



**PUBLIC ACCREDITATION AGENCY
FOR HIGHER EDUCATION**

PAAHE

STATE QUALITY STANDARDS

FOR

ACCREDITATION OF THIRD CYCLE STUDY PROGRAMS

(DOCTORATE)

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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 its 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 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.

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STATE QUALITY STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION OF THIRD CYCLE STUDY PROGRAMS (DOCTORATE)

Based on National Strategy of Higher Education and Bologna Process, PhD studies in higher education system in Albania are programs of third level study. They are built as individual programs for qualification in independent scientific research. Doctorate study programs realize qualification of students studying for their doctorate, giving them an interdisciplinary culture in the framework of a coherent scientific project that aims at their scientific and professional preparation through scientific research work. PhD study programs are accredited for a period of up to 6 years, referring to standards and criteria published and applied in each PHD study program. Assessment of doctorate study programs take into account the program self assessment conducted by respective universities.

I – STUDY PROGRAMS OF THIRD CYCLE (DOCTORATE)

Standard I.1 - General framework

Criterion 1. The study program of third cycle (doctorate) is a new program or a reorganized program;

Criterion 2. If it is reorganized, the extent to which it affected the previous program.

Criterion 3. The total number of students studying how doctor eight and number of those who attend this study program each year is in line with the policies of Higher Education Institutions (HEI) where the program is conducted as well as state policy for higher education and scientific research regarding recognition and validation of diploma and number of students studying for doctorate to one scientific mentor.

Criterion 4. Doctorate study program is supported by national or international research groups

accredited for research in relevant field or fields of studies;

Criterion 5. Doctorate study program is supported by a sufficient budget for research;

Criterion 6. The number and level of researchers engaged in this program constitutes a guarantee for program implementation (60% of them should be internal academic staff, engaged in research and holders of academic titles "Professor", "Associate Professor" or scientific degree "Doctor" or "PhD" awarded in universities well known in the world for quality and rich research and publishing activities in the relevant field;

Criterion 7. Internal evaluation report of study program of the third cycle is reviewed by the Council of Professors.

Standard I.2 - Continuous increase of theoretical level and promotion of students' team work are targets of a study program of third cycle, doctorate.

Criterion 1 Level of scientific research development helps in student training to complete the study program successfully;

Criterion 2 Students have the opportunity to participate in various research activities closely related to the specific area in which they attend doctorate studies, which help him/her to be trained for:

- a. Acquisition of research methodologies for independent creative activities, such as scientific articles, presentations, standard approach for references, bibliography, indexes and content writing as the basis for doctor a thesis processing;
- b. Independent work in laboratory;
- c. Use of information resources (e.g. libraries and Internet) and information management;
- d. Use of modern technologies for public presentations;
- e. Acquisition of advanced methods of analysis and data processing;
- f. Learning and mastery of specialized terminology associated with the research field of doctorate student;

Criterion 3 Doctorate students participate in foreseen activities young and their research work.

A doctorate student is free to participate as a listener or as a speaker in:

- a. Lectures;
- b. Seminars;
- c. Interdisciplinary debates, organized in the framework of doctorate study program;
- d. Other possibilities of learning such as following presentations of post doctorate students and research projects, even when it is not related directly to the student's research interest.

Scientific mentors advise students to take part in scientific activities and conferences that help them in their scientific research;

Criterion 4 Students have gained skills for appropriate communication with a scientific level (*Student's communication skills include: the competency to write clearly and with an appropriate style, use of persuasive arguments and clear articulation of ideas before the public concerned; the ability to debate and support others, involved in teaching, supervision or demonstrations*);

Criterion 5 Students have acquired the ability to communicate correctly with others, and necessary skill for a scholar, but also in other situations (*being able to develop and maintain cooperation and working relationships with others, awareness that their behavior affects them and others and be willing to listen, to give and to take reactions and responses with sharpness*);

Criterion 6 Development of communication skills of doctorate students encouraged them to be engaged in teaching in study programs of first and second cycle (e.g. by engaging in teaching as lecturers, in support of professors guiding their thesis.).

Standard I.3 - Admission of students in a doctorate study program

Criterion 1 The student admitted to doctorate study program has completed second study cycle with average grade (> 80% of points) and was awarded the university degree "Master of Science"/ "Master of Fine Arts" or an equivalent degree, following

completion of university studies that include a scientific thesis evaluated with 30-40 ECTS;

Criterion 2 Candidate who applies to continue the third cycle program, the doctorate, has profound theoretical knowledge in the relevant field of study. Some basic knowledge that doctorate student has is:

- a. Creative thinking;
- b. Development of critical sense about research;
- c. Connections between different fields of research;
- d. Skills developed for solving problems arising during research work;
- e. Competence to manage research complexity and to propose new ideas in research field;

Criterion 3 The student admitted to doctorate study program is ready to apply in practice the knowledge gained from research in relevant field of studies;

Criterion 4 Student owns the English language certified in the international level, at least "C1", based on internationally recognized tests and a second foreign language as French, German, Italian, Spanish or Russian. In social sciences it may be Latin, Ancient Greek, Persian or other languages needed for research in the area;

Criterion 5 Professors' Council set the criteria for admission to program of doctorate studies contained in regulation of doctorate program of studies;

Criterion 6 The applicant has received detailed information about doctorate program of study, before being admitted into it. He is fully informed regarding:

- a. Duration of study program;
- b. Conditions that student should meet before appearing in doctorate exam;
- c. Support that institution provides to the student through administrative and research structures for activities envisaged in the study program (laboratories, libraries, etc.).
- d. Modalities of exercise of research or creative activity of doctorate students, especially with regard to preparation of doctorate thesis;

Criterion 7 Admission criteria include also interviews and supports that can be provided by references and additional documents;

Criterion 8 Admission policies include also doctorate admission exam.

Standard I.4 - Design and realization of theoretical course of third cycle studies (Doctorate)

Criterion 1 Programs of third cycle studies include 60 credits for theoretical organized studies.

Criterion 2 Theoretical organized studies anticipate balanced ratio of classes for academic and scientific general and specific training;

Criterion 3 Detailed teaching program is approved pursuant to bylaws in force;

Criterion 4 Theoretical doctorate course is evaluated with a general theoretical examination in relevant field of study, organized by Dean's office and Professors' Council, with a commission consisting of 5 (five) professors in the relevant research field or approximate to it. Candidates who achieve over 80% points are allowed to

attend the doctorate research studies. Those who do not reach this result receive a certificate for conducted modules, together with accumulated credits and interrupt doctorate studies.

II - SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Standard II.1 - Capacities for scientific research

Criterion 1 A third cycle study program (doctorate) is integrated in research activity of Higher Education Institutions;

Criterion 2 The institution that offers programs of study of third cycle (doctorate), has sufficient academic staff with scientific titles and degrees;

Criterion 3 The institution has sufficient administrative and research structures for activities provided in the study program to conduct research. The institution may organize joint programs of doctorate study with one or more other institutions, based on agreements between them;

Criterion 4 The institution has the capacity to perform supervision of each doctorate student in research activities and respective didactic duties;

Criterion 5 The institution has agreements with other academic or research institutions at home and abroad, supporting the exchange of academic staff and doctorate students and academic and research activities of doctorate school;

Criterion 6 Academic staff must show achievements in the research field through such creative activities as: presentations, scientific publications, magazines, books or monographs;

Criterion 7 Indicators of high level research activity are publications that contain statements from publishing and scientific research activity by other scholars outside doctorate study program, especially international, regarding the outcome of scientific research in the institution that offers doctorate programs;

Criterion 8 External funding received for scientific research are indicative of high level research activity and they are administered for the progress of relevant study program.

Standard II.2 - Didactic basis and technical support

Criterion 1 Students admitted in the third cycle study program have necessary conditions to realize the study program with academic and research character;

Criterion 2 Doctorate studies program provides harmonization of student's goals in scientific-research field, approved research projects and, at its conclusion, even the possibility of academic career and employment;

Criterion 3 A scientific library with publications in hardcopy and electronic form and complete IT infrastructure available to of third cycle study program;

Criterion 4 Students have sufficient technical support for scientific research development;

Criterion 5 Researches that include laboratory researches are supported by sufficient scientific laboratory basis.

Standard II.3 - Drafting and approval of proposed research project

Criterion 1 Applicant who requires to be admitted to doctorate studies program has submitted the request for a particular research area and this has been discussed with him in the interview;

Criterion 2 Scope of research is selected in such a way that doctorate studies program can support it;

Criterion 3 Proposal is approved by Professors' Council if criteria prescribed and announced in regulation of doctorate studies are met.

The following should be also confirmed:

a. Duration of study program;

b. Modalities of verification of research or creative activity of doctorate students;

c. Manner of final presentation of scientific research result that doctorate student will achieve;

Criterion 4 A member of academic staff with the title "Professor", "Associate Professor" or with scientific degree "Doctor" or ("PhD") awarded in the scientific field in which doctorate student follows the studies in universities known in the world, for quality and rich researching and publishing activities in the relevant field, is appointed by Board of Professors to supervise and support student's research work;

Criterion 5 Doctorate student presents to Board of Professors the research development plan, designed by him and discussed with his supervisor;

Criterion 6 Supervisor has advised repeatedly the students that he supervises for didactic duties and research activities as well as research methodology to ensure the progress of his studies in this program.

Standard II.4 - Doctorate student's supervision and continuous evaluation of progress of doctorate studies

Criterion 1 Scientific supervisor of student is responsible for directing, advising, assessment of student's needs and for developing and monitoring progress of student's research work. He has the academic title "Professor", "Associate Professor" or the scientific degree "Doctor" or ("PhD") awarded in Western universities and has a rich research and publishing activity;

Criterion 2 All scientific supervisors have had the expertise, instruction and proper guidance for their role in realization of scientific research project of doctorate students;

Criterion 3 Scientific supervisors work to update their knowledge and skills, based on institutional arrangements in order to enable the exchange of best practices and providing advice to support students effectively;

Criterion 4 Board of Professors selects scientific supervisors, capable to supervise doctorate students' research work, based on assessment of their publishing and research activities inside and outside the country;

Criterion 5 The main scientific supervisor and the other supervisor (when program of doctorate studies is offered by more than one university) guarantee that doctorate students receive sufficient support and guidance to facilitate their work to achieve success;

Criterion 6 In all cases, the student must have only one identified contact point, who should be his main supervisor. If his main supervisor is not available, the student must know who will be the person to replace him;

Criterion 7 University ensures that supervisor has enough time to supervise doctorate student;

Criterion 8 If the main leader is unable to continue supervision of student, or will be absent for a considerable period, he should be replaced by another his main supervisor before the period of awarding the diploma for scientific degree "Doctor";

Criterion 9 If relationship student-supervisor does not function well, at the request of student or his supervisor, supervisor is changed, provided that this does not affect the project progress;

Criterion 10 Clear and transparent procedures are set for verification of knowledge or periodic evaluation of student (for example, an annual review by a panel called for this purpose or by a special commission set up by Professors' Council). Doctorate student and his supervisor should be present during this process. The manner and periods of verification of knowledge or periodic evaluation of doctorate student are stipulated and specified in the beginning of doctorate studies program;

Criterion 11 Continuous evaluation conclusions for realization of scientific research project of program of doctorate studies are clear and transparent including suspension, extension or withdrawal from doctorate studies;

Criterion 12 Meetings between supervisors and doctorate students are documented, especially during the review of progress reports.

Standard II.5 - Final evaluation of students in this cycle of studies

Criterion 1 Student provides evidence that he has acquired:

- a. Profound knowledge in relevant scientific field;
- b. Profound knowledge in some areas approximate to it;
- c. Professional skills in using modern technology to solve critical problems related to his field of scientific research;
- d. Innovation, to expand and update existing knowledge;
- e. Autonomy, scientific, professional integrity and dedication for development of new ideas that encourage scientific research;

Criterion 2 Student provides evidence that he has brought original scientific products, scientific works of a high scientific level through conducted scientific research, some of which have deserved or deserve publication in scientific national and international magazines;

Criterion 3 Final evaluation of doctorate students is based above all on an assessment of their scientific research product;

Criterion 4 On the basis of an agreement reached in the phase of the study program approval, scientific research result is presented as a dissertation thesis, or cumulative with 3 scientific articles published in international journals with impact factor coefficient above 1;

Criterion 5 In case of doctorate examination with dissertation thesis, doctorate student meets the following conditions:

a. He has realized as first author at least three scientific papers or presentations (poster), of which two papers or presentations are held in a international scientific event, in a western country (symposium, conference, congress), accepted on the basis of a preliminary scientific assessment, published in "Proceedings", indexed with an ISBN code;

b. He has published as first author, at least three scientific articles in scientific journals. At least two of the articles have been published or accepted for publication in well-known western journals with editorial board;

c. He has prepared and presented to Faculty Board of Professors the dissertation, along with a summary, approved by scientific supervisor. Structure of dissertation and its summary are defined in doctorate study regulation;

Criterion 6 Board of Professors defines two or three opponents, one of which is from outside the institution. Opponents are also members of the jury to assess dissertation. They have required academic titles and rich research and publishing activities inside and outside the country in the relevant field of study in which program doctorate studies is offered;

Criterion 7 Opponents who have had a substantial involvement in the work of doctorate student, or whose work is the very focus of research project;

Criterion 8 A dissertation copy is given to every opponent, giving enough time to read it and to write a separate report. Opponents should not communicate among themselves, with doctorate student or its scientific supervisor during this period. Opponents must verify the authenticity of data used in dissertation, observance of scientific research practice as well citations of scientific research works and articles of other authors.

Criterion 9 Opponents express clearly that scientific paper is free of plagiarism. If they notice and find that this has happened, they ask for termination of dissertation assessment;

Criterion 10 Dissertation is accompanied by a summary, about 10 pages in English. This review is published in the official website of the institution, in the section designated for information for this study;

Criterion 11 Scientific supervisor of the student should not be an opponent;

Criterion 12 When opponents have completed their reports, they are called by the Dean and Head of Board of Professors to agree to conduct oral examination;

Criterion 13 It is recommended, that a jury member of doctorate examination be from universities known in the world for quality and rich research and publishing activities in the relevant field, which has at least the scientific degree "Doctor" awarded in the

scientific field in which doctorate student follows the studies and over 5 years academic and research experience.

This criterion may not be applied to Albanological sciences.

Assessment of doctorate student in examination is made open by consensus, provided that all members are pronounced for a passing grade. Even if one member has evaluated doctorate student by convincing arguments, with a failing grade, the final outcome will be failing;

Criterion 14 Opponents submit to dean of unit that organizes the program of doctorate studies and chairperson of doctorate examination jury a copy of their individual reports;

Criterion 15 Dissertation defense for obtaining the diploma for scientific degree "Doctor" is public. It is announced at least 4 weeks before and it is done in the presence of department interested members, students and teachers in the relevant Higher Education Institution;

Criterion 16 Evaluations that opponents can make include: granting diploma of scientific degree "Doctor", or resubmission of written scientific research paper after completion of their recommendations, or a further extension of study program, or denial of diploma for scientific degree "Doctor";

Criterion 17 A copy of dissertation of student who received a diploma for scientific degree "Doctor" is deposited in library of faculty, research institute, university research centers, university where study program is carried out and scientific paper and a copy in National Library. Scientific degree "Doctor" is not issued without dissertation being deposited in aforementioned institutions, published in paper and on disk (CD) and without making it public in the official website of respective higher education institution;

Criterion 18 Scientific degree "Doctor" is not issued without being registered in National Register of Doctorates of Securities Commission Academic Assessment (KVTA) in MES.

III-MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF DOCTORATE STUDIES

Standard III.1 - Management and financing tools for doctorate study program

Criterion 1 Unit that organizes doctorate study program has accredited two first cycles of studies in the field, in which it offers the doctorate study program;

Criterion 2 Unit that organizes the doctorate study program has adequate administrative premises to realize its good functioning;

Criterion 3 In order to carry out the doctorate study program, the unit that proposes its opening engages the necessary personnel, ranging from teaching secretary that follows the third cycle progress;

Criterion 4 Responsible bodies for its supervision are established in doctorate study program regulation;

Criterion 5 Board of Professors, which is responsible for organizing and supervising doctorate study program has a sufficient number of members that cover all its issues. Minimum number of professors in PC should be 7 (seven). Board of Professors may be also raised to the level of higher education institution, when its main units do not meet the required number of full-time professors;

Criterion 6 Board of Professors of the main unit that organizes and manages the doctorate study program meets periodically throughout the year;

Criterion 7 Financial budget of doctorate study program is sufficient to achieve research objectives for each doctorate student;

Criterion 8 Financial budget distribution structure of doctorate study program matches with scientific research policy and needs.

Standard III.2 - Quantitative aspects of doctorate study program

Criterion 1 Total number of registered doctorate students and doctorate number for each year;

Criterion 2 Number of registered doctorate students coming from outside the unit that has opened the doctorate study program;

Criterion 3 Number of diplomas issued to receive "Doctor" degree for each year;

Criterion 4 Average duration of doctorate studies and trend of this indicator;

Criterion 5 Number and percentage of those who gave up doctorate studies in the level of study program.

Standard III.3 - Financing of doctorate study program

Criterion 1 Number of research works funded by the ministry;

Criterion 2 Distribution of funds to host and supervision teams of scientific research works is done in a balanced way;

Criterion 3 Number of research works funded under national research projects, benefited by scientific supervisors of doctorate students for this study program;

Criterion 4 Number of research works funded under international research projects benefited by scientific supervisors of doctorate students for this study program;

Standard III.4 - Internationalization of doctorate study program

Criterion 1 Number, expressed in percentage, of registered doctorate students coming from Kosovo and other areas where Albanians live and Albanian diaspora;

Criterion 2 Number, expressed in percentage, of registered doctorate students coming from Balkans region.

Criterion 3 Number, expressed in percentage, of registered doctorate students coming from the EU countries;

Criterion 4 Number, expressed in percentage, of registered doctorate students coming from other countries of the world;

Criterion 5 Doctorate study program encourages doctorate mobility by paying a considerable amount of expenditures for academic training outside doctorate study program;

Criterion 6 Doctorate study program encourages mobility of doctorate students by paying a considerable amount of expenditures for presentation of research results in national and international scientific activities (symposium, conference, congress);

Criterion 7 The institution has an agreement, at least with one Western university, guaranteeing programs of exchange of academic staff and doctorate students and realization of joint research projects. For Albanological Sciences cooperation could also be with a Higher Education Institution or research centre in Kosovo and lands where Albanians live;

Criterion 8 Doctorate study program creates the necessary space to develop joint doctorate study programs with homologous universities in the region, Europe and beyond;

Criterion 9 Doctorate study program provides for 3-4 modules (not less than 15 ECTS) to be conducted, organized in theoretical studies and doctorate students have the exam by professors of partner universities, known in the world, for quality and research, publishing activities in the relevant field of study. Exception cited in criterion 7 applies for Albanological Sciences;

Criterion 10 Doctorate study program promotes involvement of professors from foreign universities as scientific supervisors or as scientific collaborators of doctorate students.