



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo

Agjencia e Kosovës për Akreditim
Agencija Kosova za Akreditaciju
Kosovo Accreditation Agency

The State Council of Quality of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency,

Pursuant to Article 6, paragraph 1, subparagraph 1.11. and Article 11, paragraph 1 subparagraph 1.8. and 1.9. of the Law No. 08/L-110 on Kosovo Accreditation Agency (Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo No. 13, 29 June 2023), State Council of Quality (hereinafter: SCQ) at its 120 session on 07.02.2024, adopted the following:

**REGULATION ON THE SELECTION, ENGAGEMENT, AND
COMPENSATION PROCEDURES OF EXTERNAL EXPERTS**

(AKA) No.03/2024

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I. PREAMBLE

Article 1. Purpose of the Regulation

This Regulation stipulates the conditions for selection, engagement and compensation of *external experts* and *student experts* (both categories commonly referred to as *international experts*) engaged by Kosovo Accreditation Agency (hereinafter: KAA) in the process of external evaluation of higher education institution or the study programme in the Republic of Kosovo.

II. INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS

Article 2. List of international experts

1. The KAA administration maintains a list of international experts.
2. The list of international experts is updated regularly through public calls for the nomination of experts published on the KAA website throughout the year, based on recommendations from other accreditation agencies, by directly encouraging potential external experts, and by other expression of interest.
3. The KAA administration collects and reviews new candidates who fulfil the criteria for international experts and submit them to the SCQ for approval.
4. The KAA Director provides the SCQ with the CVs of external experts, the evidence of criteria fulfilment, other relevant information as required by the SCQ and relevant evidence for the student member of the panel.

Article 3. Selection criteria for listing international experts

1. The external experts should meet the following conditions:
 - 1.1. Relevant academic and professional degree in program fields that which is undergoing the assessment process.
 - 1.2. A panel chair should have a good knowledge of higher education quality assurance and be experienced in conducting external quality assurance procedures.
 - 1.3. Teaching and /or research experience.
2. The student expert member should be recognized for his/her continuity of studies and have the fundamental knowledge in the area of higher education quality assurance.

3. All international experts are expected to have a good knowledge of the English language, good oral and written communication skills, be able to work in a team environment, and agree to all set protocols, procedures, and deadlines.
4. The external experts must not have a history of misconduct or malpractice, especially regarding their previous cooperation with KAA or other quality assurance agencies listed in European Quality Assurance Register.

III. INTERNATIONAL PANEL OF EXPERTS

Article 4. Purpose of the international panel of experts

According to the Article 15, paragraph 8, of the Law on Higher Education Nr. 04/L-037, and Article 32, paragraph 1, of the Law on Kosovo Accreditation Agency No. 08/L-110, the KAA conducts its external evaluation procedures with international panel of experts (hereinafter expert panels).

Article 5. Procedure for the appointment of the expert panel

1. KAA Director proposes the composition of each expert panel to SCQ.
2. SCQ confirms the proposed panel members or asks replacement of one or more candidates based on criteria or reasonable doubts regarding integrity of the process. If no objection within 3 working days after the proposed composition is presented to SCQ, the panel is considered as appointed. If one or more members of SCQ present substantiated objections, the SCQ takes additional two working days for the decision. If SCQ does not oppose the presented objection, the objected member must be replaced.
3. After the SCQ confirms the expert panel, the KAA submits the information on the composition of the Expert Panel to the higher education institution (HEI).
4. The HEI has the right to object to the composition of the expert panel, substantiated on facts and arguments (for example, incompatibility), in which case it shall submit the objection within 3 working days from the date of receipt of the composition.
5. If HEI submits its objection to the composition of the expert panel, the SCQ shall decide if the objection is reasonable, based on facts. If it is reasonable, new expert/s shall be appointed. Objection to the composition of an expert panel does not affect set deadlines for the submission of the self-evaluation report and other documents.

Article 6. Composition of the international panel of experts

1. International panel of experts assigned for the external evaluation procedure consist of:
 - 1.1. two (2) external experts up to seven (7) external experts depending on the number of study programs being evaluated and the type of evaluation (institutional or programme).
 - 1.2. at least (1) student expert.
2. All external experts from point 1.1 of this article must have the relevant academic and professional degree in the program field which is undergoing the assessment process.

Article 7. Incompatibility for members of the expert panel

1. The international experts should not be in incompatibility.
2. Incompatibility exists if:
 - 2.1. An expert is/was under any other type of contract or agreement with the evaluated higher education institution at the time of the evaluation procedure, or in the last 5 years counting of the day of appointment;
 - 2.2. An expert participates or has participated, in any capacity, in a project carried out or involving the evaluated higher education institution between time period starting from five years from the day of appointment until the time of the evaluation procedure;
 - 2.3. An expert is/has in the last 5 years been a member of management, professional or advisory bodies of the evaluated higher education institution;
 - 2.4. An expert personally collaborates in joint academic and/or research activities with the staff member of the evaluated higher education institution or unit;
 - 2.5. An expert is a student or a graduate of the evaluated HEI.
3. Incompatibility is also present if the above-mentioned association relates to the expert's immediate family (spouse, first-degree relative, adoptive parent).

The external experts must guarantee they are not in incompatibility, by signing an *Incompatibility and Ethical Statement*.

In all other cases, the provisions of the Law on the Prevention of the Conflict of Interest of the Republic of Kosovo 06/L-011 shall apply.

Article 8. Objectivity of the expert panel

1. The international experts are independent and do not represent their respective institutions.

2. During the procedure, the international experts shall adhere to the principles of impartiality and objectivity.

Article 9. Confidentiality

1. All international experts should maintain the confidentiality of information obtained during the procedure.
2. The international experts shall sign a *Confidentiality Statement*.

Article 10. Duties and responsibilities of expert panel

1. According to Article. 33 of the Law on KAA, 08/L-110, the duties and responsibilities of the expert panels are:
 - 1.1. review of documents submitted by the institution before the visit to the institution;
 - 1.2. carrying out the visit to the higher education institution arranged by KAA;
 - 1.3. drafting the evaluation draft report after the site visit;
 - 1.4. review of comments submitted by the institution on the factual situation recorded in the draft report;
 - 1.5. finalization of the external evaluation report for the higher education institution;
 - 1.6. recommend the number of students, allowed to be enrolled in the study program under evaluation, and the duration of accreditation in the final report;
 - 1.7. submission of the external evaluation report to the KAA.
2. In accordance with the duties and responsibilities mentioned above, the international experts shall read the self-evaluation report, which shall be submitted by the KAA coordinator and, if necessary, submit a list of additional documents that the international experts would like to examine before and during the site visit to the HE:
3. Before the site visit, the members of the expert panel shall participate in an online or onsite preparatory meeting organized by the KAA coordinator. The expert panel shall participate in any other online or onsite additional meeting, if necessary.
4. In addition to drafting the evaluation report after the site visit, the expert panel shall ensure the consistency of grades and analyses of quality standards, as well as the recommendations for improvement.
5. The expert panel shall correct and amend the evaluation report accordingly solely based on factual inaccuracies or obvious errors in the report.

Article 11. Duties and responsibilities of the panel chair

In addition to the duties and responsibilities mentioned above, the panel chair also has the obligation to:

- coordinate the work of all international experts;
- lead discussions and chair the meetings during the site visit to the HEI;
- chair the exit meeting with the HEI's management;
- ensure the consistency of the final report (i.e. grades and analyses of quality standards);
- make sure all international experts agree with the report;
- finalize the experts' report and submit it to the KAA.

IV. INVOLVEMENT OF EXPERT PANEL IN THE EVALUATION PROCEDURE

Article 12. Training of international experts

1. Before beginning the accreditation cycle, KAA shall provide one-day online training for international experts listed on the approved SCQ list.
2. The training aims to inform international experts about the Kosovo higher education and science system, the KAA's role in internal and external quality assurance processes, quality assurance procedures, and institutional and program accreditation quality standards.

Article 13. Preparatory meeting for the expert panel

1. Preparatory meeting is essential before conducting a site visit to HEI.
2. Before the site visit to the HEI, the members of the expert panel are required to participate in an online or onsite meeting with the KAA coordinator. They shall be informed on the purpose of the evaluation, procedures, their duties and responsibilities, final report writing, and other practicalities related to the visit.
3. The expert panel shall share their first impression of the self-evaluation report, their findings, observations, and areas of concern that should be addressed during the site visit, and prepare the questions for the meetings they shall address during the site visit to the HEI.
4. During the preparatory meeting, the international experts shall agree on the areas of responsibilities (quality standards) between themselves.
5. If necessary, the expert panel shall agree on the list of additional documents/evidence needs to be requested from HEI.

Article 14. Site visit to the higher education institution

1. According to the Law on KAA, Article 32, paragraph 3, external evaluation cannot be done without a site visit of the international accreditation expert panel to the HEI.
2. The purpose of the visit is to gather comprehensive and unbiased information about the HEI and/or study program(s) to supplement the data presented in the self-evaluation report.
3. The site visit is carried out according to a predefined schedule in the site visit program and sent to expert panel no less than one week prior to the visit to the HEI.

Article 15. During the site visit to the higher education institution

1. During the site visit, verifying all the information presented in the self-evaluation report is not obligatory.
2. As the time allocated for the site visit is limited, during the interviews, expert panel shall collect missing or unclear information from the self-evaluation report and other relevant HEI documents.
3. In accordance with the site visit program, the expert panel shall meet with the following stakeholders: HEI management, staff members who have contributed to writing the self-evaluation report; quality assurance office; academic staff, representatives of various administrative units/offices, students representatives and other students, alumni, employers, the business sector and partner institutions.
4. In addition to the meetings, the expert panel shall visit the HEI's facilities, which include but are not limited to, lecture halls, library, laboratories, student administration office, IT classrooms, and facilities for practical work.
5. The expert panel ends the site visit with an exit meeting with HEI's management, in which the panel chair or a person appointed by the chair (a member of the expert panel) informs the participants of the panel's observations during the site visit.
6. No HEI additional documents or evidence or clarification can be asked or presented to the expert panel after the exit meeting.

Article 16. The final report

1. On the last day of the site visit to the HEI and during the last expert panel internal meeting, international experts shall agree on the timeline for writing the report. The expert panel shall decide on the deadline for completing the initial draft, the deadline for providing the comments, and the final deadline for submitting the report to the KAA.
2. The expert panel drafts the report based on the criteria and standards set by the KAA, which should ascertain whether the institution under evaluation meets the accreditation standards.

3. The expert panel drafts the report based on the information in the self-evaluation report and the findings obtained during the site visit.
4. The panel chair shall submit the final report to the KAA as agreed during the last expert's internal meeting.
5. After receipt of the report, the KAA coordinator reviews the report and ensures that all the quality criteria and standards have been assessed. If the KAA coordinator determines that amendments/corrections are needed to the report, in particular regarding the obvious factual inaccuracies or inconsistencies between the grades and analyses of individual criteria and standards, the KAA coordinator shall return the report via e-mail to the chair and all members of the expert panel, with a request for amendments.
6. The panel chair shall submit the finalized draft version of the report within 2 weeks after the evaluation visit.
7. KAA coordinator revises the report in 3 working days.
8. The report shall be sent to HEI for feedback. The HEI has the right to provide feedback on the factual errors in 3 working days.
9. The expert panel shall review HEI's feedback and correct and amend the evaluation report based solely on factual inaccuracies or obvious errors in the report. The panel chair shall send the report's final version to the KAA coordinator in 1 week.
10. In case the same expert panel has to write more than one report in the same period, a new timeline will be agreed with the KAA Coordinator.
11. The KAA coordinator shall prepare and provide the State Council of Quality (SCQ) with the report's final version and the HEI's feedback for decision-making.
12. The SCQ may request additional clarification from the international experts, if necessary.

Article 17. Feedback from the international experts

After the evaluation procedure is finished, expert panel shall submit their feedback to the KAA through the format and deadlines defined by the KAA. The data is collected for the purpose of improving the work of the KAA.

V. PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS

Article 18. Contractual arrangements

7. The international experts are compensated according to the Law on KAA, Article 36 and internal KAA regulations.
8. The panel chair and all international experts shall sign an agreement with the KAA in which the terms of remuneration for the panel members are fixed.

9. The contracts shall be signed with the KAA after the composition of the expert panel has been approved by the HEI.
10. The Consulting Contract, among other things, listed all duties and responsibilities that the panel chair and international experts have to perform during the evaluation procedure (participate in the meetings, review the documents, participate in the site visit to the HEI, write the final report and obey the timeframe for drafting the final report).
11. The Consulting Contract shall also stipulate consequences in case of non-performance of his/her duties and responsibilities

Article 19. Travel and accommodation expenses

1. The KAA shall directly cover or reimburse the following expenses to the international experts:
 - 1.1. The KAA shall book and buy flight tickets in economy class according to agreed dates/times for arrival and departure, etc.
 - 1.2. The daily expenses of the external evaluators are covered by daily payments (daily financial assistance) of a 100€.

VI. GENERAL AND FINAL PROVISIONS

Article 20. General instructions

1. During the evaluation procedure (before and after the site visit), there shall be no direct communication between the expert panel members and the evaluated HEI.
2. The expert panel members shall inform the KAA coordinator of possible violations of this provision.
3. The international experts may not accept gifts from the evaluated HEI before, during, or after the site visit.
4. All international experts must meet all the set protocols, procedures, and deadlines.

21. Final provision

This Regulation shall enter into force upon its signature by the President of the State Council of Quality.

The Regulation shall be published on the KAA's official website upon its approval and signing by the President of the SCQ.

Pristina, 07.02.2024.

Prof.Asoc.Dr. Hasnija Ilazi

The President of SCQ



** The timescales within this document do not include periods of state holidays.*