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Pursuant to provisions of Article 8, Paragraph 3 of the Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Science (Official Gazette 151/22) and provisions of Article 32, Paragraph 1, Items 1 and 2 of the Statute of the Agency for Science and Higher Education (CLASS: 003-05/13-01/0001; FILE NUMBER: 355-01-23-29), at its 2<sup>nd</sup> session held on 11 May 2023 the Accreditation Council adopted the following

# QUALITY STANDARDS FOR EVALUATIONS IN THE PROCEDURE OF INITIAL ACCREDITATION OF UNDERGRADUATE, GRADUATE, INTEGRATED, SPECIALIST AND SHORT-CYCLE PROGRAMMES

#### Article 1

- (1) The standards for external quality evaluation in the process of initial accreditation of study programmes include standards, elements and quality indicators and criteria for initial accreditation of research institutes, against which the level of their fulfilment is determined and a quality assessment is passed.
- (2) Quality standards are divided into units (four assessment areas) content-wise, and they refer to various aspects of study quality evaluation.
- (3) For the purposes of this document, the following expressions shall have the following meaning:
  - A standard is a clearly defined level of quality of a particular aspect of quality of the higher education institution.
  - Elements of the standards are considered when assessing the compliance of an aspect of quality of a higher education institution and a study programme against the standards.
  - The criterion for the initial accreditation of the study programme is related to Article 12 of the Quality Assurance Act (151/22), which must be complied with during the initial accreditation of a higher education institution/study programme, and it is highlighted red in the text. Indicators are used to assess the level of compliance of the standards.



Sources for checking the fulfilment of the standards – documents of the higher education institution, websites and other materials that serve to check and assess the level of fulfilment of the standards. The sources mentioned in this document are only examples that a higher education institution can use as guidelines in the preparation of study programme proposals, as well as help to the expert panel in assessing the level of fulfilment of quality standards. Both the higher education institution and the expert panel can use other sources and information collected from the received application form and during the site visit to the higher education institution.

The level of fulfilment of the standard is a quantitative assessment passed by an expert panel and a qualitative assessment passed by an expert panel which includes recommendations for quality improvement.

(4) Gendered terms used in this document are used neutrally and refer equally to male and female gender.

#### Article 2

In the initial accreditation procedure of undergraduate, graduate, integrated, specialist and short-cycle study programmes, the following quality standards apply:

#### I. Internal quality assurance

1.1. Clear justification for the introduction of the			
new study programme has been provided with			=
regard to the mission and strategic goals of the	Not fulfilled	Partly fulfilled	Fulfilled
higher education institution, as well as economic			
and societal needs.			

#### Elements and indicators of the standard

In the course of planning and proposing the new study programme, the higher education institution made sure that the programme was specific and there was no overlap with similar programmes in central and south-eastern Europe and the neighbouring countries, as well as in the Republic of Croatia in general.

In the course of planning and proposing the new study programme, an analysis of programme compatibility with the mission and strategic goals of the higher education institution was taken into account.

In the course of planning and proposing the new study programme, an analysis of the justification of introducing the new programme was taken into account, in particular with regard to scientific, artistic, cultural and humanistic needs (if applicable) and societal/economic needs.

The proposed study programme is aligned with labour market needs and ensures the employability of students in the Republic of Croatia.

Admission quotas are aligned with labour market needs and the capacities of the higher education institution, and are part of consistent strategic planning.

Admission quotas are aligned with scientific needs (in the case of university study programmes).

Minimal institutional requirements of the proposed study programme are comparable to similar accredited programmes in the Republic of Croatia and EU member states.

In the course of proposing the new study programme, an opinion of the Croatian Employment Service was submitted on the compatibility of the programme with the labour market, i.e. evidence that an application to issue an opinion on the compatibility of the programme with the labour market was submitted to the Croatian Employment Service at least 30 days prior.

- mission and strategic goals of the higher education institution;
- analysis of justification for launching the study programme;
- analysis of employability of students on completion of the programme;
- opinion of the Croatian Employment Service on the compatibility of the programme with the labour market or evidence that an application to issue an opinion on the compatibility of the programme with the labour market was submitted to the Croatian Employment Service at least 30 days prior;
- optimal number of students who may enrol in the programme in accordance with labour market needs and the capacities of the higher education institution;
- analysis of minimum institutional requirements for the comparability of the study programme with similar accredited study programmes in the Republic of Croatia and EU member states.

1	.2. The study programme has undergone an
a	ppropriate internal quality assurance process
aı	nd has been formally approved by the higher
e	ducation institution.

Partly fulfilled

**Fulfilled** 

# Elements and indicators of the standard

The higher education institution has published a quality assurance policy which encompasses all aspects of education and relevant aspects of research in the case of university study programmes on its website and has made it publicly available.

The development of the new programme has undergone an internal quality assurance process which involved internal and external stakeholders (alumni, employers, the local community, etc.) and students.

The higher education institution collected and analysed relevant data which was used to decide to introduce the new programme, i.e. make changes to an existing programme / mode of delivery of the programme.

The new programme was approved by a competent professional body (for example, senate, faculty, i.e. academy council, polytechnic council or management

- rules and procedures for the introduction of new programmes, i.e. making changes to existing programmes;
- evidence of student and external stakeholder involvement in the development of the new programme, i.e. making changes to an existing
- adopted decision of a competent professional body on the adoption of the programme.

1.3. The higher education institution will collect, analyse and use relevant data for the effective management and continuous enhancement of the study programme in accordance with the published quality assurance policy.

Not fulfilled

Partly fulfilled

**Fulfilled** 

# Elements and indicators of the standard

The management and continuous enhancement of the programme is aligned with the quality assurance policy of the higher education institution.

Processes and key indicators which will be used to monitor the quality of programme delivery have been defined, as well as methods for collecting necessary

Target values and deadlines have been defined for all key indicators.

Student, staff and where possible other stakeholder feedback will be used for continuous enhancement of the programme.

Monitoring will be used to determine if the distribution of ECTS credits, defined learning outcomes and estimated workload are feasible, realistic and appropriate.

Mechanisms which will be used to assess and adapt delivery mode and teaching methods, as well as student assessment and examination have been defined.

Monitoring processes will make use of data on programme duration, completion rate and drop-out rate.

Monitoring results and action plans will be publicly available.

- publicly available quality assurance policy;
- processes and data which will be used to monitor various aspects of the programme;
- key indicators which will be used to monitor programme quality and data collection methods;
- plan for assuring programme quality, including target values for key indicators and deadlines;
- rules, procedures, activities used to adopt and assure programme quality and continuous enhancement;

- processes used in quality assurance of programme delivery and use of teaching and learning methods and assessment and examination methods (surveys, questionnaires, focus groups, etc.);
- procedures used to enhance the study programme.

1.4. The higher education institution informs the
public about the study programmes it offers, as
well as plans to offer new programmes, i.e.
changes made to existing ones.

Partly fulfilled

**Fulfilled** 

## Elements and indicators of the standard

The higher education institution publishes clear, well-organised, up-to-date, easily searchable and publicly available information.

The higher education institution publishes information on admission requirements, intended learning outcomes, teaching and assessment methods, and qualifications which may be gained.

The higher education institution publishes information on the opportunities students have to continue their studies or find employment on completion of their studies.

- brochures on study programmes;
- open house days;
- organisation of fairs for prospective applicants;
- HEI website.

### II. Study programme

2.1. The proposed study programme is
compatible with the qualification standard in the Croatian Qualifications Framework Register*.

Not fulfilled

Partly fulfilled

**Fulfilled** 

# Elements and indicators of the standard

The proposed study programme is compatible with the qualification standard in the Croatian Qualifications Framework Register.

- the qualification standard is listed in the Croatian Qualifications Framework Register;
- study programme proposal.

<sup>\*</sup> If the qualification standard is not listed in the Croatian Qualifications Framework, the standard does not apply.

2.2. Intended learning outcomes at the level of the study programme are aligned with the competences a student should gain by completing the study programme, as well as with the CroQF and EQF level.	Not fulfilled	Partly fulfilled	Fulfilled
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The intended learning outcomes at the level of the study programme have been clearly defined and examples of good practice have been used to define them (for example, the ECTS guide 2015).

The intended learning outcomes are aligned with requirements of the profession and internationally recognised professional standards, and they ensure that the programme is contemporary.

The intended learning outcomes clearly reflect the competences required to participate in the labour market, continue one's education or meet other needs of individuals/society or meet other needs of individuals, society or scientific discipline (if applicable).

The intended learning outcomes are comparable with the intended outcomes of comparable programmes in the Republic of Croatia and EU member states.

The intended learning outcomes also include the development of generic (general/key/transferable) and profession-specific competences.

The intended learning outcomes are aligned with the descriptor of the relevant Croatian Qualifications Framework and EQF level.

In the case of graduate programmes, the intended learning outcomes reflect a clear distinction between the intended programme and the existing undergraduate programme.

In the case of graduate programmes, the higher education institution has a document constituting evidence of an accredited undergraduate programme in the same scientific or artistic field.

In the case of university specialist studies, the higher education institution has a document constituting evidence of an accredited graduate programme, i.e. university integrated undergraduate and graduate programme in the same scientific or artistic field.

- study programme proposal;
- employer survey regarding competences required on the labour market;
- analysis of the alignment with labour market needs;

- alignment of intended learning outcomes with recommendations of professional associations, where applicable;
- alignment of intended learning outcomes with internationally defined learning outcomes for that profession, if there are any;
- alignment of intended learning outcomes with Croatian Qualifications Framework level descriptors;
- Table 1. Table linking units of learning outcomes (LO) from the qualification standard with programme outcomes.

2.3. The intended course outcomes are aligned with the intended learning outcomes at the level of the study programme.

Not fulfilled

Partly fulfilled

**Fulfilled** 

### Elements and indicators of the standard

The higher education institution has clearly defined the intended learning outcomes for all elements of the study programme (courses, modules, practicals, seminars, student practice, projects, etc.).

The list of learning outcomes for each element of the study programme is extensive and detailed, and includes everything the student needs to master on successful completion of the work and study involved in each element.

The higher education institution checks and ensures that course outcomes are aligned with programme level outcomes.

The intended course outcomes also include the development of generic (general/key/transferable) and profession-specific competences.

- study programme proposal;
- regulations on studying and/or student grading;
- intended learning outcomes;
- intended course outcomes;
- Table 2. Programme level outcomes.

2.4. The study programme content allows students to achieve all the intended learning outcomes.	Not fulfilled	Partly fulfilled

Fulfilled

# Elements and indicators of the standard

The study programme, in addition to profession-specific knowledge, anticipates the acquisition of generic competences.

The study programme content ensures horizontal and vertical student mobility in the national and European education area.

The higher education institution provides evidence of the alignment of the content of each course with the intended course outcomes.

The higher education institution ensures that courses are offered in an appropriate sequence and has clearly defined the prerequisites for enrolment on each

The core disciplines for the acquisition of all professional competences are well represented.

- study programme proposal;
- intended learning outcomes and course outcomes for each course;
- prerequisites for enrolment in individual courses;
- inclusion of core disciplines necessary for the profession.

2.5. ECTS distribution is aligned with the anticipated actual student workload.	Not fulfilled	Partly fulfilled	Fulfilled

ECTS credits are allocated in accordance with rules and recommendations applicable in the European Higher Education Area.

ECTS credits are allocated for every element of the study programme based on total student workload, which includes all planned activities.

For each student obligation, an appropriate number of ECTS is allocated in accordance with the actual student workload.

The higher education institution has appropriate mechanisms to ensure ECTS allocation is aligned with the actual student workload.

- study programme proposal;
- ECTS credits allocated to courses which comprise the study programme;
- planned mechanisms to check the alignment of ECTS credits with the actual student workload;
- planned mechanisms for enhancement and revision of student workload expressed as ECTS credits.

2.6. Student/professional practice is an integral part of study programmes (if applicable).	Not fulfilled	Partly fulfilled	Fulfilled

Student/professional practice is an integral part of study programmes and is organised outside the higher education institution, in cooperation with the labour market, where this is applicable.

Student/professional practice is allocated an appropriate number of ECTS.

Mechanisms are ensured to allow student/professional practice to be carried out in a systematic and responsible manner which will ensure the achievement of intended learning outcomes connected with student/professional practice.

The opportunity to learn and acquire practical skills is planned.

- study programme proposal which includes practical skills;
- intended learning outcomes and particular course outcomes which include the acquisition of practical skills;
- a procedure for assessing the achievement of intended practice-related learning outcomes;
- number of ECTS credits allocated for student/professional practice;
- contracts with employers, regulations on student/professional practice;
- feedback from employers in cooperation with whom student/professional practice will be carried out;
- planned mechanisms to assure the quality of student/professional practice (student logbooks, evaluation questionnaires for students and mentors at the higher education institution and outside the institution, etc.).

2.7. If the completion of the study programme allows students access to a regulated profession, the programme is aligned with national and European regulations and the recommendations of national and international professional associations.  Not fulfilled associations.	Partly fulfilled	Fulfilled
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The study programme is aligned with the minimum training conditions defined by EU directives and the Act on Regulated Professions and the Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications.

The proposed study programme is included in the list of regulated professions in the Republic of Croatia, where applicable.

The higher education institution acknowledges and applies the recommendations of professional associations.

Graduates are competitive on the national and international labour market.

- opinion of competent body on compliance with the requirements stipulated for regulated professions (included in the list of regulated professions in the Republic of Croatia);
- consent/opinion of competent professional chamber included in the list of regulated professions or another professional association (if there is analysis of study programme alignment with rules and recommendations

## III Teaching process and student support

3.1. Admission requirements and criteria as well as the admissions procedure are clearly defined and transparent, and guarantee that students will possess the necessary prior knowledge.

Not fulfilled

Partly fulfilled

**Fulfilled** 

#### Elements and indicators of the standard

The criteria for admission or continuation of studies are clearly defined.

The envisaged criteria for admission or continuation of studies ensure the selection of candidates with appropriate prior knowledge, which is aligned with the requirements of the study programme.

The higher education institution has defined procedures for recognition of prior learning.

The higher education institution has defined the manner of evidence which will be required/accepted for admission.

Admission requirements, admission criteria and enrolment procedure are clearly defined, published in time and publicly available.

- clear admission criteria (evaluation of high school performance, State Matura level, elective exams, additional assessments of knowledge and skills);
- defined decision-making procedure in relation to the admission criteria;
- defined procedures for recognising domestic (Croatian) and foreign higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning in case of continuation of studies;
- anticipated number of students on the programme (for the first year of study);
- proposed manner of publishing all information related to enrolment in the study programme.

3.2. The planned teaching methods guarantee student-centred teaching and the achievement of all intended learning outcomes.	Not fulfilled	Partly fulfilled	Fulfilled

Various modes of programme delivery have been planned in accordance with the intended learning outcomes.

Various teaching methods have been planned that encourage interactive and research-based learning, problem solving, creative and critical thinking, and independence and responsibility (for example, individual and group projects, cooperative learning, problem-based learning, field work and other interactive

The planned teaching methods are adapted to a diverse student population (non-traditional student population, part-time students, mature students, underrepresented\* and vulnerable groups\*\* etc.).

The student workload has been distributed appropriately throughout the day, week, semester and year so as to avoid overloading students.

The use of advanced/modern technologies and staff training has been planned. The necessary conditions have been ensured to enable this.

Mechanisms for the assessment and adjustment of the used modes of programme delivery and teaching methods used have been ensured.

\*Under-representation in higher education is defined as a lower participation of a certain group of students in relation to their percentage in the general population, and the situation in other European countries. The under-represented groups are as follows: students whose parents have lower educational qualifications, female students in technical fields and male students in the humanities; mature students; students with disabilities; students with children; students belonging to the Roma minority.

\*\*Vulnerability is perceived as difficulties in the academic or social integration of students, associated with certain personal characteristics of students.

- study programme proposal and curriculum;
- modes of delivery and use of teaching methods;
- planned mechanisms to monitor the quality of instructional delivery and use of teaching methods (surveys, questionnaires, talks with stakeholders,
- e-learning systems (LMS, VLS), repositories, etc.

3.3. The higher education institution has provided evidence that adequate support will be ensured for future students.	Not fulfilled	Partly fulfilled	Fulfilled
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The higher education institution has ensured that future students will have the opportunity to receive guidance on studying and career opportunities (for example, tutors, supervisors and other advisers as support in student learning and progress).

The higher education institution has planned functional procedures for future student career guidance, psychological and legal counselling, support to students with disabilities, support in outgoing and incoming mobility, and library and student administration services, at university or faculty level.

The planned student support is tailored to a diverse student population (part-time students, mature students, students from abroad, students from under-represented and vulnerable groups, students with learning difficulties and disabilities, etc.).

The higher education institution employs an adequate number of qualified professional, administrative and technical staff.

- regulations on studying, regulations on internal organisation;
- information packages for new students;
- number, qualification structure, and availability of library and administrative staff;
- decisions on establishing and rules of procedure of library and advisory services;
- established student support and counselling services (psychological, academic/study, legal, career guidance) at the level of university or university constituent;
- availability of teaching staff to students (for example, information on office hours is provided).

3.4. Objective and consistent evaluation and
assessment of student achievements are planned
so as to ensure the achievement of all intended
learning outcomes.

#### Partly fulfilled

#### **Fulfilled**

#### Elements and indicators of the standard

The criteria and methods for evaluation and grading are clear and planned to be made publicly available before individual courses begin.

The criteria and methods for evaluation and grading are aligned with the intended learning outcomes.

The criteria and methods for evaluation and grading are aligned with the planned teaching methods.

Mechanisms are planned to ensure the impartiality and objectivity of evaluating and grading student achievements.

Planned evaluation procedures take into account special circumstances of certain groups of students (modifying examination procedures to suit e.g. students with disabilities), while at the same time ensuring the achievement of intended learning outcomes.

A student appeals procedure is planned, as well as provision of feedback on the results of evaluation and grading.

- study programme proposal;
- criteria and methods for evaluation and grading;
- defined procedure on how to ensure objectivity and consistent implementation of evaluation and grading procedures;
- defined procedure on how to implement activities to support skills development related to testing and examination methods for those who
  evaluate students;
- defined procedure on how to modify examinations processes (for example, for students with disabilities);
- planned functional student appeals procedure.

#### IV. Teaching resources and infrastructure

4.1. The higher education institution has ensured adequate teaching capacities to deliver the study programme and achieve the intended learning outcomes.	Not fulfilled	Partly fulfilled	Fulfilled
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#### Elements and indicators of the standard

At the time of submitting the application, the higher education institution is employing teachers who are delivering courses in the total value of at least 50% of any type of direct instruction in the case of the first year of a university study programme, i.e. 35% of any type of direct instruction in the case of the first year of a professional study programme (for every subsequent year the higher education institution must show evidence that this requirement has been met for the year ahead).

The higher education institution employs an adequate number of teachers full time on an indefinite term basis.

At philological studies, a maximum of half the teachers may hold the teaching positions of language instructor, senior language instructor and language instructor advisor.

The ratio between the total number of enrolled students and the total number of full-time teachers and those with nominal teaching titles does not exceed 30: 1 (when calculating the ratio, the number of working hours of teachers who are not employed full time is added up to meet the number of working hours required of a full-time teacher).

Total annual teaching load of all teachers does not exceed 20% of the total annual standard teaching load (in the case of public HEIs).

Total annual teaching load of an individual teacher does not exceed 20% of the total annual standard teaching load.

The teachers are qualified to deliver the course(s) they teach.

Lead course instructors are qualified for the courses where they assume this role.

The higher education institution has clearly defined how it intends to support teachers in their scientific, teaching and/or professional development.

- information on whether courses on a study programme have been covered;
- information on student/teacher ratio;
- information on teacher workload;

- information on the number of teachers holding a doctoral degree;
- information on each teacher involved in the delivery of the study programme (their CV, employment contract, decision on appointment to a title, evidence of registration for health and pension insurance);
- information on lead course instructors;
- alignment of staff numbers with the relevant CroQF standard;
- Table 3. Student-teacher ratio at the higher education institution;
- Table 4. Value of all types of direct instruction included in the study programme;
- Table 5. Teachers on the study programme.

4.2. The qualifications and professional experience of external associates are appropriate for the delivery of the study programme and the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.  Not fulfilled	Partly fulfilled Fulfilled
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External associates have relevant work experience.

External associates include the latest research, trends and professional expertise from the labour market in the teaching process.

The higher education institution encourages the participation of external associates in the supervision of final and graduation theses.

The higher education institution encourages the organization of student/professional practice at the institution where the external associate is employed.

If external associates come from the business sector and/or from abroad, the higher education institution organises trainings on how to plan and teach classes and informs the external associates about regulations and practices in the higher education sphere (for example, ECTS credits, learning outcomes, teaching methods).

- a list of external associates, the institutions where they are employed and their positions;
- qualifications of external associates for the course(s) they teach (their CV);
- a written statement provided by each external associate stating that they are prepared to teach classes and a written statement by the head of the higher education institution where the teacher is employed, as well as the course and the period for which permission is granted;
- examples of co-supervision;
- contract regulating the organisation of student/professional practice;
- Table 5. Teachers on the study programme.

4.3. The premises, equipment and entire infrastructure (classrooms, laboratories, library, etc.) are appropriate for the delivery of the study programme and ensure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.		Partly fulfilled	Fulfilled
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The higher education institution ensures a minimum of 1 m² of space per student.

The premises, equipment and the entire infrastructure (laboratories, IT service, work facilities etc.) are adequate for the delivery of the study programme and ensure the achievement of intended learning outcomes and implementation of scientific activity.

The premises, equipment and entire infrastructure (laboratories, IT service, work facilities, etc.) are adequate for the realization of professional and/or scientific research.

The higher education institution has ensured an adequate supply of computers to be made available to students, as well as wireless internet access in all rooms intended for students.

- information on the premises (documents proving ownership or the right to use the premises);
- evidence of the institution's own equipment or leased equipment required for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes;
- optimal number of prospective students given the premises, equipment and number of teachers;
- availability of literature in the library;
- access to relevant databases;
- alignment of material conditions with the relevant CroQF standard;
- Table 6. Premises

4.4. The library premises and resources, as well
as access to additional services ensure the
availability of literature and library services for
the delivery of the study programme.

Partly fulfilled

**Fulfilled** 

#### Elements and indicators of the standard

The higher education institution has ensured the literature needed to deliver the proposed study programme.

Students and teachers on the proposed study programme have access to ICT resources.

Students and teachers on the proposed study programme have access to library materials in print and/or electronic format.

The library premises and resources, including additional resources, meet the conditions for a high quality of study in accordance with, among other things, the conditions stipulated by the Standard for Higher Education, University and Scientific Libraries (Official Gazette, 81/22).

- examination of library premises;
- availability of up-to-date teaching materials;
- number of copies of required readings for each course on the proposed study programme;
- subscriptions to appropriate bibliographic databases and databases with full-text access;
- availability of the network library catalogue of the evaluated higher education institution;
- availability of teaching materials via protected website;
- Table 7. Library premises and resources.

4.5. The higher education institution ensures the
availability of the necessary financial resources
to organise the activities and quality delivery of
the proposed study programme.

Partly fulfilled

**Fulfilled** 

#### Elements and indicators of the standard

Financial resources have been ensured for study programme delivery and achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

The higher education institution has provided evidence of financial sustainability and efficiency.

The public higher education institution has provided evidence of sufficient funds to deliver the study programme in the form of a concluded programme contract or projections of income from tuition or other sources.

#### Sources for assessing the fulfilment of the standard:

- calculations of expenses planned for the delivery of the proposed study programme (per student, per year of study);
- financial plan of income and expenses for a period of at least three years which clearly indicates the source of funding for all existing study programmes as well as the proposed study programme, and a breakdown of expenses;
- evidence of ensured financial resources corresponding with the list of expenses;
- Table 8. Financial sustainability

#### Article 3

Quality Standards shall be published on the website of the Agency and shall enter into force on the day of their publication.

President of the Accreditation Council

Prof. Mirjana Hruškar, PhD