvement of stakeholders.

Article 5

Structures of the Agency's internal system

1. The internal organisational structure of the Agency, its bodies, organisational units, their titles, activities and status, their essential functions, tasks, responsibilities and responsibilities of the organisational units and their heads of staff are set out in the Quality Assurance Act, the Agency's statutes² and the organisational rules of the Agency³.
2. The structures of the Agency's internal system shall be:
 - a) Chairman of the Executive Board of the Agency,

² [Status of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education](#)

³ [Organization chart of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education](#)

- b) Internal Quality Assurance Coordinator of the Agency;
 - c) The Executive Board of the Agency; and
 - d) The Agency's International Advisory Board.
- 3.** The Chairman of the Executive Board shall have primary responsibility for the internal system of the Agency.
- Under this main responsibility, it shall in particular ensure the following tasks:
- a) appoint a person from among the Agency's staff to act as the Agency's internal quality assurance coordinator;
 - b) submits to the Executive Board:
 - 1. proposals concerning the internal system of the Agency, for the adoption of draft rules formalising the procedures applied within the Agency's internal system;
 - 2. Annual evaluation of the internal system;
 - 3. the Agency's development strategy;
 - 4. the Agency's work plan;
 - 5. the Agency's self-assessment report.
- 4.** The internal quality assurance coordinator shall in particular performs the following tasks:
- a) provide for activities in the framework of the implementation, development and improvement of the internal system of the Agency;
 - b) methodologically guides and coordinates the collection and processing of internal and external feedback in order to continuously improve the Agency's activities;
 - c) coordinate consultations on the development of the Agency's internal quality system with the Agency's International Advisory Board and other stakeholders;
 - d) produce an annual evaluation of the internal system;
 - e) monitor and analyse the state of play of the Agency's internal system and propose measures to improve it;
 - f) evaluate the results achieved after the measures have been taken and verify that they meet the objectives set;
 - g) publish and provide information on the Agency's internal quality system and its implementation and development.
- 5.** Within the Agency's internal system, the Executive Board shall in particular carry out the following tasks:
- a) approve, on a proposal from the Chairperson of the Executive Board, the Agency's internal system and related internal rules;
 - b) approve the Agency's self-assessment report submitted by the Chairperson of the Executive Board;
 - c) approve the proposals concerning the internal system of the Agency and the proposals for strategic objectives and measures to improve the internal system of the Agency;
 - d) approve the Agency's development strategy and work plan.
- 6.** The Agency's International Advisory Board is experts who provide expert advice and advice to the Agency on European policies and good practice of external quality assurance in higher education and provide feedback on the Agency's verification of the Agency's compliance with European Standards and Guidelines (ESG 2015).

Article 6

Procedures for the Agency's internal system

1. In pursuing its mission and strategic objectives, the Agency shall lay down the rules and procedures laid down in its internal rules, in particular:
 - a) procedures, criteria, external quality assurance indicators⁴.
 - b) procedures for the prevention of conflicts of interest and procedures for identifying conflicts of interest between collective bodies, members of the working groups of the Executive Board and staff of the Agency⁵.
 - c) procedures for preserving the integrity and ethical and moral principles of conduct of members of the Agency's collective bodies, assessors and members of the working groups of the Agency's Executive Board and staff of the Agency in the performance of their activities⁶.
 - d) procedures for the decision-making or expression of the Agency⁷;
 - e) the procedures for assessing objections of parties to proceedings to decisions or representations of the Agency shall be laid down in the Quality Assurance Act and the procedures of Board of Appeal.⁸
 - f) procedures for filling and handling complaints pursuant to Act No. 9/2010 Coll. on Complaints⁹.
 - g) the Agency's procedures for filling and reviewing whistleblowing reports¹⁰.
 - h) rules governing the staffing of the Agency's activities and the professional development of the members of the bodies, assessors and staff of the Agency¹¹.
 - i) rules for the material and information provision of the Agency's activities¹².

Article 7

Resources of the Agency's internal system

1. The Agency shall plan and ensure adequate resources for the development of the quality of its activities:
 - a) Staff resources for the creation, monitoring, evaluation and improvement of internal system processes at the level of internal system structures and individual departments,¹³ and resources for their development and training.
 - b) Information and resources for the development of the Agency's information system for the development, monitoring and improvement of internal system processes¹⁴.
 - c) The necessary infrastructure and material resources.

⁴ [Methodology for evaluating standards; Guidelines on applications pursuant to Section 4\(2\)\(h\) of the Quality Assurance Act; Fee schedules, assessment manuals, IS agency manual and more.](#)

⁵ [Regulating conflicts of interest of members of collective bodies, members of working groups, executive board and staff](#)
[Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education](#)

⁶ [Code of Ethics of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education](#)

⁷ [Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education](#)

⁸ Section 22 of the Act on Quality Assurance, [Rules of Procedure of the Commission of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education for the Assessment of Objections](#)

⁹ [Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education Directive on complaint handling](#)

¹⁰ [Directive on the internal system for the verification of whistleblowing notices of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education](#)

¹¹ [Working Regulations; Principles for inclusion in the list of assessors, guide to assessors and more.](#)

¹² [Public Procurement Plan, Directive on the establishment of public procurement procedures of the contracting authority of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education.](#)

¹³ Rules of organisation

¹⁴ [Information system SAAHE](#)

2. All contractors' activities of the Agency shall be carried out in accordance with ESG 2015, in accordance with generally binding legislation and the Agency's internal rules.
3. Financial resources for the creation, implementation and improvement of the internal system procedures and processes shall be provided from the Agency's budget.

Article 8

Development and improvement of the internal system of the Agency

1. The Agency shall regularly review and improve its activities in order to ensure optimal services for universities and society.
2. Management of the development and improvement of the Agency's services, processes and processes takes place in a short and long PDCA cycle. The short cycle is a one-year-old. The long cycle is five years.
3. The Agency's development strategy is an essential planning document for the long cycle.
4. The basic planning document of the short cycle is the work plan of the Agency.
5. The Agency's development planning shall include:
 - a) defining or adapting policies and strategic objectives relating to the development of the Agency and the Agency's internal system on the basis of a SWOT analysis;
 - b) developing strategic objectives into a work plan and indicators for their monitoring based on the results of the Agency's annual evaluations and self-assessment reports and the results of external evaluations of the Agency's internal system over the long cycle;
 - c) identification or review of processes and their interdependencies and formalisation of the Agency's procedures;
 - d) establishing competences and responsibilities for the various activities and activities of the Agency;
 - e) allocation of the resources needed to fulfil the tasks set out.
6. The Agency shall implement the activities arising from the Agency's strategic objectives and work plan and monitor their implementation on an ongoing basis.
7. The Agency shall carry out an annual evaluation of the internal system and propose improvement measures based on the verification of the work plan, the results of the feedback from stakeholders and the review of the internal system processes. Verification of the achievement of strategic objectives is part of the Agency's self-assessment report.
8. The Agency shall regularly consult stakeholders' representatives on proposals for improvement and further development.
9. The Agency may modify further details of the procedures for managing the development of the Agency's internal system in specific internal rules of the Agency.

Article 9

External evaluation of the Agency's internal system

1. The Agency shall undergo an external evaluation of the Agency's internal system and

its activities every 5 years.

Article 10
Final provisions

This internal rule was approved by the Executive Board of the Agency on 24 February 2022 and enters into force with its approval.

Bratislava, 24 February 2022

Prof. Ing. Robert Redhammer, PhD.
Chairman of the Executive Board