

State Quality Standards in Higher Education Institutions

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STATE QUALITY STANDARDS

State Quality Standards, logic and organization

State Quality Standards are drafted in accordance with and for implementation of Article 61 of Law No.9741 of 21.5.2007, "On Higher Education in Republic of Albania", amended and pursuant to guidelines of Quality Assurance in European Area of Higher Education. They help Higher Education Institutions to assess their procedures, outcomes and potential. Division in chapters directs Higher Education Institutions to fulfill basic tasks (study programs, science policy, and institution management) and helps them to assess the internal quality assurance from a strategic viewpoint. With these normative standards that are possible to be implemented, institutions are allowed all freedom of expression.

Based on the operation logic, this set of standards invites Higher Education Institutions to accept it. With a properly performed assessment, Institution will have an overall vision of functioning and greater autonomy in management policy.

The logic on the basis of which State Quality Standards are designed dictates that they should be distributed to all constituent units of higher education institutions in order to to include not only the bodies and their management authorities in the self-evaluation process.

This is the opportunity to create a dynamic stream that will lay before them the need for recognition of successful collective practices and the use of instruments and methods for a sustainable assessment.

Thus, Institution will use the self-evaluation process for its own purposes, as a real tool of measurement and progress to show the image that will distinguish it among other institutions. Furthermore, internal assessment report that it will have drafted, will enable Public Agency for Higher Education Accreditation (PAHEA) to assess the ability of institution to prove that it meets its obligations and responsibilities and it is aware of its capacities.

Glossary

Principal objectives of study programs and standards of offered programs are the basis for building chapters and highlighting the goals that Higher Education Institutions aim to achieve in relation to their missions in public service. (examples: students from registration to employment; research: research outcomes, dissemination, evaluation, transfer, etc.).

Standards: They are the entire requirements, qualities and characteristics that help to achieve

these fundamental objectives of HEI-s, which are defined as targets to respond to a certain level of institution development (examples: Institution pursues a policy of

welcoming new students, Institution follows a policy of public communication and dissemination of outcomes in scientific research field...).

Criteria: They are examples of good practice, listed in a non-final form (that is, they are not reviewed finally). They help Institution to meet standards in favor of quality improvement (examples: Institution offers Study programs and provides academic staff for their accomplishment; institution interacts with actors from local or foreign economic and business areas). Performance indicators and solutions tailored to achieve its best, will improve Institution functioning.

State Quality Standards in Higher Education Institutions.

State Quality Standards represent the entire requirements, criteria that Institution meets, which serve as a set of recommendations to help Higher Education Institutions to reach a certain development level. The criteria are standard, achievable, verifiable, clearly defined elements on which Institutions rely to fulfill their missions and they are used to make an assessment a classification, etc.

Contents

- Standard I.3 Study programs are offered in accordance with laws and bylaws in force.
- Standard I.4 Study programs are offered in accordance with level of studies.
- Standard I.5 Study programs aim to reach international dimensions.
- Standard I.6 Study programs include vocational training and scientific research.
- Standard I.7 Study programs "Professional Master" are offered in accordance with labor market needs.
- Standard I.8 Study programs take into account labor market needs.
- Standard I.9 Study programs aim at maintaining national cultural values and national interests.
- Standard I.10 Institution uses evaluation methodologies, measuring and evaluation instruments for the progress of study programs.
- Standard I.11 Institution drafts a development plan for study programs, teaching and learning results.
- Standard I.12 Duration and number of credits for study programs of this cycle are in accordance with law No. 9741 of 21.5.2007, "On Higher Education in Republic of Albania", amended.
- Standard I.13 Institution publishes regularly unbiased, objective, qualitative and quantitative information for internal evaluation.

II - ORGANIZATION, MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF INSTITUTION IS MADE IN ACCORDANCE WITH STUDY PROGRAMS NEEDS.

- Standard II.1 Academic, assisting teaching-scientific and administrative staff are engaged to fulfill study programs objectives.
- Standard II.2 Institution is organized in accordance with laws and bylaws in force, to accomplish its mission.
- Standard II.3 Institution units are engaged directly and devotedly for study programs implementation.
- Standard II.4 Academic staff is engaged in designing and implementing institution development policies.
- Standard II.5 Institution provides the necessary infrastructure for implementation of second cycle study programs and integrated study programs of second cycle that it offers.
- Standard II.6 Institution provides effective management of information about study programs.
- Standard II.7 Institution conducts an annual analysis to assess second cycle study programs and second cycle integrated programs.
- Standard II.8 Second cycle study programs and second cycle integrated study programs provide for a graduation plan.

Standard II.9 - Institution makes an annual (external and/or internal) audit about the financial situation.

III - STAFF OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS is COMPOSED OF ACADEMIC STAFF, SUPPORTING TEACHING-SCIENTIFIC STAFF AND ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF.

Standard III.1 - Institution follows legal and transparent procedures for personnel recruitment and evaluation.

Standard III.2 - Academic staff (with scientific degrees and academic titles) covers the Institution needs and have clearly defined responsibilities.

Standard III.3 - Academic staff is engaged in scientific activities organized in the study program framework.

Standard III.4 - Institution offers also teaching programs in foreign language, with a qualified academic staff.

Standard III.5 - Students who attend study programs of the second cycle "Master of Science" or integrated study programs of second cycle have a supervisor for the thesis.

Standard III.6 - Study-research field in which the supervisor is specialized is consistent with the study field in which the study program is provided and thesis is foreseen to be prepared.

Standard III.7 - Institution engages supporting teaching-scientific and administration staff to fulfill its mission.

Standard III.8 - Academic staff carries out the teaching load defined in laws and bylaws in force

Standard III.9 - Institution has a database for its personnel

IV - INSTITUTIONS PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF STUDENTS

Standard IV.1 - Students have the right to pursue study programs of second cycle and integrated study programs of second cycle.

Standard IV. 2 - Institution informs students about: the institution status, study programs it offers and employment policies.

Standard IV. 3 - When institution applies for evaluation and accreditation for the second time, it has statistics about the number of students attending study programs of second cycle and integrated programs of second cycle.

Standard IV. 4 - Institution has a database about employment statistics of graduate students after completion of study programs of second cycle and integrated study programs of second cycle.

Standard IV. 5 - Institution informs students consistently in details about study programs.

Standard IV. 6 - Institution engages its staff to care for students.

V - INSTITUTIONS PROVIDES SERVICES AND MAKES LIBRARIES AND OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS

Standard V. 1 - Institution makes its library available to students.

Standard V. 2 - Institution makes available to students sufficient labs and appropriate learning facilities.

V. 3 - Institution has cooperative relations with domestic or foreign business actors to carry out practices his students.

VI - INSTITUTION HAS AND MANAGES FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Standard VI.1 - Institution drafts a financial report on costs of study programs.

VII - INSTITUTION GUARANTEES INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COOPERATION RELATIONS

Standard VII.1 - Institution guarantees fruitful cooperation relations among its staff.

Standard VII.2 - Institution guarantees collaborative relationship with counterpart institutions abroad and domestic or foreign business actors.

VIII - INSTITUTION GUARANTEES QUALITY ASSURANCE

Standard VIII.1 - Institution guarantees quality assurance in realization of study programs.

STATE QUALITY STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION OF SECOND CYCLE STUDY PROGRAMS AND INTEGRATED SECOND CYCLE PROGRAMS

I - PROVISION OF STUDY PROGRAMS

Standard I. 1 - Institution offers study programs in accordance with its mission and purpose.

Criterion 1 Institution offers accredited study programs, organized in modules and evaluated by credits under European Credits Collection and Transfer System (ECTS);

Criterion 2 Average amount of credits accrued during the year by a student who attends a full-time study program is 60 credits;

Criterion 3 Study programs are designed in accordance with Institution purposes and mission:

Criterion 4 Study programs are designed in accordance with labor market needs;

Criterion 5 Study programs are designed in accordance with economic development of the country.

Criterion 6 Study programs reflect the will of Institution to maintain nation values.

Standard I.2 - Study programs are consistent with institution's development strategy.

Criterion 1 Study programs are geared to institution's development strategy;

Criterion 2 Second cycle study programs "Master of Science", "Master of Fine Arts" or "Professional Master" provide students who possess the university degree "Bachelor" with in-depth theoretical and practical knowledge, and training for scientific research or proper professional training;

Criterion 3 Study programs: Master of Science" or "Master of Fine Arts" and "Professional Master" intend to expand the knowledge acquired in the first cycle of studies:

Criterion 4 Integrated study programs of second cycle (in medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, veterinary, architecture) provide students with in-depth knowledge, theoretical and practical scientific competencies, and scientific research training according to the field. After their completion and successful completion of State exam for the specific program, students are entitled to exercise a regulated profession under the law in force:

Criterion 5 Study programs of this cycle provide students with general and professional competencies intended to be achieved or enlarged during its conduct;

Criterion 6 Study programs: "Master of Science" or "Master of Fine Arts" and "Professional Master" create strong knowledge foundations for the third cycle of studies – doctorate, including qualification for scientific research and meeting of prerequisites (knowledge, skills and competencies) for admission to the third cycle of studies;

Criterion 7 "Professional Master" study programs have clear professional, justifiable, achievable objectives, with clear goals for achieving the necessary qualifications and in accordance with labor market requirements.

Standard I.3 - Study programs are offered in accordance with laws and bylaws in force.

Criterion 1 The content of study programs is in accordance with criteria defined by laws and regulations in force;

Criterion 2 Study program naming is consistent with qualifications level achieved and determined by Albanian Qualification Framework.

Standard I.4 - Study programs are offered in accordance with level of studies.

Criterion 1 The content and order of objectives of study programs aim at achieving their goals in line with the level of studies in which they are offered;

Criterion 2 Methods of students' assessment through continuous knowledge control by means of tests with alternative answers or final exams demonstrate students' progress and achievements for relevant cycle of studies.

Standard I.5 - Study programs aim to reach international dimensions.

Criterion 1 Study programs are based on many years experience and practices of European countries;

Criterion 2 Study programs are internationally competitive in the elements they contain (general information, key objectives, curriculum, credits, terms of admission, assessment methods, criteria and procedures for transfer of acquired credits and knowledge, diplomas awarded on completion, etc..) affirming university education values in Albania;

Criterion 3 Study programs are designed in accordance with objectives defined in the EU legislation and directives on higher education and regulated professions.

Standard I.6 - Study programs include vocational training and scientific research.

Criterion 1 Second cycle programs and second cycle integrated programs include vocational training and scientific research;

Criterion 2 Study programs are designed in accordance with the Higher Education Institution profile and its development strategy;

Criterion 3 Academic staff is engaged in scientific research work for realization of study programs;

Criterion 4 Research work of academic staff engaged in study program implementation corresponds with the aims to meet its objectives.

Standard I.7 - Study programs "Professional Master" are offered in accordance with labor market needs.

Criterion 1 Second cycle study programs "Professional Master" are offered in accordance with labor market needs;

Criterion 2 Second cycle study programs "Professional Master" aim at meeting the needs in relevant domestic or foreign economy sectors.

Standard I.8 - Study programs take into account labor market needs.

Criterion 1 Study programs take into account labor market needs and are prepared in accordance with strategic goals of national economic development;

Criterion 2 In order to assess labor market needs, Institution carries out a market study, which includes:

- a. students' employment opportunities in domestic or regional, national and international market;
- b. demands of employers;
- c. a rough estimate of expected number of students that may be enrolled in this program;
- d. number of enrollments in similar programs of sister institutions.

Standard I.9 - Study programs aim at maintaining national cultural values and national interests.

Criterion 1 Institution offers study programs that do not conflict with national interests; **Criterion 2** Study programs intend to help preserve national cultural values.

Standard I.10 - Institution uses evaluation methodologies, measuring and evaluation instruments for the progress of study programs.

Criterion 1 Institution uses evaluation methodologies, measuring and evaluation instruments for the progress of study programs;

Criterion 2 Institution includes this piece of information in the self assessment it makes in order to achieve the internal quality assurance;

Criterion 3 Institution publishes the assessment results and results it aims to achieve;

Criterion 4 In order to conduct the assessment, Institution uses indirect or direct methods:

Indirect:

- a. Survey: for students who follow study programs, for graduates in these programs in previous academic years or in different cycles of study;
- b. Surveys assessing didactics, curriculum, learning;
- c. Conceptual question;
- d. Interviews;
- e. Etc.

Direct:

- a. Outcomes achieved by students in standardized national/international tests (e.g. State exam for regulated professions);
- b. Hearings in auditorium;
- c. Outcomes achieved by students in exams assessed with grades / points;

- d. Outcomes achieved by students in preliminary and final tests, examinations for modules, professional practices;
- e. Outcomes achieved by students in assessment of tasks performed during the study program conduct (course assignments for analyzing conceptual understanding, presentations. exams, etc.);
- f. Observations in performance of exercises / practice;
- g. Outcomes achieved and quality of research result thesis;
- h. Etc..

Standard I.11 - Institution drafts a development plan for study programs, teaching and learning results.

Criterion 1 Institution prepares a strategic plan in Institution level for the development and improvement of study programs;

Criterion 2 Institution prepares a strategic plan in Institution level to improve teaching and learning results.

Standard I.12 - Duration and number of credits for study programs of this cycle are in accordance with law No. 9741 of 21.5.2007, "On Higher Education in Republic of Albania", amended.

Criterion 1 Study programs "Master of Science" is realized with 120 European credits, ECTS, including 30-40 European credits, ECTS for the research project and thesis to be prepared at the completion of these study programs. Normal duration is 2 academic years;

Criterion 2 Study programs "Professional Master" are conducted with 60-90 European credits, ECTS. Their normal duration is 1-1.5 (one to one year and a half) academic years.

Criterion 3 Integrated study programs of second cycle are completed with the issue of diploma "Master of Science." They are conducted with no less than 300 European credits, ECTS (360 European credits, ECTS for studies in the medical field). Normal duration of integrated study programs is no less than five academic years (6 years for studies in the medicine field).

Standard I.13 - Institution publishes regularly unbiased, objective, qualitative and quantitative information for internal evaluation.

Criterion 1 Institution publishes regularly brochures, newsletters, etc.., designed and published by Institution for internal evaluation;

Criterion 2 Institution posts regularly video audio presentations, etc.., on the website for internal evaluation.

II - ORGANIZATION, MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF INSTITUTION IS MADE IN ACCORDANCE WITH STUDY PROGRAMS NEEDS.

Standard II.1 - Academic, assisting teaching-scientific and administrative staff are engaged to fulfill study programs objectives.

Criterion 1 The academic, assisting teaching-scientific and administrative staff are engaged to fulfill objectives of study programs and to achieve them; **Criterion 2** Academic, assisting teaching-scientific and administrative staff of Institution are engaged in accordance with institution development strategy.

Standard II.2 - Institution is organized in accordance with laws and bylaws in force, to accomplish its mission.

Criterion 1 Institution is organized in order to fulfill its mission;

Criterion 2 Institution has at least two Faculties;

Criterion 3 Faculty is organized in basic units. Each college has at least three basic units, from which two are departments;

Criterion 4 Faculty or Institute of Research and Development consists of 3 basic units at least with well-defined objectives and mission;

Criterion 5 Department should be composed of 7 effective members at least as academic staff, 3 of whom at least should have the scientific degree "Doctor."

Standard II.3 - Institution units are engaged directly and devotedly for study programs implementation.

Criterion 1 Basic and main units are aware of responsibilities they have to realize the study programs;

Criterion 2 Basic and main units arte involved in necessary academic staff recruitment and evaluation process.

Standard II.4 - Academic staff is engaged in designing and implementing institution development policies.

Criteria 1 Academic staff plays a key role in curriculum drafting and institutional decisions that belong to organization of study programs;

Criterion 2 Recruitment of new staff and allocation of teaching load is made in accordance with laws and bylaws in force.

Standard II.5 - Institution provides the necessary infrastructure for implementation of second cycle study programs and integrated study programs of second cycle that it offers.

Criterion 1 Institution has a permanent location, which means central administrative premises and facilities where teaching activity is conducted;

Criterion 2 These facilities are available to Institution for no less than 6 years;

Criterion 3 If the study program is offered in more than one building, institution provides efficient management and continuous control for achievement of standards and implementation of educational policies designed for realization of study programs that it offers;

Criterion 4 Institution provides sufficient capacities and facilities for implementation of professional practices foreseen for realization of study programs in the fields of health, veterinary, agriculture, technical sciences etc..

Standard II.6 - Institution provides effective management of information about study programs.

Criterion 1 The information provided for study programs, modules and syllabuses is easily consultable for students;

Criterion 2 Information on study programs, modules and syllabuses is offered in various written and electronic forms.

Standard II.7 - Institution conducts an annual analysis to assess second cycle study programs and second cycle integrated programs.

Criterion 1 Institution makes an annual analysis to assess the progress of second cycle study programs and second cycle integrated study programs;

Criterion 2 Institution develops policies aimed at improving second cycle study programs and second cycle integrated study programs;

Standard II.8 - Second cycle study programs and second cycle integrated study programs provide for a graduation plan.

Criterion 1 Graduation plan explains graduation manner at the completion of studies within the prescribed period;

Criterion 2 30-40 credits are foreseen for the implementation of study programs "Master of Science", for research project and thesis.

Standard II.9 - Institution makes an annual (external and/or internal) audit about the financial situation.

Criterion 1 Audit report presents the entire financial situation for the use of budget made available to implement second cycle study programs and second cycle integrated study programs;

Criterion 2 Audit report contains a clear picture of received foreign grants, and related services contracts for implementation of second cycle study programs and second cycle integrated study programs;

Criterion 3 Audit report analyzes the use efficiency of revenues from students' fees in order to increase the quality of studies in this cycle of studies.

III - STAFF OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS is COMPOSED OF ACADEMIC STAFF, SUPPORTING TEACHING-SCIENTIFIC STAFF AND ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF.

Standard III.1 - Institution follows legal and transparent procedures for personnel recruitment and evaluation.

Criterion 1 Institution follows legal and transparent proceedings for personnel recruitment in accordance with the statute and regulation;

Criterion 2 Academic staff employed with fulltime in second cycle study programs and second cycle integrated study programs comprises at least 70% of academic staff engaged in implementation of respective study programs;

Criterion 3 Institution follows legal and transparent procedures for personnel assessment:

Criterion 4 Institution maintains a database of personnel recruitment reports, of announcements for jobs, etc..

Standard III.2 - Academic staff (with scientific degrees and academic titles) covers the Institution needs and have clearly defined responsibilities.

Criterion 1 Program Manager has at least the title "Associate Professor" or the scientific degree "Doctor" ("PHD") awarded in western universities and academic experience in these universities;

Criterion 2 The head of course / module in study programs "Master of Science" has at least the scientific degree "Doctor";

Criterion 3 The head and teachers of subject / module in study programs "Professional Master" have at least the scientific degree "Doctor" or, diploma "Professional Master" or "Master Science" and a professional experience of at least 5 years in the profession in which this study program is offered;

Criterion 4 Rector, Deputy Rector, director and deputy director of interuniversity center,

Dean, Vice Dean, Director, Head of department, service supervisor, program supervisor are employed with full time in the institution offering the study program;

Criterion 5 Institution provides sufficient personnel for guidance and supervision of professional practices.

Standard III.3 - Academic staff is engaged in scientific activities organized in the study program framework.

Criterion 1 Academic staff publishes regularly articles, scientific materials in relevant discipline;

Criterion 2 through engagement in these activities, academic staffs give their contribution to development of science or development of production or service sectors.

Standard III.4 - Institution offers also teaching programs in foreign language, with a qualified academic staff.

Criterion 1 Academic staff that is engaged in teaching in foreign language has conducted university studies in that language or possesses a certificate for its advanced mastery;

Criterion 2 Academic staff that engages in teaching in foreign language has teaching experience in that language for one semester at least.

Standard III.5 - Students who attend study programs of the second cycle "Master of Science" or integrated study programs of second cycle have a supervisor for the thesis.

Criterion 1 Students who attend these study programs have a supervisor for the research work and thesis they prepare for diploma issue at the completion of this cycle of studies:

Criterion 2 Supervisor has at least the scientific degree "Doctor";

Criterion 3 Supervisor supervises no more than 5 (five) students simultaneously for themes of applied research character (such as those offered in study programs in the fields of natural sciences, medical science, etc...) and no more than 10 (ten) students simultaneously for themes offered in study programs in fields of social and human sciences.

Standard III.6 - Study-research field in which the supervisor is specialized is consistent with the study field in which the study program is provided and thesis is foreseen to be prepared.

Criterion 1 Study-research field in which the supervisor is specialized is consistent with the study field in which the study program is provided.

Criterion 2 Supervisor has advanced theoretical knowledge and specific research skills in the area in which the study program is provided and in which thesis is anticipated to be drafted.

Standard III.7 - Institution engages supporting teaching-scientific and administration staff to fulfill its mission.

Criterion 1 Institution demonstrates an optimal commitment of supporting teaching-research staff for the realization of laboratory classes and maintenance of laboratories and school facilities;

Criterion 2 Institution demonstrates an optimal use of human resources for meeting objectives of study programs of second cycle.

Standard III.8 - Academic staff carries out the teaching load defined in laws and bylaws in force.

Criterion 1 Academic staff realizes teaching load as defined in laws and regulations in force;

Criterion 2 Teaching load carried out by academic staff in study programs of second cycle and integrated study programs of second cycle and their organization and management are evaluated in teaching classes.

Standard III.9 - Institution has a database for its personnel.

Criterion 1 Institution has a detailed database for its academic staff members involved in the program and the person responsible for organizing the study program;

Criterion 2 Institution possesses a complete list of teaching- scientific support staff, academic and administrative staff for each semester;

Criterion 3 Institution defines and publishes criteria and procedures for staff recruitment.

Standard III.10 - Institution is committed to continuous and further training of its staff.

Criterion 1 Institution organizes specific programs for further professional qualification of academic and teaching-scientific staff;

Criterion 2 Institution provides academic and teaching-scientific staff with the possibility of further qualifications in the country and abroad.

Standard III.11 - Institution has a database about scientific-research activities of its academic staff.

Criterion 1 Institution has a database of scientific studies of academic staff engaged in this study program;

Criterion 2 Institution has a database of publications (texts, monographs, books, articles or presentations in conferences) inside and outside the country by academic staff engaged in this study program;

Criterion 3 Institution has a database for national and international scientific research projects in which academic staff engaged in this study took part or takes part.

IV - INSTITUTIONS PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF STUDENTS

Standard IV.1 - Students have the right to pursue study programs of second cycle and integrated study programs of second cycle.

Criterion 1 Students who attend study programs "Master of Science" or "Professional Master" have at least a university degree "Bachelor" and have accumulated 180 ECTS credits;

Criterion 2 Admission to integrated study programs is made in accordance with Law No. 9741 of 21.5.2007, "On Higher Education in Republic of Albania", amended, and bylaws in force;

Criterion 3 Students meet eligibility criteria set by the institution;

Criterion 4 Students of these study programs give English exam based on internationally recognized tests until graduation. For study programs "Professional Master", English level is B2, and for study programs "Master of Sciences and integrated study programs of second cycle level of English is C1, under the European Framework for Languages;

Criterion 5 Institution evaluates admission policies and their impact on further progress of students in the study program, and designs possible plans to change admission criteria.

Standard IV. 2 - Institution informs students about: the institution status, study programs it offers and employment policies.

Criterion 1 Students are given information about opportunities for employment after graduation at the completion of these study programs;

Criterion 2 Students are given information about institution's accreditation and study programs offered as well as recognition and validity, at home and abroad, of diploma, issued by the institution;

Criterion 3 Students are offered career counseling service.

Standard IV. 3 - When institution applies for evaluation and accreditation for the second time, it has statistics about the number of students attending study programs of second cycle and integrated programs of second cycle.

Criterion 1 Institution has annual statistics on number of graduates in study programs they have completed;

Criterion 2 Institution possesses annual statistics on number of students enrolled in study programs of second cycle and integrated study programs second cycle, withdrawals from program, dropouts before program completion, and unsuccessful completion of academic year;

Criterion 3 Institution has data on academic performance of students from admission to graduation.

Standard IV. 4 - Institution has a database about employment statistics of graduate students after completion of study programs of second cycle and integrated study programs of second cycle.

Criterion 1 Institution maintains a database of students employed after completion of study programs of second cycle or integrated study programs of second cycle and their employment places;

Criterion 2 Institution maintains a database for students who continue further studies in other study cycles, etc..

Standard IV. 5 - Institution informs students consistently in details about study programs.

Criterion 1 Students are informed in details about study programs, time of completion and organization of program, program accreditation status;

Criterion 2 Students are informed about evaluation results during the program and at its completion;

Criterion 3 The module head discusses the results of these evaluations with students openly.

Standard IV. 6 - Institution engages its staff to care for students.

Criterion 1 Institution provides counseling for students, it follows their progress and helps to address and resolve issues and problems that relate to the teaching process;

Criterion 2 Institution (through the office for career counseling) helps students to select the institution in which they will carry out the professional practice, when this is foreseen.

V - INSTITUTIONS PROVIDES SERVICES AND MAKES LIBRARIES AND OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS

Standard V. 1 - Institution makes its library available to students.

Criterion 1 Institution provides quality textbooks and sufficient auxiliary and modern literature;

Criterion 2 The library has sufficient literature that helps the student to conduct successfully the study program, the scientific research project and thesis;

Criterion 3 The library has periodicals and electronic library, which contain necessary books or journals to conduct successfully the study program, the scientific research project and thesis;

Criterion 4 Program managers have drawn up a detailed plan to increase library items in support of study program, scientific research project and thesis preparation by students, including the budget planned for this purpose;

Criterion 5 Library has service hours in accordance with timetable of study programs and needs of students.

Standard V. 2 - Institution makes available to students sufficient labs and appropriate learning facilities.

Criterion 1 Institution indicates that it has adequate number of: labs, classrooms, offices, studios and other facilities with electronic equipment and information technology to carry out the study programs;

Criterion 2 Equipment of teaching facilities is suitable for teaching in accordance with program objectives;

Criterion 3 Laboratories contain necessary equipment and tools to meet requirements of study programs and to conduct practices provided for by study program in accordance with program goals, and are maintained and improved continuously;

Criterion 4 depending on offered study programs, institution has at least a laboratory for each group of lectures which foresee laboratory practices.

V. 3 - Institution has cooperative relations with domestic or foreign business actors to carry out practices his students.

Criterion 1 for carrying out various practices provided for the realization of study program "Master Professional", Institution demonstrates that has cooperative relations with the enterprise or venture out areas of trade, industry or manufacturing services;

Criterion 2 To perform the different practices in the study program "Master of Science" or in programs of integrated studies second cycle, Institution demonstrates that there is cooperation relationship with various actors from the public sphere and that private enable the benefit of the best professional knowledge by student.

VI - INSTITUTION HAS AND MANAGES FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Standard VI.1 - Institution drafts a financial report on costs of study programs.

Criterion 1 Institution drafts a report that contains detailed financial data on costs for implementation of study programs, as operational costs, fixed costs of facilities and equipment, etc..;

Criterion 2 Institution shows that it has a financial sustainability during conduct of study programs and it has sufficient financial capacities to improve the financial situation and generation of revenues in the future.

VII - INSTITUTION GUARANTEES INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COOPERATION RELATIONS

Standard VII.1 - Institution guarantees fruitful cooperation relations among its staff.

Criterion 1 For drafting and overseeing the program, institution promotes cooperation among staff within the institution through information exchange;

Criterion 2 With division of duties between personnel within the institution, by taking respective responsibilities and continued analysis of their work, institution guarantees fruitful cooperation relations.

Standard VII.2 - Institution guarantees collaborative relationship with counterpart institutions abroad and domestic or foreign business actors.

Criterion 1 Institution has established cooperation relations with counterpart institutions abroad and domestic or foreign business actors in order to achieve objectives of study programs.

Criterion 2 Institution establishes cooperative relations with employers for the conduct and supervision of practice, depending on study programs it provides;

Criterion 3 Institution organizes further vocational training in coordination with the employer;

Criterion 4 Institution makes an analytical report of benefits from contractual agreements for the realization of study programs.

VIII - INSTITUTION GUARANTEES QUALITY ASSURANCE

Standard VIII.1 - Institution guarantees quality assurance in realization of study programs.

Criterion 1 Institution has met institutional standards and is accredited in institutional level before applying for accreditation of study programs;

Criterion 2 Institution uses appropriate instruments for quality assurance;

Criterion 3 Institution establishes a policy and follows certain procedures for quality assurance and standards of their programs;

Criterion 4 Institution uses formal mechanisms for periodic reviewing, approving and supervision of study programs;

Criterion 5 Institution aims at raising awareness of its staff and students, who pursue offered study programs, for quality importance and quality assurance in them;

Criterion 6 Institution designs and implements a strategy for constant quality improving. Strategy, policy and procedures are published.