SLOVAK ACCREDITATION AGENCY
FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Standards for the Higher Education Internal Quality Assurance System and Educational Programmes leading to the Acquisition of Microcredentials

Bratislava, 4 September 2025

Article 1
Introductory provisions and scope

1. *The Standards for the Higher Education Internal Quality Assurance System and Educational Programmes leading to the Acquisition of Microcredentials* (hereinafter referred to as the "internal system") are a set of requirements for the internal system and its implementation.[1] The requirements relating to quality assurance in higher education are stated in Articles 2 to 11 of these Standards, and the requirements relating to quality assurance in educational programmes leading to the acquisition of microcredentials are stated in Article 12 of these Standards.
2. The set of procedures, criteria and indicators through which the review panels of the Agency's Executive Board (hereinafter referred to as the "review panel") and the Agency's staff evaluate the fulfilment of standards and measures to ensure the compliance of the Internal System and its implementation with the Standards for the Internal System is stated in the Methodology for Evaluation of Standards issued by the Agency.
3. The Standards for the Internal System use defined terms whose interpretations are stated in Article 13 herein. The defined terms are given in italics when they first appear in the text.
4. The standards for the Internal System are based on the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the Higher Education Area[2] (ESG 2015) and take into account generally binding regulations, in particular Act No. 269/2018 Coll. on quality assurance in higher education and amending Act No. 343/2015 Coll. on public procurement and on the amendment of certain acts, as amended (hereinafter referred to as the "the Quality Assurance Act"), Act No. 131/2002 on higher education and the amendment of certain acts, as amended (hereinafter referred to as the "Higher Education Act"), Act No. 292/2024 Coll. on adult education and on the amendment of certain acts (hereinafter referred to as the "Adult Education Act") and other generally binding legal regulations governing the field of higher education.
5. The Standards for the Internal System regulate the requirements for the evaluation of the internal systems of higher education institutions based in the Slovak Republic. They shall apply appropriately to the evaluation of the internal systems of applicants for state approval[3] and for the evaluation of the internal systems of higher education institutions based abroad, with an emphasis on the evaluation of compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area [4] from 2015.

Article 2
Quality assurance policies

1. In its strategic management, the higher education institution shall consistently apply *the quality assurance policies*. Their basic principle is to accept the primary responsibility of the

[1]Pursuant to § 2 letter a) of Act No. 269/2018 Coll. on quality assurance in higher education and on the amendment to Act No. 343/2015 Coll. on public procurement and on the amendment to certain acts, as amended ("the Quality Assurance Act").
[2]Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area – ESG 2015.
[3]Pursuant to § 33 of the Quality Assurance Act.
[4]Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area – ESG 2015.

institution for the quality of education provided at all *parts*, all levels and in all aspects *of the higher education institution*.

2. In its strategic documents, especially in the long-term plan, the higher education institution has a clearly defined mission which is consistently fulfilled.

3. In its strategic documents, especially in the long-term plan, the higher education institution has clearly defined strategic objectives in terms of its educational activities, *research, artistic and other activities* and other related activities in accordance with its mission.

4. The higher education institution has quality assurance policies that are implemented and formalized and it strictly follows them. For this purpose, it has established appropriate structures and processes that are linked to a coherent *internal system*, which applies to the entire institution. The internal system defines the competence and responsibilities of individual structures, institution management, other institution staff and relevant *stakeholders* to ensure the quality of higher education and related activities.

5. The higher education institution has sufficient personal staff, financial and material resources commensurate with its size and the extent of its educational, research, artistic and other activities and other related activities.

6. The policies, structures and processes of the higher education institution's internal system shall ensure:

a) student and external stakeholder involvement in quality assurance;

b) the interrelationship between educational and research, artistic and other activities and that the level and focus of research, artistic and other activities correspond to the level of higher education and the learning outcomes;

c) support for the internationalization of educational, research, artistic and other activities and other related activities to ensure that its level is commensurate with the mission and strategic objectives of the higher education institution, the learning objectives and outcomes and the needs of stakeholders;

d) protection against all forms of intolerance and discrimination against students, staff and applicants, based on gender, race, color, language, age, sexual orientation, belief or religion, disability, political or other opinions, national or social origin, nationality or ethnic group, property and origin;

e) the maintenance of *academic integrity*, adherence to academic ethics, vigilance against plagiarism and other types of *academic fraud*, and that appropriate action is taken in response to them;

f) effective mechanisms for examining claims through which students seek the protection of their rights and legally protected interests that they believe have been violated or through which students point out specific deficiencies in the actions or inactions of the higher education institution[5]. The examination of claims is transparent and is also carried out by student representatives. The complainants are provided with feedback on the results of the examination and the adopted measures;

g) compliance with and adherence to generally binding regulations and the internal regulations of the higher education institution;

h) the continuous improvement of the quality of the activities carried out by the higher education institution and the development of a quality culture at all parts and levels of the higher education institution;

i) the interrelationship between the internal system and the long-term plan of the institution;

[5]Pursuant to § 3 par. 3 letter g) of the Quality Assurance Act.

j) effective administration related to quality assurance and not overloading teachers, students and other staff involved in research, artistic and other activities with unnecessary bureaucratic obligations.

7. In the event that the higher education institution carries out habilitation proceedings and inauguration proceedings, the policies, structures and processes of the internal system ensure that the institution meets the standards for habilitation proceedings and inauguration proceedings[6].

8. Quality assurance policies shall be binding on all contractors of the higher education institution and other third parties that participate in or have an impact on the quality of education, research, artistic and other activities and other related activities.

9. Quality assurance policies and processes shall include the regular monitoring, evaluation, and revision of the internal system involving all stakeholders. These processes shall take into account whether the internal system leads to the achievement of strategic objectives in the field of quality assurance set in strategic documents, especially in the long-term plan.

10. The higher education institution shall allow easy public access to formalized policies and processes and to the further documentation of the internal system, while the type of access shall respect the specific needs of persons with disabilities. The internal system documentation relevant to students is published in all the languages of the delivered study programmes.

Article 3
Design, modification and approval of study programmes

1. The higher education institution has formalized structures and processes for the design, modification and approval of study programmes. The competence, extent and responsibilities of the individual structures, staff and other stakeholders for ensuring the quality of the study programme are defined.

2. The structures and processes for the design, modification and approval of study programmes shall ensure:

a) the involvement of students, employers and other relevant stakeholders;

b) a transparent, fair, professional, objective and independent evaluation of the study programme that avoids conflicts of interest and possible bias;

c) that study programmes meet the Standards for Study Programmes[7];

d) that study programmes have a specified and communicated qualification acquired through their successful completion corresponding to the requirements of the relevant level of the qualifications framework;

e) that the content and level of qualification meet the sector-specific expectations of employers and other external stakeholders;

f) that study programmes have a specified graduate profile with clearly defined and communicated learning objectives and learning outcomes that are verifiable and appropriate to the higher education institution’s mission, level of qualification and field

[6]Standards for Habilitation Proceedings and Inauguration Proceedings issued by the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education.

[7]Standards for Study Programmes issued by the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education.

knowledge according to the relevant field of study or combination of fields of study[8] in which graduates obtain their degree;

g) that the interrelationship between educational and research, artistic and other activities and the level and focus of research, artistic and other activities correspond to the level of higher education and learning outcomes;

h) that study programmes provide students with *transferable skills* that contribute to their personal development and can be used in their future careers and life as active citizens in democratic societies.

3. The structures and processes for the design, modification and approval of joint study programmes with institutions abroad shall ensure the application of the principles of the European approach to quality assurance in joint study programmes[9].

4. The granting of a higher education institution's entitlement to the design, implementation and modification of study programmes in the relevant field of study and at the relevant level[10] is conditioned on the compliance with the internal system and its implementation of these Standards and on the delivery of the study programme or study programmes in the relevant field of study and at the relevant level in compliance with the Standards for Study Programmes[11]. This condition shall be met by all study programmes assigned to the relevant field(s) of study and to the relevant levels that are carried out at the higher education institution and its parts.

Article 4
Student-centered learning, teaching and assessment

The policies, structures and processes of the internal system shall ensure that:

a) students are encouraged to take an active, autonomous, creative and independent role in their education and the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach;

b) the diversity of students and their needs is respected within the delivery of study programmes and that the flexibility of learning paths is enabled, also with regard to the possibility of managing work/family life while studying at a higher education institution;

c) various teaching and assessment methods, forms and concepts are used within the delivery of study programmes and that their application is regularly evaluated and improved;

d) students are provided with adequate guidance and support by teachers and that mutual respect between students and teachers is promoted;

e) examiners are familiar with existing testing and examination methods of verifying the achievement of learning outcomes, and the methods of testing and assessing students' performance and that they are supported in developing their skills in this field;

[8]The fields of study in which institutions in the Slovak Republic can provide higher education and their descriptions are stipulated in Decree No. 244/2019 Coll. of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic on the System of Study Branches in the Slovak Republic.

[9]European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes; available at: https://www.eqar.eu/assets/uploads/2018/04/02_European_Approach_QA_of_Joint_Programmes_v1_0.pdf

[10]In connection with § 25 par. 1 of the Quality Assurance Act.

[11]Pursuant to § 30 par. 11 and 12 of the Quality Assurance Act.

f) information regarding assessment criteria, methods and deadlines as well as marking criteria is communicated to the students in advance and is easily accessible;
g) the assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved and provides students with feedback, which, if necessary, is accompanied by recommendations and advice on the learning process;
h) the assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out according to the stated procedures and producing reliable conclusions that do not lead to unjustified differences in similar cases;
i) the assessment appropriately considers circumstances concerning students with special needs;
j) if possible, the assessment is carried out by more than one examiner; and
k) a formal procedure for student appeals against the assessment is available and applicants for remedies are guaranteed fair treatment.

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

The internal system policies, structures and processes shall ensure that:
a) that higher education institutions consistently apply pre-defined, published and easily accessible regulations covering all stages of the study cycle, e.g. student admission, progression, assessment, recognition of education, study completion, awarding of academic degrees, diplomas and any other evidence of formal qualifications;
b) that the offer to applicants is published in advance and provides objective and complete information on the study programmes, admission requirements and criteria and other study conditions;
c) inclusive conditions and equal opportunities for all applicants who demonstrate that they have met the admission standards and that the admission procedure is fair, transparent and reliable and that the selection of applicants is based on appropriate methods of assessing their eligibility for admission;
d) support measures and an environment for equalizing opportunities to study at a higher education institution for students with special needs[12] and students from disadvantaged backgrounds;
e) that the quality level of defended final and rigorous theses is in accordance with the corresponding degree, requires an appropriate level of research, artistic and other activities and that effective detection and principled sanctions of plagiarism and other academic fraud are ensured;
f) that the transparent, consistent and reliable recognition of higher education qualifications, periods and parts of the study, prior education, including non-formal and *informal education*, comply with the generally binding rules and principles of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European region,[13] in order to support student mobility; and

[12]Pursuant to § 100 of the Higher Education Act.
[13]Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, Lisbon 1997.

g) that the successful completion of studies is confirmed by the higher education institution by the award of an academic degree as well as by the issuance of a diploma and further documentation indicating the obtained qualifications, including the achieved learning outcomes, context, level and content of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed.

Article 6
Teaching staff

The policies, structures and processes of the internal system shall ensure:

a) that a transparent, objective and well-founded process for the selection of the teaching staff is implemented and that the criteria of the institution for filling the teaching staff positions are available in advance and follow the mission, long-term plan and generally binding regulations of the institution;

b) the openness of the teaching staff selection process that enables their inter institutional, inter-sectoral and international mobility;

c) systematic assurance by the higher education institution regarding the sufficient number of *teaching staff* with the required qualifications, workload allocation, research, artistic and other outputs, practical skills, teaching skills and *transferable skills* that enable them to achieve learning outcomes and that the number of teaching staff and their workload corresponds to the number of students;

d) that the interrelationship between educational and research, artistic and other activities of the teaching staff is strengthened and that the focus and level of achievement of these activities is commensurate with the learning outcomes and with the level of *qualifications framework* at which the education is provided;

e) the professional development and the development of language, teaching, digital and transferable skills of the teaching staff;

f) that the assignment of the teaching staff to the delivery of study programmes and educational activities as well as to the teaching of individual courses and the supervision of final and rigorous theses is transparent and guarantees that their level of qualification, skills, practical experience, research, artistic and other outputs correspond to the level and learning outcomes and thematic scope of the final theses. *Profile courses* are normally provided by staff members in the position of professors or associate professors employed at the university for fixed weekly working hours. In professionally oriented programmes, profile study courses are also provided by teachers who are experienced professionals from the relevant economic or social fields and who work at the institution for a fixed weekly or part-time period;

g) that the qualifications of the teachers providing a study programme are at least one degree higher than the qualifications achieved by its completion. This requirement may be waived in justified cases, such as foreign language lecturers, in-service teachers, specialists and doctoral candidates; and

h) that the workload allocation of the teaching staff enables the delivery and quality development of study programmes, teaching and other related educational activities, assessment of students, supervision and assessment of final theses, participation in research, artistic and other activities and in activities related to their professional

development and the fulfilment of the higher education institution's mission to the extent and proportion corresponding to the working hours and nature of their position.

Article 7
Learning resources and student support

The policies, structures and processes of the internal system shall ensure that:

a) the higher education institution has sufficient financial resources allocated to the comprehensive provision of study programmes and the related research, artistic and other activities, supportive activities and other activities corresponding to its mission;

b) the higher education institution's spatial, material, technical, infrastructural and institutional provision of educational, research, artistic and other activities and other related activities correspond to the learning outcomes, the number of students and their specific needs;

c) the higher education institution has functional contractual partnerships with specialized teaching establishments and other institutions which are necessary to achieve learning outcomes, in particular, practical training for the relevant professions;

d) information resources, library collections and services are easily accessible and correspond to the learning outcomes, number of students and research, artistic and other activities;

e) students have easy access to counselling as well as to administrative resources that meet their diverse needs and are necessary for progress in their studies and for their personal and career development;

f) the higher education institution has a qualified support staff that provides tutoring, counselling, administrative and other support services and related activities for students, and whose capacity is appropriate to the number of students and their diverse needs;

g) students have adequate social security, sporting, cultural, spiritual and social activities during their studies;

h) all of the resources referred to in the preceding paragraphs a) – g) shall be provided at all parts of a higher education institution where the study programmes or educational activities are delivered;

i) the use of all resources is efficient and effective; and

j) resources are accessible and students are informed of their accessibility.

Article 8
Information management

The policies, structures and processes of the internal system shall ensure that:

a) information used in the effective strategic, tactical and operational management of the delivery and development of study programmes, research, artistic and other activities and other related activities of the higher education institution is systematically collected, processed, analysed and evaluated;

b) the higher education institution has and systematically monitors a set of indicators by means of which it evaluates the characteristics of applicant profiles and the student population, the success rate and other admission characteristics, success rates within

study programmes, graduation rates within study programmes, student satisfaction with the delivery of study programmes and the accessibility of the resources needed for the study, the employability of graduates, the satisfaction of employers and other external stakeholders with the quality of graduates, the profile characteristics of the teaching and other staff, the research, artistic and other outputs and the degree of their interconnection with education and the internationalization of the institution's activities; and

c) all stakeholders are involved in the collection and processing of information.

Article 9
Public information

The policies, structures and processes of the internal system shall ensure that:

a) the higher education institution provides clear, precise, adequate and up-to-date quantitative and qualitative information on study programmes and their graduates as well as on other related activities in accordance with the mission of the institution that are relevant to the applicants, students, employees, employers and other external stakeholders and the public;

b) the higher education institution provides up-to-date information on the implementation and functioning of the internal system, the results achieved and the measures taken;

c) information on study programmes is provided in all the languages of their delivery; and

d) the information is easily accessible, even for individuals with disabilities.

Article 10
On-going monitoring and periodic review and approval of study programmes

The policies, structures and processes of the internal system shall ensure:

a) the on-going monitoring, periodic review and periodic approval of study programmes involving employers, students and other stakeholders;

b) that the delivery of study programmes, student assessment and learning outcomes are in line with the latest knowledge, technological possibilities, needs of the society, needs of students and expectations of employers and other external stakeholders and that the higher education institution creates a supportive and effective learning environment for students;

c) that the higher education institution has sufficient spatial, personal, material, technical, infrastructural, information and financial resources for the delivery of study programmes and other related activities;

d) that at least once a year the students have the opportunity to express their opinions on the quality of the study programmes, the quality of the teaching staff, the quality of support services and the quality of the higher education institution environment and that students are provided with feedback on the evaluation results and the measures taken;

e) that the modification of study programmes resulting from their on-going monitoring and periodic review is designed with the participation of students, employers and other stakeholders; and

f) that study programmes are periodically approved at periods corresponding to their standard length of study.

Article 11
Periodic external quality assurance

1. The higher education institution undergoes a periodic external quality assurance review in order to ensure that the internal system is being developed and implemented in line with the Standards for the Internal System.

Article 12
Quality assurance of educational programmes leading to the acquisition of microcredentials

1. The higher education institution has established and formalised policies within its internal system to ensure the quality of educational programmes leading to the acquisition of microcredentials (hereinafter referred to as the "*educational programme"*) and strictly adheres to them. It shall have established appropriate *structures* and *processes* for this purpose.

2. The internal system defines competences, scope and responsibilities of individual structures, managers, other staff, participants in educational programmes and other *stakeholders* to ensure the quality of educational programmes.

3. The higher education institution has formalized structures and processes in its internal system:

a) for the design, implementation, modification and approval of educational programmes within the sub-framework of higher education qualifications;

b) for the assessment of applications from certified educational institutions for approval to provide an educational programme within the sub-framework of higher education qualifications and within the sub-framework of professional qualifications corresponding to one or more accredited study programmes of the respective higher education institution;

c) to withdraw the consent for the provision of an educational programme within the sub-framework of higher education qualifications and within the sub-framework of professional qualifications of a certified educational institution.

4. The structures and processes referred to in paragraph 3 of this Article shall guarantee:

a) transparent, fair, evidence-based, objective and independent assessment and approval, in which conflicts of interest and possible bias are prevented;

b) compliance of educational programmes with generally binding regulations and internal regulations of the higher education institution or certified educational institution;

c) that the requirements of educational programmes are clearly defined pursuant to § 7 par. 1 letters a) to f) of Decree No. 405/2024 Coll. of the Ministry of Education,

Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic, implementing certain provisions of Act No. 292/2024 Coll. on adult education;

d) that the educational programme corresponds to an accredited study programme or programmes;

e) that the graduate profile of the educational programme clearly defines the objectives and outcomes of acquiring specific and verifiable knowledge, skills and transferable skills that correspond to the current needs of the labour market and society. In relation to labour market demands, the higher education institution appropriately considers sector-specific and geographically specific requirements;

f) that consistent rules are established, applied, published and easily accessible for all phases of the educational programme, in particular, the conditions of admission to the educational programme, the fee schedule for the educational programme, the method and criteria for verifying the learning outcomes, criteria for obtaining the microcredential and issuing documents on the acquired learning outcomes;

g) that consistent rules for the recognition of microcredentials in higher education system at all levels are enacted, applied, published and easily accessible;

h) that educational programmes have set appropriately the expected workload necessary to achieve learning outcomes expressed in ECTS credits, which shall not exceed the standard credit workload necessary to obtain higher education degree at any level;

i) that each educational programme has a person responsible for the quality, coordination and implementation of educational activities, whose qualifications correspond to the level of the qualification framework and the content of the educational programme;

j) that, if circumstances require, the educational programme has additional teachers whose qualifications correspond to the content of the educational programme;

k) that the provider of the educational programme has sufficient financial resources and necessary spatial, material, technical, infrastructural and institutional resources to achieve learning outcomes, including adequate resources in the case of distance or combined learning and/or learning via technical means, particularly those based on the use of computer networks;

l) that in the design and implementation of educational programmes, the higher education institution consistently applies the principles of academic ethics and prevents academic fraud and other forms of unethical behaviour;

m) that the provider of the educational programme systematically collects, processes, analyses and evaluates information that is used to ensure the quality of educational programme and that all stakeholders are involved in the respective collection and processing of information;

n) that the higher education institution has clearly defined target groups and their need of skills development, and that it tailors educational programmes to their needs, particularly in terms of professional performance, as well as in the area of social, cultural and civic competences;

o) that complete and up-to-date information on the educational programme, relevant for stakeholders and the general public is published;

p) that education programmes are continuously monitored, periodically evaluated and periodically approved, involving all stakeholders.

Article 13
Glossary of terms

1. For the purposes of the Standards, a set of terms and their definitions is set out in paragraphs 2 to 25 of this Article.

2. *Academic fraud* is a dishonest action that is contrary to academic integrity and moral standards. It includes plagiarism, cheating on tests, fabrication of research results, recording of fictitious data, omitting unsuitable facts and data, forgery of research, dishonest practices in publishing research results, not declaring conflicts of interest, misusing information gathered during reviewal, fictitious authorship, superficial and poor-quality review, systematic and conscious publishing in predatory magazines and publishing houses.

3. *The learning objectives of a study programme* identify students' abilities at the end of their studies and express what is expected of the study programme graduates. The objectives are stated in the programme through verifiable/measurable learning outcomes.

4. *Informal education* is the lifelong process of acquiring knowledge, skills and attitudes from day-to-day experience, from our environment and through contacts with other people.

5. *Competence* is the authority, capacity, effect or impact of a person in relation to a given task, procedure, process or activity for which such person is responsible.

6. *Competency*[14] is the professional competency of a person as a result of a complex of knowledge, skills and attitudes that the person has acquired through formal and informal learning in the process of gaining practical experience. Competencies, together with knowledge and skills, serve as structural characteristics of learning outcomes.

7. *The qualifications framework* is the national qualifications framework. The levels of the national qualifications framework correlate with the qualifications framework levels in the European Higher Education Area[15] and the European Qualifications Framework[16].

8. *Microcredential* is a document certifying learning outcomes obtained by a natural person on the basis of completing an educational programme.

9. *Non-formal education* is systematic education outside the formal education system. It is organised by various institutions in order to provide education for certain groups of the population in selected types, forms and content areas.

10. *Quality assurance internal system policies* are a set of principles that guide the activities of the higher education institutions and their staff, students and external stakeholders to achieve continuous quality assurance and the development of higher education and related activities.

11. *The internal system processes* are rules, regulations, codes, formalized procedures, and a sequence of steps through which the quality and development of higher education and related activities are ensured.

12. *Profile courses* are courses of the study programme that significantly contribute to the achievement of the graduate's profile, i.e. to the learning objectives and learning outcomes of the relevant study programme.

[14]"Competency" in the terminology of the Quality Assurance Act [§ 3 (3), letter a) 4] or "skill" in the terminology used in the professional literature on education.
[15]Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.
[16]European Qualifications Framework.

13. *Transferable skills* are skills that are not specifically linked to a particular job or profession but can be used and further developed in a variety of situations and conditions. They include communication skills, mathematical skills, organizational skills, digital skills, analytical skills, interpersonal skills, creativity and abstract thinking, critical thinking, mentoring and supervising skills, business skills, motivation and learning skills, contextual thinking and metacognitive skills.

14. *Rigorous thesis* is a thesis that is submitted following the completion of the second level of a higher education study programme; the viva is a part of the "rigorous" examination. Only institutions which are authorised to provide the second level of higher education in a given field are permitted to provide this kind of examination.

15. *Standards for the study programme* are a set of requirements whose fulfilment is required for obtaining a study programme accreditation.

16. *The structures of the internal system* are authorities, departments of the institution, contracted partners and persons with specified competencies and responsibilities for a defined extent of quality assurance in higher education and in other related activities.

17. *The parts of a higher education institution* include faculties and other pedagogical, research, technological development, arts, economics and information centres located at the seat of the higher education institution or its faculties, special facilities, detached workplaces and consulting centres outside the higher education institution or outside its faculties.

18. *Research, artistic and other activities* are activities[17] of a higher education institution that are relevant to its mission, mainly to its learning objectives and outcomes.

19. *Teaching staff* are all persons who provide study programmes, whether employed as university teachers, researchers, doctoral candidates or specialists, regardless of their working hours or type of work contract.

20. *Modification of a study programme* is an addition or deletion of compulsory courses or compulsory optional courses, a change in the requirements for the regular completion of study, and a modification of the information sheet of a compulsory course or a compulsory optional course, but does not include teacher updates, recommended literature or course evaluations[18].

21. *Scientific integrity* is a primary prerequisite for quality scientific work; it entails strict adherence to high professional and moral standards, and transparency. It implies conducting research critically and without prejudice, and in the absolute integrity of the practice, teaching, and research administration. It is the opposite of scientific dishonesty and deceit.

22. *The internal quality assurance system of higher education* is a consistently interlinked set of policies, structures, and processes through which the institution ensures and develops the quality of the fulfilment of its mission in the spheres of higher education, research, artistic and other activities and other related activities.

23. *Learning outcome*[19] is a detailed description of what the learner knows, understands and can do at the end of the learning process to ensure that the individual learning objectives of the programme are fulfilled. It is stated in the content of knowledge, skills and

[17]Pursuant to § 3 par. 2 letter a) of the Quality Assurance Act.

[18]Pursuant to § 2 letter g) of the Quality Assurance Act.

[19] "Outcome of higher education" in the terminology of the Quality Assurance Act [§ 3 (3), letter a) 4] or "learning outcomes" in the terminology of Decree No. 614/2002 Coll. of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic on the study credit system.

competencies. In contrast to a learning objective, a learning outcome is fixed and the degree of its fulfilment is measurable and verifiable. Learning outcomes are stated for each study programme and its individual parts and for individual courses.

24. *An educational programme* is an education leading to the acquisition of microcredential with a minimum of 25 teaching hours, which may be provided by a higher education institution or a certified educational institution with its consent.

25. *Stakeholders* are the persons within the higher education institution, communities or organizations that may have an influence on or be influenced by the educational process, research, artistic and other activities and other related activities. A distinction is made between internal stakeholders (students, participants of educational programmes and teaching staff) and external stakeholders (employers and other representatives of relevant sectors of the economy and society, university graduates, domestic and international partners ot the higher education institution).

26. *A final thesis* is a bachelor's thesis in first level study programmes, a diploma thesis in second level study programmes and a dissertation thesis in third level study programmes.

27. *Skill* is the ability or the art of easily and accurately applying knowledge and performing a certain cognitive, psychomotor or social activity. Skills, together with knowledge and competencies, serve as structural characteristics of learning outcomes.

Article 14
Transitional and final provisions

1. These Standards repeal and replace the Standards of 2 July 2020.

2. These Standards were approved by the Executive Board of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education on 4 September 2025 and shall enter into force on 1 October 2025.

3. Higher education institutions are required to align their internal systems with these Standards within 12 months of the Standards coming into effect.