Higher Education Quality Council
Turkey

THEQC INSTITUTIONAL EXTERNAL EVALUATION GUIDE (VERSION 1.2)

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The Higher Education Quality Council of Turkey

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FOREWORD

This guide presents information on external evaluation process of higher education institutions with the aim of providing guidance to the evaluation team members assigned to evaluate institutions on behalf of the Higher Education Quality Council of Turkey (THEQC) as part of the Institutional External Evaluation Program.

Evaluation team members are expected to conduct the external evaluation of the institutions they are assigned to in line with the Institutional External Evaluation Criteria. Contribution of each team member is of great significance to ensure the objective evaluation and effective guidance of the institution. In order to guarantee the evaluation's thoroughness and fitness for purpose, it is required to complete the preparations in time before the visit, establish an effective communication with the institution during the visit, and convey (both in written and oral forms) the evaluations based on objective observations and analyses to the institutions in a brief and clear tone.

Within the Institutional External Evaluation Program, the evaluation teams are expected to qualitatively and quantitatively evaluate the institutions' quality assurance systems, education, research and development activities, regional/national social contribution activities (if any) and administrative system. The THEQC's Institutional External Evaluation Directive and Institutional External Evaluation Criteria, and the Institutional Self-Evaluation Reports (ISER) annually submitted to the THEQC by the institution are the documents that will be referred in conducting external evaluation.

All the evaluators assigned in teams in order to contribute to the external evaluation process of higher education institutions are expected to be in close contact and cooperation with the THEQC and respect academic ethics. We believe that the evaluation process will be an important experience for both institutions and evaluators and contribute to the continuous improvement endeavors of institutions.

The Higher Education Quality Council of Turkey

INTRODUCTION

This guide has been written to provide guidance to the team members assigned to conduct external evaluation on behalf of the THEQC about the details of the Institutional External Evaluation Program. The Institutional External Evaluation Directive and the Institutional External Evaluation Criteria, which constitute the reference point of the evaluation program, are publicly available on the official website of the THEQC (yokak.gov.tr). As per the relevant legislation, higher education institutions should prepare their annual self-evaluation reports in accordance with the ISER Writing Guide available on the THEQC's website and submit it to the Council. The evaluators should be informed on the latest version of the ISER Writing Guide, the Directive and the Criteria as the evaluators are required to carry out the external evaluation process on the basis of these documents.

INSTITUTIONAL EXTERNAL EVALUATION PROGRAM

The Institutional External Evaluation Program involves the evaluation of higher education institutions by evaluation teams assigned by the THEQC. The self-evaluation process of the institution is also taken into account in the Program. Unlike the evaluation and accreditation of study programs, the Program focuses on the general evaluation of the institution and has the qualities stated below:

- The Program is a national evaluation process that has an internationally recognized perspective.
- The Program is based on the institution's self-evaluation.
- The Program aims to measure to what extent the institution realizes its defined mission, vision, and strategic objectives with a focus on continuous improvement.
- The Program constitutes a peer review process since the internal and external stakeholder opinions of the institution are received.

The following questions form the basis of the approach employed in the Program:

- What does the institution intend to achieve? (*Vision, mission and objectives of the institution*)
- What is the institution's roadmap to achieve its mission and objectives? (*The governance/organizational processes and activities of the institution*)
- How does the institution make sure that it has achieved its mission and objectives? (*Quality assurance processes, internal evaluation processes)*
- How does the institution plan to improve its processes in future? (*Continuous improvement activities of the institution*)

As part of the Regulation on Quality Assurance, all the higher education institutions in Turkey are required to be included in the Institutional External Evaluation Program conducted by the THEQC at least once every five years. The Program consists of three main stages:

a. Pre-review on the basis of ISERs,

b. Site visit to the institution,

c. Activities conducted after the site visit, which are finalized with the submission of the Institutional Feedback Report (IFR).

The success of the Program is contingent on the conduct of these three stages with a comprehensive, well-organized, uninterrupted and integrative approach and the completion of the Program within the scheduled time. The improvement of the Program depends on a clear and accurate understanding of the evaluation's purposes, review of the outcomes of the process, and the feedback of all the participants.

Table 1 outlines the Program's schedule:

Date	Activity
January-February	Applications for the evaluator pool are accepted (vacancy announcements are made if necessary).
January-March	HEIs prepare their ISERs.
End of April	The ISERs are submitted to the THEQC.
May	The HEIs that wish to be included in the Institutional External Evaluation Program make a declaration of will.
June	Evaluator trainings are organized.
June	The HEIs that will be subject to external evaluation are announced.
July	The evaluation teams are formed, the prevention of any conflict of interest between the team members and evaluated institutions is ensured and verified.
July-August	The evaluation teams review the ISERs of the institutions they are assigned to evaluate.
September	The site visit program is announced.
October-November	Site visits are paid to the institution included in the external evaluation program.
November-December	The institution submits its 21-day response.
December-January	The IFRs are conveyed to relevant HEIs.
February	A meeting is organized with the team leaders.
February	A meeting is organized with the administrators of the evaluated HEIs.
March	A meeting is organized with all HEI representatives to inform them on the feedback and experiences about the program in the relevant year.
March	The Higher Education Evaluation and Quality Assurance Annual Situation Report is prepared.

Duties and Responsibilities of the Institutional External Evaluation Commission

The Institutional External Evaluation Commission (IEEC) is responsible for conducting and coordinating the Institutional External Evaluation Program. The duties of the IEEC within the process include:

- Forming an evaluator pool,
- Determining the evaluator candidates and evaluation teams assigned to the institutions
- Planning and organizing training/briefing meetings,
- Checking the consistency and style of the IFR drafts written by the evaluation teams,

- Preparing the Higher Education Evaluation and Quality Assurance Annual Situation Report and submitting it to the THEQC.

Duties and Responsibilities of Evaluation Teams

Evaluation team refers to the team assigned by the THEQC to conduct the external evaluation of higher education institutions. The duties and responsibilities of the evaluation team leader and members are listed below:

Duties and Responsibilities of the Team Leader: Team leader is the person responsible for the coordination of the evaluation team assigned for the external evaluation of higher education institutions. Team member is selected by the IEEC among the present or former THEQC members or the evaluator candidates within the evaluator pool, and submitted for the Council's approval. The team leader fulfills the responsibilities defined in the Institutional External Evaluation Directive and organizes the meetings to be held before and after the visits in the Program. The team leader also provides communication between all relevant stakeholders throughout the evaluation process, and performs the necessary checks to ensure that the visits are paid as planned. They also ensure that the examinations and evaluations undertaken by evaluators are conducted in line with the process stated in the guide and the evaluations are made in an objective and realistic manner in accordance with the Institutional External Evaluation Criteria. They are also in charge of completing the IFRs.

Duties and Responsibilities of the Team Member: Team members are external experts assigned in the evaluation team. They are selected by the IEEC among the candidates within the evaluator pool according to the structure and size of the evaluated institution and submitted for the Council's approval. Team members should show care in conducting their examination and evaluation processes in line with the Criteria and the Guide and contribute to the writing of the IFR with their objective and evidence-based findings.

All the Council and Commission members and external evaluators assigned in the Program are required to sign the Statement of Confidentiality and Commitment to the THEQC Code of Ethics, which is available on the last page of the THEQC Code of Ethics (Annex 1).

Qualities of the Evaluation Team

The team members are included in the external evaluation process based on voluntariness and are required to complete the evaluator training program. The administration of the evaluated institution and the team members should submit a statement to the THEQC informing whether there is a conflict of interest between the evaluated institution and the team leaders and members within 7 days after they are notified.

The qualities expected from evaluators are as follows:

- Experience in higher education and/or quality assurance in higher education,
- Accepting the ethical principles,
- Being open to cooperation and team work,
- Strong communication skills,
- Time management and organizational skills.

Team leaders and members should be adequately informed on the Institutional External Evaluation Criteria, be in close contact with the evaluated institution's administrators, employees and students, conform to the privacy of personal information in every stage of the evaluation, and evaluate the institution without drawing any comparison with other institutions.

Employable Methods for the Evaluation Team

Four main evaluation methods that can guide the evaluators might be employed in the external evaluation process, including:

Document Review: The expressions describing the institution's mission, vision and objectives can be reviewed through documents. Statistical data, graphics and documents, annual activity reports, awards and evaluation surveys filled out by students can be employed in this regard.

Observation: The fitness of the common use areas and academic and administrative units can be examined through observation during the site visit. The aspects such as the ways of protecting the confidentiality and security of the files and records, or the ways of conducting the activities of backup and service delivery (servers) in electronically stored files might be considered.

Interview: Some reviews can be made or data can be collected through one-on-one or group interviews with the institution's internal and external stakeholders during the site visit. In this scope, interviews might be conducted with internal and external stakeholders, managerial staff, academic and administrative staff, Registrar's Office and Department of Personnel, students and student representatives, and units providing services to students (Department of Health, Culture and Sports, Department of Library and Documentation, Career Center, Office for Disabled Students etc.).

Other Methods: Other methods might include a variety of factors such as the oral/written comments of the institution's staff and students, demonstration of the processes such as recruitment through model practices, updated catalogues, publicity documents, news about the institution, evidence on the institution's relations with internal and external stakeholders (projects, meetings, exhibitions etc.), and activities in public relations.

Initiation of the Program

The steps that initiate the Institutional External Evaluation Program are listed below:

1. The self-evaluation report of the higher education institution that has submitted a declaration of will to take part in the program undergoes a pre-review by the IEEC for the eligibility check of the report on the basis of the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report Writing Guide. If the institution's conformity to join the program is approved, the institution is included in the list of the institutions to be subject to external evaluation in relevant year.

2. As per the Article 5 and Article 6 of the THEQC Institutional External Evaluation Directive, the IEEC appoints an evaluation team to each institution included in the external evaluation program. The structure and size of the institution are considered while determining the number of members in each team. Changes can be made in teams if necessary and the final list of teams are submitted for the Council's approval.

3. The IEEC requests team members to submit a statement informing whether they have any conflict of interest with the evaluated institution. New evaluators are appointed in place of the team members having a possible conflict of interest.

4. The IEEC sends the institution subject to evaluation a list of the names that will be possibly included in the evaluation team and requests the institution to notify whether there is any name that might have a conflict of interest with the institution.

5. The IEEC determines team members assigned to institutions by considering the feedback of the evaluators and the institutions and avoiding any possible conflict of interest.

6. The IEEC sends team members and institutions the final list of the evaluation teams and the institutions they are assigned to.

Evaluation Process

The evaluation process comprises the pre-review of the institution based on the ISER, two-stage visits paid to the evaluated institution, the oral presentation of the exit statement to the institution and the activities conducted for the preparation of the IFR following the visits.

A. Pre-review based on ISER (July-September)

The pre-review that is based on the ISER has two objectives:

1. Having adequate information on the institution prior to the visits and preparing the evaluation team for the site visit,

2. Outlining a plan for the additional data and documents to be requested from the institution before or during the visit and for the additional reviews to be conducted during the visit.

A.1. Submission of ISERs to teams and initiation of the pre-review based on reports (July-August)

1. The IEEC conveys the ISER and ISER annexes of the evaluated institution and the Institutional External Evaluation Guide and its annexes, the latter of which will be referred during the external evaluation, to the team leaders and evaluators.

2. The team members review the contents of the ISER and the information and documents presented in its annexes, assess to what extent the report meets the Criteria, and fill out the document review section of the Institutional Evaluation Form (Annex 2).

A.2. Determination of the Site Visit Schedule (September)

1. The team leader conducts meetings with other team members and the rector (or relevant deputy rector)/director of the institution to be visited as part of the external evaluation process and determines a site visit date that is within the academic year (late September, October and November in general) and suitable for all the parties. The evaluation team pays a pre-visit to the institution two or three weeks before the site visit date.

   Within the scope of the pre-visit, team members organize meetings among themselves and with the institution's administrators, interview with the quality commission members of the institution and visit several spaces in the institution. During the one-day pre-visit, the schedule of the site visit is also finalized by the team leader and the rector (or relevant deputy rector/director). The evaluation team's expenses for the pre-visit are covered by the relevant institution.

2. During or after the pre-visit, the team leader meets with the rector and arrange the details regarding the transportation and accommodation of team members as part of the site visit. For the team meetings during the site visit, the institution provides a meeting room in the institution's accommodation facilities or one of the halls of the institution (*The meeting room is expected to be kept open for works that might extend to late hours, to be equipped with necessary items such as computer, projector and printer, and refreshment services such as water, tea and coffee must be provided during the meetings.*).

3. The team leader coordinates with the rector in the preparation of the draft schedule (Annex 3/b) of the visit. The schedule is prepared in accordance with the Institutional External Evaluation Criteria and in a way to allow the conduct of a thorough evaluation of the institution by the team and an articulate self-expression of the institution.

4. The evaluators should prepare the questions to be asked during the site visit in consideration of the criteria and convey the additional information to be requested from the institution to the team leader.

5. Team leader and evaluators should be in contact and exchange opinions for the pre-review of the additional information and documents and the details of the visit.

6. Team leader contacts with the rector and requests the additional information and documents that are thought to shed light on the evaluation process at the beginning or in the course of the visit (*during the pre-visit or before the site visit if possible*).

7. The units to be visited and necessary information regarding the academic and administrative staff and students to be interviewed during the site visit are shared with the institution prior to the visit.

8. The team leader forms the final schedule of the visit in consultation with the rector and informs the Council on the dates of the visit. The schedule is announced on the official websites of the Council and the relevant higher education institution.

B. Visit to the Institution (October-November)

B1. Pre-Visit

Pre-visit is a one-day visit the team members pay to the evaluated institution generally 2-3 weeks before the site visit. The scope of the pre-visit (Annex 3/a) is as follows:

1. Organization of the first official meeting among the team members,

2. Organization of the first meeting between team members and the institution's rector and senior administration,

3. Organization of a meeting between the team members and the institution's quality commission members, which helps the team members to obtain information on the operations of the institution,

4. The team members' visit to campuses and several spaces for common use (library, cafeteria, canteens, student clubs, computer labs, research centers etc.) with the aim of getting to know the institution (This visit comprises various activities such as obtaining information on the institution's campuses, infrastructure and other facilities for common use and observing the opportunities and services provided to students.) [An average of 1.5 hours is recommended for the visit.].

5. The formation of the site visit schedule by the team leader and the institution's rector.

B2. Site Visit

The site visit process starts with the arrival of the evaluation team in the place they will stay during the visit and ends with the completion of all the meetings, oral presentation of the exit statement and the departure of the team from the evaluated institution.

The site visit has four main purposes for the evaluation team:

1. Evaluating the factors that are not explained to the full extent in the ISER (factors that are not easy to describe or document in a written statement, such as the overall academic environment, the motivation of students and employees, the teaching staff's and students' sense of belonging to the institution, the quality of staff and students etc.).
2. Helping the determination of the institution's strengths and areas for further development.
3. Examining the physical facilities on-site in consideration of the information and documents presented by the institution as part of the external evaluation process.
4. Contributing to the continuous improvement and quality culture of the institution with the exit statement made at the end of the visit.

The visiting process should be planned and executed with a group of activities integrated to each other. In order to explicate the process, a site visit plan sample is provided in Annex 3/b with a chronological list of the activities required in this scope. The program presented in Annex 3/b should be considered a template and site visit plans should be reorganized specifically for each team and institution in a way to enable an effective evaluation. While choosing the academic (faculties, institutes, schools of higher education, vocational schools of higher education, research and application centers etc.) and administrative units to be visited as part of the institutional external evaluation, the size of the institution in terms of the number of students and employees and the strategic importance of the units for the institution are taken into account.

Fundamental disciplines (Positive Sciences and Social Sciences, Medicine, Health Sciences, Engineering, Applied Sciences, Education, Arts) should be homogenously included in the sample, which can vary according to the institution's structure. As part of the program, the first day of the visit is generally spent on faculties whereas the second day is spent on visiting schools of higher education and vocational schools of higher education.

During the focus group meetings, a great care should be shown in avoiding any superior-subordinate relationship among the participants, who should have qualities that could reflect the diversity in the relevant focus group, in order to provide a more comfortable discussion environment and contribute to the institution as much as possible.

B.2.1. Evaluation Team's Day of Arrival (Generally Sunday)

1. The team members meet in their place of stay or the meeting room allocated to them in the institution and organize the first team meeting of the visit. Following subjects are discussed during the meeting (*A minimum of 3-4 hours is recommended for the meeting.*):

a) Revision of the works in the scope of the pre-determined visit plan in cooperation with the institution, with the clear expression of the timing and objectives.

b) Ensuring the consistency within the team regarding the evaluation of the institution by considering the Institutional External Evaluation Criteria,

c) Reviewing the possible questions to be raised by the team members related to the site visit plan,

ç) Sharing the contributions of the observers (if any) in the site visit activities with the evaluation team.

2. The evaluation team, the rector and other relevant officials of the institution invited by the rector meet in an introduction meeting/dinner during the evening hours. Following the introduction, the site visit plan is discussed and ideas are exchanged on the subject.

B.2.2. First Day (Generally Monday)

1. The evaluation team organizes a brief meeting with the rector. During the meeting, the quality assurance system of the institution and the institution's general approaches in teaching and learning, research-development and administrative processes are discussed. Also, the aspects with respect to the general operation of the institution that are not clarified in the ISER are tried to be illuminated as the team leader brings them to the agenda throughout the discussions. The rector expresses the aspects s/he wants to be taken into account during the visit (*An average of 30 minutes is recommended for the meeting*).

2. The evaluation team meets with the Board of Trustees Chairman in foundational higher education schools (*An average of 45 minutes is recommended for the meeting*).

3. Evaluation team organizes a meeting with the institution's quality commission members. During the meeting, a presentation that provides up-to-date information on several factors is made. These factors include the institution's quality assurance system formed in line with the Institutional External Evaluation Criteria, the role of the quality commission in the system and decision-making processes, the institution's strategic objectives and the role of these objectives in regional/national development goals, the institution's administrative approach in the processes related to teaching and learning, research activities and managerial practices, the institution's outlook on continuous improvement and the outcomes obtained in this scope, and other common aspects of all institutional units. Following the presentation, a Q&A session is held among the evaluation team and commission members (*An average of 1 hour is recommended for the meeting.*).

4. The evaluation team holds a meeting with the Senate and the administrative committee members of the institution. During the meeting, a number of key issues are discussed, including the institution's quality assurance system formed in line with the Institutional External Evaluation Criteria, the institution's strategic objectives and the role of these objectives in regional/national development goals, the institution's administrative approach in the processes related to teaching and learning, research activities and managerial practices, the institution's outlook on continuous improvement and the outcomes obtained in this scope (*An average of 1.5 hours is recommended for the meeting.*).

5. If necessary, the evaluation team could meet the institution's officials at lunch to continue discussions as part of the site visit activities on the basis of both parties' (the team and the institution) agreement.

6. Faculties of the institution are visited in the afternoon. When necessary, the team can split into groups comprising at least two persons and pay simultaneous visits to different faculties depending on the size

of the institution. During the visits, the administrators of relevant units (deans, associate deans, faculty secretaries etc.) are met to discuss a number of subjects including the dissemination of quality processes in units, the objectives of the units, the role of these objectives in the institution's strategic objectives, stakeholder participation in related processes, learning outcomes of the programs within the units, R&D activities and continuous improvement endeavors. The team members request the explanation of the aspects on the operation of the units that are not clarified (*An average of 45 minutes is recommended for the meeting.*).

7. The team members meet the relevant faculty's academic staff to discuss the academic staff's relation to the administration, their role in the quality assurance system, and the recruitment, development and motivation of the staff. The focus group consisting of the academic staff is expected to comprise 8 to 10 persons in order to enable the efficient use of the time allocated for the meeting. The group is also expected to represent all the components of the faculty (*An average of 1 hour is recommended for the meeting.).*

8. The team members meet the relevant faculty's students. If any, the participation of guest students and international student representatives in the meeting is also encouraged. During the meeting, the students are asked to share their experiences on several subjects including the student participation in decision-making processes, quality assurance system, educational services and student support services. The student group is expected to comprise 8 to 10 persons in order to enable the efficient use of the time allocated for the meeting. The group is also expected to represent all the components of the faculty's student profile [*An average of 1 hour is recommended for the meeting.*].

9. The team organizes a meeting with the stakeholders of the higher education institution. The opinions of the representatives of the higher education institution's external stakeholders on the institution are received, including representatives of various institutions and organizations from public and private sectors, non-governmental organizations and alumni associations (*An average of 1.5 hours is recommended for the meeting).*

10. Following the first-day meetings, the team members meet at dinner and holds another meeting in its aftermath. In the final meeting of the day, the first day is reviewed and the duties for the second day are delegated. The duration of the meeting might change depending on the number of team members and evaluated units. The team leader should chair the meeting and the interviews with an effective time management. The notes taken by the team members during the first day are compiled and recorded (*The meeting may continue until the late hours of the evening.).*

B.2.3. Second Day (Generally Tuesday)

1. The units chosen among the schools and vocational schools of the institution are visited. When necessary, the team can split into groups comprising at least two persons and pay simultaneous visits to different academic units (schools, vocational schools etc.) depending on the size of the institution. During the visits, the administrators of relevant units are met to discuss and exchange ideas on a number of subjects including the dissemination of quality processes in units, the objectives of the units, the role of these objectives in the institution's strategic objectives, stakeholder participation in related processes, learning outcomes of the programs within the units and continuous improvement endeavors. The team members request the explanation of the aspects on the operation of the units that are not clarified (*An average of 45 minutes is recommended for the meeting.*).

2. The team members meet the relevant unit's academic staff to discuss the academic staff's relation to the administration, the role of the quality assurance system in the instructors' activities, the recruitment of new personnel, and the policies related to the development and motivation of the academic staff. The group consisting of the interviewed academic staff is expected to comprise 8 to 10 persons in order to enable the efficient use of the time allocated for the meeting. The group is also expected to represent all the components of the academic unit (*An average of 1 hour is recommended for the meeting*.).

3. The team members meet the relevant unit's students. If any, the participation of guest students and international student representatives in the meeting is also encouraged. During the meeting, the students are asked to share their experiences in several subjects including the student participation in decision-making processes, quality assurance system, educational services and student support services. The student group is expected to comprise 8 to 10 persons in order to enable the efficient use of the time allocated for the meeting. The group is also expected to represent all the components of the unit's student profile (*An average of 1 hour is recommended for the meeting*.).

4. The evaluation team meets at the lunch break.

5. The evaluation team meets the heads of the administrative units (Department of Personnel, Department of Health, Culture and Sports, Registrar's Office, Department of Library and Documentation, Career Center, Office for Disabled Students etc.) to exchange ideas on a number of subjects including the dissemination of quality processes in units, the objectives of the units, the role of these objectives in the institution's strategic objectives, stakeholder participation in related processes and continuous improvement endeavors. The team requests the explanation of the aspects on the operation of the units that are not clarified (*An average of 1 hour is recommended for the meeting.*). Following the meetings, evaluators can visit the selected units in groups.

6. The team members meet the administrative staff in relevant administrative units to discuss the administrative staff's relation to the administration, their role in the quality assurance system, the professional development and motivation of the administrative staff, and intra-institutional communication (*An average of 1 hour is recommended for the meeting.*).

7. The team meets the heads of research units (actively operating Application and Research Centers, Technoparks, Technology Transfer Offices etc.) in order to review the institution's research and development activities. During the meeting, opinions are exchanged on a number of subjects including the objectives of relevant units, the role of these objectives in the institution's strategic objectives, stakeholder participation in related processes, quality processes and continuous improvement endeavors. The team requests the explanation of the aspects on the operation of the units that are not clarified (*An average of 1.5 hours is recommended for the meeting.*).

8. Following the second-day meetings, the team members meet at dinner and holds another meeting in its aftermath. During the meeting, the team members make the necessary preparations for the exit interview, which is the final activity of the program's site visit. The team leader fills out the Institutional Evaluation Form (Annex 2) with the contributions of the evaluators and prepares the exit statement (Annex 4) that is to be orally presented during the exit interview. The exit statement comprises the institution's strengths and areas for further development along with additional remarks on these aspects. Each area for further development should be explained by providing brief yet adequate description. Observations and recommendations for improvement can also be added in the statement. The aspects

to be stated in the exit statement should seek to contribute to the development and enhancement of the institution (*The meeting may continue until the late hours of the evening with the aim of completing the exit statement.*).

B.2.4. Third Day (Generally Wednesday)

1. The evaluation team organizes a brief meeting with the rector to make a general review of the external evaluation process. During the meeting, the team leader relays to the rector the team's findings regarding the institution's strengths and areas for further development and the aspects they request to be elaborated on the operation of the units. The team leader also requests the rector to fill out the "Team Evaluation Form (to be filled out by the visited institution)" (Annex 5/a) (The THEQC will share the link to the form with the institution after the visit), an online form developed by the THEQC that comprises the quality of the visit and reviews of team members, and submit it to the THEQC within 5 work days after the completion of the visit (*An average of 45 minutes is recommended for the meeting.*).

2. The evaluation team conducts an exit interview with the rector and other officials of the institution delegated by the rector (vice rectors, deans, directors, quality commission members, other administrators etc.). An all-inclusive participation in the meeting is recommended in order to maximize the contribution of the exit interview to the institution. If the officials of the institution (rector and other participants) have any questions at the end of the meeting, the meeting might be followed by a brief Q&A session. The exit interview is adjourned by the rector and the team leader (*An average of 1.5-2 hours is recommended for the meeting.).*

3. The evaluation team fills out the online "Team Member Evaluation Form (to be filled out by team members)" (Annex 5/b) (The THEQC will share the link to the form with the evaluation team after the visit), developed by the THEQC in order to enable the team leaders and members to evaluate each other, and submits it to the THEQC within 5 work days after the completion of the visit.

4. The evaluation team leaves the institution after the exit interview.

C. Post-Visit Activities

The post-visit activities start with the completion of the site visit and ends with the completion of the IFR that is sent to the institution after being revised by the IEEC and approved by the THEQC.

The post-visit activities have three purposes:

1. Enabling the inclusion of the institution's review on the findings obtained during the visit in the IFR,

2. Providing the institution an opportunity to express their opinion,

3. Enabling consistency between the evaluations performed in different institutions in the same period in order to comply with the specific criteria.

The post-visit process should be planned and executed with a group of activities integrated to each other. A chronological list of the activities to be conducted in this process is presented below. The schedule involves the days between the completion of the visit and the finalization of the post-visit activities. All correspondences and forms are sent electronically throughout the process.

Following the visit:

1. The evaluation team submits the IFR draft that comprises the results of the feedback to the institution within 21 days after the visit and requests the institution to convey their response to the team leader within 21 days.

2. The institution electronically conveys the “21-day response” to the team leader. In this response, the institution can only express views regarding the revision of the areas for further development and the correction of the errors of fact in the IFR draft.

3. The team leader reviews the Institutional Evaluation Form (Annex 2) by meeting the evaluators in the team, updates the report by using the data in the institution’s “21-day response” and submits the final version of the report to the THEQC and the relevant institution (within 21 days after the institution’s response).

4. The Consistency Committee consisting of incumbent and/or former IEEC members who have not been appointed to evaluation teams in the relevant period performs the consistency checks of the draft reports to ensure the consistency among the reports submitted in different years or by different evaluators in the same year.

5. After the consistency checks, the IEEC forms the final version of the IFR and submits it for the Council’s approval.

6. The Higher Education Quality Council Presidency sends the final version of the IFR to the institutions in the attachment of an official letter. The IFR is announced to public via the official websites of the THEQC and the relevant institution.

D. Review and Improvement of the Process

As part of the Institutional External Evaluation Program, a 360-degree feedback method is employed to enable the evaluation of the team members by one another and the evaluated institutions’ administrators.

The evaluators and relevant institution fill out the online forms (Annex 5/a-b) emailed to them by the THEQC and convey them to the THEQC within 5 work days following the evaluation.

In addition, the parties taking part in the process are expected to convey their feedback and suggestions for improvement regarding the activities in all three stages of the process (pre-visit, visit and post-visit) in written form to the THEQC.

Each year, the completion of the evaluation process is followed by two separate review meetings held with the team leaders and the administrators of the evaluated institutions.

Also, a meeting aiming to inform all the HEI representatives on all the feedback and reviews made within the relevant year is organized.

As per the related article of the Higher Education Quality Assurance Directive, the IEEC prepares the Higher Education Evaluation and Quality Assurance Annual Situation Report and present it to the Higher Education Quality Council Presidency.

E. Expenses of the Program

All the expenses for the external evaluation process of higher education institutions are covered by the relevant budget of the institution subject to evaluation.

F. The Content of the IFR

The IFR should provide guidance to the evaluated institution by summarizing the institution's level of implementing the quality assurance system, good practice examples and areas for further development in its education, research, social contribution and administration processes aside from including the statistical data already presented by the institution. The report is expected to reflect the consensus of the team. A template for the IFR is presented in Annex 6.

G. Writing Principles of the IFR

The team leader is responsible for preparing the IFR. One of the team members may be assigned as rapporteur to support the team leader in writing the report. Following aspects should be considered while writing the IFR:

Accuracy: Using accurate and coherent terms is important in writing the report. The terms employed should be in compliance with relevant legislations and directives. The definitions and terms such as faculties, departments, commissions and course names should be referred in the same way as they are referred in the institution.

Impartiality: The findings and outcomes of the evaluation should be reflected without making any exaggeration, distortion or criticism.

Evidence-Basedness: The evaluations should be supported with evidence without employing any assumptions or personal views.

Format: The format must be in compliance with the Institutional External Evaluation Criteria in every part of the report.

Turkish Grammar and Style: Grammar and writing rules should be heeded and ambiguous expressions should be avoided while writing the report. A clear and concise language should be used.

Writing Format: As shown in the format presented in Annex 6, the report should be around 25-30 pages long and typed in 12-point Times New Roman font and 1.5 line spacing.

H. The Submission of the IFR

The team leader sends an electronic copy of the IFR to the THEQC after receiving the institution's feedback on the first draft and reaching an agreement on the report with the institution.

In addition,

- The team leader is expected to share the final version of the Institutional Evaluation Form (Annex 1) alongside the IFR. This form constitutes a basis for evaluating all the higher education institutions that have undergone external evaluation in the relevant year during the drafting process of the Higher Education Evaluation and Quality Assurance Annual Situation Report, obtaining comparative data and making recommendations that will contribute to the development of the quality assurance system in higher education.
- A copy of the exit statement orally presented in the exit interview during the final day of the site visit should also be attached to the report sent.

Timing:

It is very important to stick to the schedule set for the external evaluation process of the relevant year in order to enable the conduct of the activities as planned.

ANNEXES

Annex 1 - THEQC Code of Ethics

Annex 2 - Institutional Evaluation Form

Annex 3/A - Evaluation Team Pre-Visit Plan Sample

Annex 3/B - Evaluation Team Site Visit Plan Sample

Annex 4 - Exit Statement Template

Annex 5/A - Team Evaluation Form (to be filled out by the visited institution)

Annex 5/B - Team Member Evaluation Form (to be filled out by team members)

Annex 6 - Institutional Feedback Report Template

Higher Education Quality Council
Turkey