



SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT FOR THE PARTIAL REVIEW OF THEQC

**WITH A FOLLOW-UP ON
THE ENQA REVIEW IN 2019**

**ANKARA, TURKEY
15.04.2022**

The Turkish Higher Education Quality Council (THEQC) is the responsible body for the quality assurance system in higher education in Türkiye. It is an independent, governmental, and non-profit organization that performs institutional quality evaluation activities in HEIs, coordinates the authorization and recognition processes of accreditation agencies, and ensures the internalization and dissemination of quality assurance culture in HEIs.

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Abbreviations

ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
ESU	European Students' Union
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEIE	Higher Education Institutions Exam
IAP	Institutional Accreditation Program
IAR	Institutional Accreditation Report
IEEP	Institutional External Evaluation Program
IFR	Institutional Feedback Report
ISER	Institutional Self-Evaluation Report
QAMIS	Quality Assurance Management Information System
SAR	Self-Assesment Report
THEQC	Turkish Higher Education Quality Council

Preface

This self-assessment report (SAR) has been prepared for the focused¹ review for the registry on European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) with a follow-up on the ENQA Agency Review in 2019 of The Turkish Higher Education Quality Council (THEQC). Turkish Higher Education Quality Council (THEQC) was founded in 2015 with the name of "Turkish Higher Education Quality Board" based on the "Higher Education Quality Assurance Regulation" and reorganized and renamed as the THEQC by law² in 2017. THEQC has gained administrative and financial independence and became the only national authority in charge of QA in the Turkish higher education system. THEQC's mission is to strengthen QA systems in higher education in order to contribute to the continuous development of higher education institutions (HEIs) in Türkiye and thus, the achievement of universal qualifications by individuals. THEQC's vision is to be an effective and internationally recognized institution in the higher education quality assurance field.

THEQC's main responsibilities are to perform the external evaluation of HEIs, coordinate the authorization and recognition processes of accreditation agencies³, and ensure the internalization and dissemination of QA culture in HEIs. With the Council's work and decision, "the Regulation on Higher Education Quality Assurance and the Higher Education Quality Council" is in force in the Turkish higher education QA system. The Regulation defines the working principles of the THEQC, the principles regarding the establishment of QA systems in HEIs, internal and external evaluation processes, quality commissions established in HEIs, granting authorization or recognition to independent program accreditation agencies, the working principles of the Council's General Secretariat, the duties of the General Secretariat units, and other subjects related to the implementation of these.

Becoming a member of the ENQA and being included in the EQAR thus improving its international recognition was set as one of main goals of the THEQC. To realize this goal, THEQC applied for ENQA membership, and between December 9 and 12 2019, ENQA coordinated a site visit of a peer review panel to evaluate the compliance of the THEQC with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

As the panel concluded that THEQC is in compliance with the ESG 2015, the Board of ENQA granted the THEQC membership of ENQA for five years as of the meeting date on 28 April 2020. The Board of ENQA requested a comprehensive follow-up report within two years of its decision, where THEQC is expected to address the panel's recommendations.

¹ The focused review follows ENQA methodology for partial reviews (see ENQA Rules of Procedure, article 7, and ENQA's policy on partial reviews of members under review) that is aligned with the requirements of a focused review for the purposes of EQAR-registration.

² [Law No. 2547 on Higher Education, Additional Article 35 \(18/6/2017-7033/18 art.\)](#).

³ In Turkey, the THEQC is sole responsible authority for the authorization and recognition of accreditation agencies by law. The processes of authorizing national accreditation agencies and recognizing international accreditation agencies are conducted in accordance with the principles and criteria set out by the THEQC. However, authorization and recognition is not mandatory to operate in Türkiye, authorization and recognition results in representation of the agencies in Higher Education Programs and Quotas Guide of HEIs Entrance Exam (YKS).

Having been granted ENQA membership, THEQC also applied for EQAR registry. The Register Committee considered the application of 17/07/2019 for inclusion on the EQAR. On the basis of the documentation, the Register Committee did not conclude that THEQC substantially complies with the ESG. The Register Committee therefore rejected the application on 18th March 2021 and THEQC was invited to undergo a focused review, according to §3.21 of the Procedures for Applications of EQAR, addressing the issues that led to rejection. On 1 March 2022 THEQC requested ENQA to coordinate the focused review and issue a review report that will be considered for the purpose of registry on EQAR. In addition, THEQC decided to use this self-assessment exercise to provide ENQA with a follow-up report on the ENQA Agency Review in 2019 [see Chapter II of this document]. On 7 March 2022, ENQA agreed to coordinate the focused review.

The preparation of this self-assessment report has been a valuable self reflection opportunity for THEQC to analyze its activities, to identify the challenges, and to implement improvements that support the agency's continued development since the ENQA panel's site visit. The 2019 ENQA review had a significant impact on the enhancement of THEQC procedures and innovative steps that the agency took over, including the improvements on Institutional Accreditation Program [IAP] which has just launched at the time of the review.

Development of the self-assessment report

The self-assessment report [SAR] was prepared in a multi-stage process and started just after the THEQC's decision to have an ENQA coordinated focused review.

THEQC internally reviewed the ENQA panel recommendations and most importantly, issues that led to the rejection decision of the EQAR Register Committee. Relevant agency Commissions provided feedback on the activities related to the improvements that have already been made and the ones to be yet implemented. Thereafter, a working group was formed and the first draft of the SAR was prepared with the aid of the working group advisor. The draft SAR was updated with the experts' views in the working groups and they contributed their expertise and knowledge on the relevant activities of THEQC. The editorial and translation works were carried out in the preparation of the final SAR. Table 1 summarizes the development of the SAR by dates.

Table 1 Self-assessment Report preparation process

DATE	Process Stages
June 2021	Decision to apply to ENQA for the focused review process
September 2021	SAR working group was formed
October 2021	Developing a plan for the preparation of the SAR
July – October 2021	Collecting internal and external feedback for ENQA and EQAR
November 2021- January 2022	First draft of the SAR
January – March 2022	Finalizing the SAR and translation into English with all annexes
March 2022	Agreeing on the Terms of Reference with ENQA and EQAR
April 2022	Submission of the SAR to ENQA



The recommendations of the ENQA panel, the ENQA Board and the expectations of EQAR has been addressed carefully and in detail. The data from our strategic plan and its monitoring, annual activity reports, results of the thematic analyses and survey results, official statistics have been used for the analysis.

This document should be read jointly with ENQA's latest review report on the agency's compliance with the ESG, in order to fully understand all of THEQC's activities and processes.

THEQC appreciates the support and collaboration of ENQA and EQAR on agreeing on our proposal to combine ENQA follow-up process and focused review on the registry to EQAR. THEQC is convinced that this document will not only provide a clear and insightful overview of what THEQC has done over the time since the review, but also will reflect on how the recommendations of the ENQA review panel in 2019 were addressed with the aim of improvement of its activities.

Members of the working group for THEQC's Self-Assessment Report:

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Mehmet Bora, Student Council Member
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CHAPTER I:

EQAR REVIEW: Summary Notes of the Register Committee (2021)

THEQC applied on the register of EQAR with application no. A90 of 17/07/2019 and received confirmation of eligibility on 08/08/2019. Thereafter, THEQC underwent an external review conducted by ENQA. [The external review report](#) was published on 28/04/2020.

On 21/09/2020 the Register Committee requested a clarification response from both the review panel and the THEQC. In addition, on 09/11/2021 THEQC was invited to make an additional representation. The Register Committee rejected THEQC's application with a decision to undergo a focused review that will address the issues that led to rejection on 18/03/2021. This chapter is to explain how THEQC addressed the identified issues regarding the ESG standards as emphasized in EQAR's letter of rejection.

Introduction

The primary purpose of this self-assessment report is to meet the requirement for a focused review of those standards of the ESG that were subject of rejection by EQAR. For this purpose, THEQC applied to ENQA to coordinate the focused review, which is limited to the relevant ESG standards.

The external evaluation report decision (as issued following the ENQA panel visit in December 2019), and the ESG compliance (Parts 2 and 3) in line with the opinions of the Register Committee are presented below (Table 2):

Table 2 ESG compliance feedback of ENQA and EQAR

Standard	ENQA Review Panel conclusion	EQAR Register Committee conclusion
2.1	Substantial compliance	Compliance
2.2	Substantial compliance	Compliance
2.3	Substantial compliance	Compliance
2.4	Substantial compliance	Compliance
2.5	Substantial compliance	Compliance
2.6	Partial compliance	Partial compliance
2.7	Partial compliance	Partial compliance
3.1	Substantial compliance	Partial compliance
3.2	Full compliance	Compliance
3.3	Partial compliance	Partial compliance
3.4	Full compliance	Compliance
3.5	Partial compliance	Compliance
3.6	Substantial compliance	Partial compliance
3.7	(not expected)	Compliance (by virtue of applying)

The decision of the EQAR Register Committee, i.e., "Given that THEQC fails to meet some key requirements of the ESG, in its holistic judgement the Register Committee remained unable to conclude that THEQC complies substantially with the ESG as a whole" was forwarded to THEQC on 18 March 2021 [ref. RC29/A90]. The rationale of the Register Committee decision regarding the "Partial compliance" of the ESG standards can be summarized as follows⁴:

- Concerns expressed by the panel regarding the delay in publishing Institutional Accreditation Reports and the consistency of the reports (ESG 2.6–Reporting),
- The Commission on Appeals and Complaints not being included in the organization chart and whether the new appeal process has been fully implemented (ESG 2.7 – Complaints and appeals),
- Reviewing the effectiveness of stakeholder involvement in relation to the governance and operation of the organization, especially in designing of methodologies (ESG 3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance)

⁴For more detailed information, see the rejection decision of the Registration Committee to THEQC: [2021 Register Committee THEQC Rejection Decision](#).

- Concerns regarding the operational independence of THEQC due to staff employment (ESG 3.3 – Independence),
- Designing the internal quality assurance system to further support the successful implementation of the agency's activities, in particular the newly launched Institutional Accreditation Program (IAP) (ESG 3.6 – Internal quality assurance and professional conduct).

Explanations on the above-mentioned views of the Register Committee and the improvement works carried out by THEQC are provided in this section.

ESG Part 2: Standards and guidelines for external quality assurance

ESG 2.6 – Reporting (partial compliance)

Decision of the Register Committee (ref. RC29/A90):

- Delay in publishing Institutional Accreditation Reports (Article 34)
- Concerns expressed by the panel about the consistency of the reports (Article 38)

THEQC's response:

- At the date of EQAR decision, the current reports of external evaluation activities were published on the official website of THEQC, and only the Institutional Accreditation Reports (IARs) were published with a delay due to the setbacks experienced in the pandemic conditions. These reports are now accessible to the public, and the reports regarding the decisions made from the external evaluation activities carried out in 2021 are also available⁵. A sample IAR is given in Annex 1. The publishing of IARs are running on schedule as planned. Since 2022 IAP has just been started, the IAR will be published when the process completed.
- In accordance with the Regulation on Higher Education Quality Assurance and the Higher Education Quality Council⁶, all HEIs have to write an Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER) annually in accordance with THEQC's Institutional Self-Evaluation Report Writing Guide⁷. These reports, in which HEIs evaluate their current status according to the criteria determined by THEQC, is submitted to THEQC through the information system since 2018, and they are published both on the official websites of THEQC and the relevant institution and provide all stakeholders open access anytime⁵.
- Other reports produced within the scope of THEQC quality assurance processes are Institutional Feedback Reports (IFR), written within the Institutional External Evaluation Program (IEEP) that is carried out by external evaluators and comprise the external evaluation results; and Institutional Accreditation Reports (IAR) written within the Institutional Accreditation Program (IAP). IFR/IARs written in accordance with the THEQC Institutional External Evaluation Accreditation and Follow-up Program Guide are written through the information system. In this system, evaluators can see the evaluation criteria, the institution's ISERs for the current and previous years, and related evidence, and they can write the IFR/IAR

⁵[Institutional Self Evaluation Reports](#), [Institutional Feedback Reports](#), [Institutional Accreditation Reports](#).

⁶[Regulation on Higher Education Quality Assurance and the Higher Education Quality Council](#)

⁷[Institutional Self-Evaluation Report Writing Guide \(V2.1\)](#)

on the same system. These reports have been submitted to THEQC through the information system since 2018, they are published on the official website of THEQC and provide all stakeholders open access anytime. ^{Hatal Yer işareti tanımlanmamış.}

- Considering the comments of the EQAR Register Committee and the ENQA evaluation panel about the consistency between the reports, improvements were made in the works carried out on the consistency of the reports.
- One of the works carried out to ensure the consistency of the ISERs, IFRs and IAR's is to provide regular, annual trainings to the institution quality commissions (for ISERs) and external evaluators (for IFR/IAR) as part of THEQC external evaluation activities. The trainings comprise modules that include the evaluations of the THEQC Rubric, and participants are presented with content on how to use the rubric by interactively analyzing sample cases.
- Another improvement was made immediately after the ENQA panel visit. At the time of the panel visit, regarding the criteria, there were only the sub-criteria, rubric system and sample evidence in the mentioned THEQC Institutional Self-Evaluation Report Writing Guide(V2.0)⁸. Following the panel's visit to THEQC, the guide was updated and explanations regarding THEQC's expectations about a certain standard were included for each sub-criterion in the rubric system⁹. This update aims at strengthening consistency in understanding the criteria among the different reporting stakeholders (institutions and evaluation teams) using the guide.
- The consistency work which is carried out for ISERs and IARs is explained below.
- ISERs are checked within the scope of the following considerations:
 - The effectiveness of self-evaluation works and stakeholder involvement in the report,
 - The inclusiveness, prevalence, clarity and participation of the work of the quality commission,
 - Objectivity and evidence-based nature of the self-evaluation processes of the institutions (re-scoring THEQC Rubric over ISER and comparison with institutional scores),
 - Adequacy of improvement work.
- As a result of the consistency work, the ISER Feedback Report (Annex 2) is written and sent to the relevant HEIs. Common problems encountered are identified as a result of the ISER check. Review of the Institutional Self Evaluation Reports and Giving Feedback are shared with the public through a thematic analysis¹⁰.
- The consistency work of the IAR's is carried out within the scope of THEQC Consistency Directive (Annex 3). After the IAR is completed by the evaluation team, the report is submitted to the Commission on Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation where it is checked by a two-person group, one a member of the Commission and the other an expert of the Council, taking into account the following considerations:
 - Compatibility of the sub-criteria maturity levels in the reports with the report content.
 - Evidence-based evaluation of sub-criterion maturity levels.

⁸ [THEQC Institutional Self-Evaluation Report Writing Guide \(V2.0\)](#)

⁹ [THEQC Institutional Self-Evaluation Report Writing Guide \(V2.1\)](#)

¹⁰ [Evaluation of Institutional Self Evaluation Reports and Giving Feedback](#)

- The language of the reports being objective, and not judgmental and/or comparative with other institutions.
- As a result of the IAR consistency work, a consistency evaluation report (Annex 4) is written. According to this report, in case of doubt, if any, the Commission meets the team leader, forms its final opinion accordingly, and submits it to the Council. The Council evaluates the process in question, makes the accreditation decision and submits it to the relevant HEI. The Accreditation decision and Institutional Accreditation Reports are published on the website¹¹. The Council also prepares a letter containing its decision and the areas for improvement of the institution, and submits it to the relevant HEI (Annex 5).

Annex 1. Sample IAR

Annex 2. Sample ISER Feedback Report

Annex 3. Consistency Directive

Annex 4. Sample Consistency Evaluation Report

Annex 5. Sample Accreditation Decision Letter

ESG 2.7 – Complaints and Appeals (partial compliance)

Decision of the Register Committee (ref. RC29/A90):

- The Commission on Appeals and Complaints is not included in the organization chart (Article 44)
- Issue about whether the new appeals process is fully implemented (Article 45)

THEQC's response:

- At the time of the ENQA panel visit, there were four commissions with which THEQC works were carried out. However, in the period following the ENQA site visit, the number of commissions of THEQC increased to seven in line with the needs arising from the work it carries out and the suggestions of stakeholders and panels (See Chapter II, ESG 3.3, Panel recommendation - 1).
- Based on the panel opinion within the scope of the ESG 2.7 standard, the Complaints and Appeals Directive was created¹² and the Commission on Complaints and Appeals was established within the scope of the aforementioned directive. The Commission on Appeals and Complaints carries out its processes within the scope of this directive.
- Based on the decision of the EQAR Register Committee regarding the organization chart, the commission information is shown in detail in the relevant fields (under the commissions tab)¹³ on the official website of THEQC and in the THEQC work flow charts (Annex 6).
- The appeal and complaint process covers the external evaluation activities carried out by THEQC, the objections to the recognition and authorization decisions of accreditation agencies, and the complaints about the services rendered. The main purpose of the process is, in line with the institutional goals and values of THEQC,

¹¹ [Accredited Institutions and Their Reports](#)

¹² [THEQC Directive on Appeals and Complaints](#)

¹³ [THEQC Commissions](#)

to provide services in an open and accountable manner, to be fair in decision-making and to secure the rights of stakeholders.

- Upon notification of the appeal or complaint to the Council, the process is managed through the information management system¹⁴. Both process tracking and performance indicators can be calculated through the information management system. According to the directive, a preliminary review of the appeal or complaint uploaded to the system is made by the Commission secretariat within 7 days. Following the preliminary examination, the appeal or complaint is placed on the agenda of the Commission and the relevant parties are contacted if additional information and documents are needed. The Commission evaluates the appeal/complaint in accordance with the relevant regulation and in the light of the information and documents provided within 30 days at the latest, and submits it to the Council. The Council makes its final decision within 30 days at the latest, and the final decision is notified in writing to the relevant person/institution.
- Since the directive came into effect, THEQC has not received any appeals but one complaint. The application was made regarding the fact that teaching staff who work under the title of lecturers could not apply as an evaluator, although the evaluator applications within the scope of 2020 IEEP were not specified otherwise in the relevant legislation. The process regarding this application was operated in accordance with the THEQC Directive on Appeals and Complaints and was concluded in favor of the applicant.

Annex 6. Process cards - Workflow - RACI Matrix

ESG PART 3: QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES

ESG 3.1 Activities, Policy, And Processes for Quality Assurance (partial compliance) Decision of the Register Committee (ref. RC29/A90):

- Reviewing the effectiveness of stakeholder involvement in relation to the governance and work of the organization, especially in designing of methodologies

THEQC's response:

- The Council is formed from the representatives of the stakeholders of the Turkish Higher Education and Quality Assurance System. Council members and the organizations they represent are also shared with the public on the THEQC official website¹⁵. When necessary, international advisors are invited to the Council meetings to take their opinions¹⁶. Thus, THEQC ensures that decision-making processes are carried out with direct stakeholder involvement.
- THEQC also seeks the opinions of its stakeholders during the design and execution of its activities and processes in line with its Quality and Institutional Governance Policies. As a result of all this feedback, it updates the relevant method designs, processes, guides and the information system. The methods used by the Council to involve its stakeholders in the processes are evaluation meetings, focus group

¹⁴ [Quality Information Management System](#)

¹⁵ [About THEQC](#)

¹⁶ [Meeting with International Experts \(Prof. Ivan Leban and Ronny Heintze\)](#)

discussions and surveys, and for this purpose, the evaluations made regularly by THEQC are as follows:

- A survey about external evaluation activities where HEIs evaluate the external evaluation process and evaluators, and a survey in which the external evaluation team (academic, administrative, student and international members) evaluate each other (in these surveys, feedback is also received regarding the external evaluation process of the relevant year),
 - Evaluation meetings with representatives of HEIs about improvement before and after external evaluation,
 - Information and evaluation meetings with quality commissions about strengthening the internal quality assurance systems of HEIs,
 - Surveys made at the end of evaluator trainings for External Evaluation activities,
 - Consulting national and international advisors on THEQC processes and methods (Annex 7),
 - Information and experience sharing meetings with international quality agencies on processes in the field of quality assurance
 - Stakeholder opinion survey conducted within the scope of the strategic plan preparation process (once every 5 years)¹⁷.
- Accordingly, since the ENQA panel visit, there have been five evaluation meetings with representatives of HEIs, four training and information meetings with quality commissions, six trainings and subsequent surveys for evaluators, three meetings with international experts, nine evaluation and information sharing meetings with national and international accreditation agencies.

Annex 7. Invitation letter and visit program for the International Advisors

Annex 8. Stakeholder activity table

ESG 3.3 – Independence (partial compliance)

Decision of the Register Committee (ref. RC29/A90):

- Concerns regarding the operational independence of THEQC due to staff employment (ESG 57 – Independence)

THEQC's response:

- All employment procedures of THEQC are defined by the Civil Servants Law No. 657, which is binding for all public institutions and organizations in Türkiye including THEQC, and additional staffing schedules to the founding law. Along with this legally binding issue, THEQC continues its efforts to increase the number of permanent full-time employees and improve the organizational structure in line with its efforts to comply with the ESG, considering the views of the ENQA panel from the last ESG review and the EQAR Register Committee and directly with the Directorate General of Personnel affiliated to the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, regarded as the highest authority in this respect. In this context, staff

¹⁷ Further details of stakeholder involvement in the preparation of the strategic plan can be found [here](#) (page 10-17).

allocation was made for 6 full-time contracted employees from the Presidency General Directorate of Personnel Principles.

- In this framework, as of March 2022, the number of THEQC employees has increased to 40, including the President, 29 permanent staff and 11 academic experts¹⁸. In accordance with the higher education legislation in Türkiye it is essential that academic experts who work full time at the Council maintain staff ties to a university in order to protect both their titles and academic promotion rights. This staff cadre obliges that the payments be made from the same HEI. Except that, academic experts assigned to THEQC or any similar public institution do not have a relationship with their universities in terms of any duties and responsibilities (education-teaching, research-development, administrative duties) during their term of office. Apart from this principle determined according to the legislation, THEQC signs an Ethical Agreement¹⁹ with all its staff members, Council members and external evaluators in order to prevent possible conflicts/coincidences of interest regarding processes. The academic experts are responsible for coordinating and implementing of activities of THEQC in their field of expertise.
- In addition, it is planned to use all the cadres that will be released for THEQC by the Presidency Strategy and Budget Department (the top institution responsible for employment planning in public institutions) in 2022. Taking into account the opinions of the ENQA panel and the EQAR Register Committee, THEQC notified the relevant institutions about its employment requirements and obtained the necessary permits to recruit employees above the employment policy determined within the scope of the Strategic Plan. Accordingly, five new experts will be recruited in 2022. These five new experts will be employed for THEQC's main processes. Among them are an industrial engineer for internal quality assurance system, a computer engineer for IT, an officer and two branch managers. This projection is inline with the strategic goals of THEQC.
- As the related official correspondences cannot be published, they will be shared if demanded by the review panel.

ESG 3.6 – Internal quality assurance and professional conduct (partial compliance)

Decision of the Register Committee (ref. RC29/A90):

- Designing the internal quality assurance system to further support the successful implementation of the agency's activities, in particular the newly launched Institutional Accreditation Program (IAP) [Article 66-67].

THEQC's response:

- Since the ENQA panel visit, THEQC has continued to improve its internal quality assurance system. Within the scope of internal quality assurance works, the duties and responsibilities of the Council determined by law and regulation, and the THEQC Strategic Plan, 29 sub-processes under 5 main processes were

¹⁸ The 'academic expert' term refers that the academic staff who are assigned to work for THEQC by temporarily leaving from their duties in HEIs. Please note that the work description of these academic experts does not include external QA activities of THEQC, therefore they are not part of the evaluation teams. For those involved in evaluation teams, 'evaluator' term is used.

¹⁹ [The Statement of Confidentiality and Code of Ethics of THEQC](#)

determined and workflow charts, performance indicators, risk plans, duties and responsibilities were determined and systematized [Annex 6].

- At the same time, this systematic approach [which integrates strategic management, process management, risk management and feedback management] is managed online through the informatics platform Quality Assurance Management Information System (QAMIS) and the Institutional Management Information System. The system provides electronic monitoring, reporting and updating of strategic management, process management and risk management. Installation procedures of the software system and the strategic plan definition processes have been completed at THEQC, and the process of defining the process cards to the system is in progress²⁰.
- Follow-up within the scope of the internal quality assurance system is carried out through performance indicators specific to each process and sub-process (examples of indicators can be found in the process cards provided in Annex 6), in addition to the performance indicators determined for monitoring the strategic plan. Process performance indicators also include indicators specific to newly designed processes, such as the IAP process. As for the performance indicators of the IAP process, the number of targeted IARs per year, the satisfaction level of the evaluation teams, the satisfaction of the evaluated HEI, and the IAR evaluation consistency²¹ were defined.
- In this context, performance indicators of the IAP process were also monitored, and this analysis is given in the Table 3:

Table 3. 2020 IAP Process Performance Follow-Up Chart

Performance Indicator	Goal Set	Goal Realized
Number of targeted IARs per year	11	11
Satisfaction level of evaluation teams (5 point Likert scale)	4,00	4,50
Satisfaction level of the evaluated HEI (5 point Likert scale)	4,00	4,40
IAR evaluation consistency	0,850	0,949

²⁰ [Quality Management Information System, Institutional Management Information System](#)

²¹ See [Part II, ESG 2.6.](#)

CHAPTER II:

ENQA'S RECOMMENDATIONS TO THEQC (2020)

THEQC underwent an external review by ENQA in 2019. The review panel made a site visit to the agency during 9th – 12th December 2019. This chapter lists the recommendations of the review panel and ENQA Board, and explains the THEQC's responses to the published [ENQA review report \(2020\)](#).

Introduction

This chapter includes THEQC response to the recommendations on the agency's ESG compliance as elaborated in the external review report by the ENQA panel and the membership decision taken by the ENQA Board (2020). THEQC's responses are provided after each listed recommendation. In the event that responses to the EQAR Register Committee and the responses in this chapter coincide with each other, references are made to the previous chapter.

ESG PART 3: QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES

ESG 3.1 Activities, Policy, And Processes for Quality Assurance (substantial compliance)

Standard:

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis. They should have clear and explicit goals and objectives that are part of their publicly available mission statement. These should translate into the daily work of the agency. Agencies should ensure the involvement of stakeholders in their governance and work.

Panel recommendation – 1: In the development of future strategic documents, the agency should make the participation of students more visible. It should ensure that the student member of the Council is involved in the agency's work to the same extent as other members.

THEQC's responses:

- THEQC established a Students Commission in 2019 to raise awareness of higher education students about the quality assurance system and increase their involvement in this respect. The Students Commission aims the establishment of students' quality communities in all HEIs. Activities for students are carried out in all HEIs in line with this goal and with the contributions of student members of Quality Commissions in institutions. The number of the students' quality communities in institutions increased to 53 as of March 2022, thanks to the work done and the established awareness level.
- "Turkish Higher Education Quality Council Students Commission Directive" was published and entered into force on 13 July 2020 and was updated on 30 March 2022 to make the Commission's works systematic in line with the panel's recommendations.²² The Directive explains the organization and working principles and the duties and responsibilities of the Commission, the duties and responsibilities of the Commission Chair, and the concepts such as quality ambassador training. ²³Similarly, the principles and procedures related to the selection of the Council's student member are determined. According to these principles and procedures, the new member assignment process starts with an open announcement to candidates, and THEQC Students Commission makes a

²² [THEQC Student Commission Directive](#)

²³ [Principles and Procedures Regarding the Determination of Student Members to the Higher Education Quality Council](#)

pre-assessment regarding the applications.²⁴ Three candidates determined by the Commission are presented to the Council and the Council decides one of them as Council member.

- The student member of the Council becomes the Commission Chair automatically. Students Commission comprises a minimum of five and a maximum of 11 members, including the Commission Chair. Commission members are selected considering educational level, sex, study field, and regional diversity.²⁵ An academic coordinator is commissioned by THEQC Presidency to guide the Commission in academic processes (training content, workshop content, etc.). This coordinator is not involved in decision processes and only gives support while scientific content of training activities is created, when needed. Students Commission consists of five sub-units.²⁶ These units are benefitted to facilitate activities and processes. It is aimed that Commission members use their knowledge, energy, and time better through these units.
- The Commission convenes at least once a month and takes decisions by voting. Afterwards, the decisions taken are submitted to the Council by the Commission Chair, who is a Council member at the same time. For example, the Commission took decision to organize "Quality Ambassadors Training Program" and "Quality Ambassador Workshop," submitted it to the Council, and then the activities were carried out. The Council supports the Commission with such issues as private licensed online communication platform [Zoom], material design, content development, etc. After the training and workshop are completed, the Commission determines the student evaluators and submit them to the Commission on Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation. Student evaluators have taken part in all evaluation teams since 2019. There are 286 candidate student evaluators in student pool as of March 2022.
- Students Commission Chair, a member of the Council, may be a member of the Commissions in which other Council members also take part. Currently, the Chair is assigned as the member of the Commission on Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation and the Commission on International Relations. Similarly, other student members of the Commission may be assigned in THEQC Commissions. Accordingly, there are Students Commission members who take charge in THEQC's Commission on Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation, Commission on Publicity and Stakeholder Relations, and Commission on International Relations. Thus, a direct connection is established between the Council's works and the works of Students Commission's related unit. For example, the students proposed to be included in evaluation process are determined by the Students Commission and submitted to the Commission on Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation by the student members of this commission. Student Commission member in THEQC Commission on International Relations exchanged opinions with other members of THEQC Commission on International Relations about inviting students to Quality Ambassador Training.
- Moreover, a system that is planned to facilitate the communication of the Commission with student members in the Quality Commissions of HEIs. Student Quality Communities Unit of the Commission interacts both with student

²⁴ [Turkish Higher Education Quality Council Student Member Application Call](#)

²⁵ [THEQC Student Involvement](#)

²⁶ [THEQC Student Commission](#)

members in the Quality Commissions of HEIs and the members of students' quality societies in HEIs.

- Some of the activities of THEQC Students Commission are:
 - [Assignment of New Student Member of the Council](#)- January 5-February 3, 2021
 - [Quality Ambassador Training Program](#)- February 5-20, 2021
 - [Quality Ambassador Workshop](#)- March 24, 2021
 - [Information for Student Members of Quality Commissions in HEIs](#)- May 24, 2021
 - [New Memberships to ESU QA Student Expert Pool](#)- July 1, 2021
 - [Meetings with Students' Quality Communities](#)- May 22-June 30, 2021
 - [Meeting of Students in THEQC Evaluation Teams](#)- October 7-8, 2021
 - [Commission Member Assignment](#)- September 27-November 1, 2021
 - [Students' Quality Societies Workshop](#)- October 27-28, 2021
 - ["What Does Students' Quality Society Do? What Should It Do?"](#) Student Workshops- November 12-December 17, 2021
 - [Quality Assurance System and Student Involvement in Higher Education"- Student Seminars](#)- March 15-December 30, 2021
- Thematic analysis of Commission activities is present in 2020 Status Report for Student Involvement in the Quality Assurance System in Higher Education.²⁷ Activities planned by Students Commission to be carried out in 2022 are present in the Commission's 2022 Activity Plan and listed below:
 - To reach all HEIs through student seminars,
 - To carry out Quality Ambassador Training-QAP'22 in 4 sessions and to add new student evaluators to THEQC evaluators pool,
 - To conduct Quality Ambassador Workshop-QAW'22 and to prepare students for THEQC evaluator training,
 - To hold inforamatory meeting on "Importance of student involvement and the activities that can be carried out" with quality commissions members in the institutions,
 - To organise Summit on Students in Quality,
 - To answer demands for "What Does Students' Quality Society Do? What Should It Do?" student works,
 - To conduct workshops to strengthen the quality of student evaluators,
 - To maintain relationships with ESU,
 - To develop and present a Student Guide that will answer students' questions in quality assurance processes,
 - To plan a project with British Council Türkiye, with student participation,
 - To carry out seminars and interactive works with student evaluators of national accreditation agencies.

Panel recommendation – 2: The panel recommends including further information in the Strategic Plan such as: plan of publications (including thematic analyses) and the staff development plan.

THEQC' response:

²⁷ [Status Report on Student Involvement in the Quality Assurance System in Higher Education for 2020](#)

- In Türkiye, public administrations are obliged to develop a strategic plan in accordance with the Public Financial Management and Control Law No. 5018. The strategic plans developed with this obligation by public administrations are produced for 5-year periods based on the Regulation on the Procedures and Principles Regarding Strategic Planning in Public Administrations, which was published in the Official Gazette dated 26/05/2006 and numbered 26179 and later updated by being published in the Official Gazette dated 26/02/2018 and numbered 30344. THEQC's current Strategic Plan covers the years 2019-2023 and is still in force. Public institutions may update their Strategic Plans only by obtaining permission beforehand and with limited changes in the period the plans are in force. For this reason, THEQC Strategic Plan will be renewed in 2024.
- The staff development plan, which was mentioned in the panel recommendation, is defined with the goal "To meet human resources needs of the THEQC by taking into account all its service areas and improve its human resources' competencies" [Strategic Plan, Objective 4.2.] in the THEQC's current Strategic Plan²⁸. The in-service training programs mentioned in this goal are carried out online and face-to-face. The in-service training objectives set for THEQC's staff development and their realization rates are presented in **Table 4**.

Table 4 THEQC's in-service trainings by years

Objective	Performance indicator	2019	2020	2021
Objective 4.2. To meet human resources needs of the THEQC by taking into account all its service areas and improve its human resources' competencies.	The number of in-service trainings* for the development of the THEQC staff	2 out of 2 1.Educational Data Mining and Artificial Intelligence Applicatons 2.ENQA-EQAR External Evaluation Processes	2 out of 3 1.Institutional Social Media Training 2.EFQM Model Training	4 out of 4 1.Official correspondence procedures and principles 2.Effective and Accurate Communication Skills 3.Diction 4.Regulation updates and Legislation training

- In the scope of THEQC's 2022 plans, in-service training works will be modelled. With this goal, a Staff Development Group will be created. Competency-based and duty-specific planning for in-service training will be conducted with reference to "ENQA Quality Assurance Professional Competencies Framework"²⁹ and in line with the new strategic plan works. Moreover, it will be added to the 2024-2028 strategic plan works to be developed in 2023.
- Another recommendation from the panel is about including publication and thematic analyses in the strategic plan. The current Strategic Plan includes this point in the goal "To conduct regular institutional and social information activities on quality assurance in higher education and make publications that will constitute references" [Strategic Plan, Objective 3.2.]²⁸. THEQC's publications are monitored according to the five performance indicators present in the said goal.

²⁸ [THEQC Strategic Plan \(2019-2023\)](#)

²⁹ [ENQA Quality Assurance Professional Qualifications Framework](#)

- The Higher Education Evaluation and Quality Assurance Status Report (referred to as "the Status Report" from this point on) written by THEQC annually is a legislative obligation of THEQC. The Status Report is included in sub-clause (ğ) of clause 1 of article 6 in the Regulation on Higher Education Quality Assurance and the Higher Education Quality Council as "To annually write and publish the Higher Education Quality Assurance Status Report that comprises recommendations for quality improvement in national higher education by evaluating the evaluation processes and internal quality assurance works of HEIs, and authorization of accreditation agencies, and to submit it for the relevant stakeholders' information, including the Council of Higher Education."³⁰ In addition, performance criteria for thematic analyses are addressed in Objective 3.2 of the current [2019-2023] Strategic Plan. In the scope of this goal, thematic analyses are expressed as reports for the society and HEIs. Thematic analysis planning will be made more visible in the scope of the works to develop the 2024-2028 Strategic Plan to be written in 2023.
- The publication activities of THEQC are carried out in compliance with the content of other goals and objectives in the Strategic Plan, too. Some examples from the publications regarding these objectives are presented in the table below (Table 5):

Table 5 Strategic Plan objectives and the relevant publications

Objective	Publications
<i>Objective 1.2. To design innovative and diversity-oriented internal and external QAS to support policies in the higher education system.</i>	<p>Uludağ, G., Bardakçı, S., Yıldız, Ö. F., Tunç, Y., Akkoyunlu, Nasır, A., B. Ercan, S., and Elmas, M [2020]. Assessing Students' Learning Online: It's More Than Testing. Proceedings of the 12th Higher Education International Conference On Teaching And Learning Quality Assurance In Higher Education Under The Pandemic.</p> <p>Akkoyunlu, B., Aksu Yıldırım, S., Bardakçı, S. Avşaroğlu, M. D., Uludağ, G., Gündüz, A. Y. Koçer, A. and Elmas, M. [2020]. How Do Turkish Universities' Undergraduate Programs Build Generation Z Competencies? INQAAHE Forum, 2020.</p>
<i>Objective 2.1. To provide educational services and activities to improve the quality assurance systems of higher education institutions.</i>	<p>Avşaroğlu, M. D., Sarıaydın, E., Bardakçı, S., Akkoyunlu, B. Ercan, S., Nasır, A., Aksu Yıldırım, S., Elmas, M. [2021]. THEQC's International Evaluator Training Program in the Midst of Pandemic. The 13th Higher Education International Conference On Education Innovation And Teaching Quality Assurance In The Post-pandemic Era, Macao Polytechnic Institue, Macao</p> <p>Bardakçı, S. Akkoyunlu, B. Aksu Yıldırım, S., Kozanoğlu, M. D., Uludağ, G., Avşaroğlu, M. D., Nasır, A., Ercan, S., and Elmas, M. [2021]. The Supporting Role of Quality Agencies for a Sustainable QA System: the Training Model in the "New Normal Environment" Re-Imagining Higher Education Quality in an Age of Uncertainty, CONFERENCE 2021 Re-Imagining Higher Education Quality in an Age of Uncertainty [pp.5-16]</p>

³⁰ [Higher Education Quality Council Regulation](#)

	Sina Ercan, Aslihan Nasir, Abdullah Yasin Gunduz, Gonca Uludag, Sibel Aksu Yildirim, Muzaffer Elmas, Buket Akkoyunlu. The Impact of On-line Simulation Platform on Training of Evaluation Team Members. EQAF 2019, Berlin.
<i>Objective 3.3. To create systems to ensure internal and external stakeholders' involvement in processes and ensure that the systems are managed.</i>	Uludağ, G., Çatal, S. and Bora, M. [2021]. Türk yükseköğretiminde kalite güvencesi sistemi ve öğrenci katılımının önemi, Trakya Üniversitesi Kalite Ve Strateji Yönetimi Dergisi, 1(1), 91-111. Uludağ, G., Bardakçı, S., Avşaroğlu, M. D., Çankaya, F., Çatal, S., Ayvat, F., Koçer, A., Aksu Yildirim, S. & Elmas, M. [2021]. Investigation of the higher education students' participation in quality assurance processes based on the theory of planned behaviour: A case of Turkey, Quality in Higher Education, 27:3, 338-356.

Panel recommendation – 3: THEQC should publish the composition and tasks of the Advisory Board on its website.

THEQC's response:

- The information published on the official website about the national and international advisors in THEQC organizational structure has been updated based on their duty areas about which they contribute to the Council actively.³¹ The Council resort to advisor opinions when needed in Council activities. The advisors contribute to the Council regarding their competency areas in this respect. Advisors are assigned with the Presidential decision.

ESG 3.3 Independence [partial compliance]

Standard:
Agencies should be independent and act autonomously. They should have full responsibility for their operations and the outcomes of those operations without third party influence.

Panel recommendation – 1: The review panel recommends that the agency reconsider its structure: an overarching and representative governing body would allow the agency to maintain the representation that it currently has in its staffing profile but this would be at the level of strategic overview. An executive arm, which manages the agency's operations and processes, might then be staffed by permanent appointments to THEQC.

THEQC's response:

- Clause 1 of Article 4 in the Regulation on Higher Education Quality Assurance and the Higher Education Quality Council states that "The Turkish Higher Education Quality Council consists of the Council and the President." Clause 1 of Article 8 states that " The President is the principal administrator of the Council and in

³¹ [THEQC Employees](#)

charge of the general administration and representation of the Council and executes the provisions of regulations and laws, and decisions taken by the Council." The Regulation states that the President and the Vice-President are elected by the Council. The President and the Vice-President serve full time. Council members responsible for each Commission ensure the flow of information by presenting the Commissions' activities and opinions to the Council's agenda.

- The Presidency and the General Secretariat constitute the executive arm of the Council. General Secretariat consists of Institutional External Evaluation and Registry of External Evaluation Agencies Unit, Publicity and Stakeholder Relations Unit, and Administrative Services Unit. 39 personnel work in the General Secretariat Units. The staff of the units affiliated with the General Secretariat take an active role to conduct commission activities [Annex 6].
- THEQC's organizational structure consists of seven commissions. The Council conducts its activities through Commission on Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation, Commission on Recognition and Authorization of External Evaluation and Accreditation Agencies, Commission on Promotion and Stakeholder Relations, Commission on International Relations, Students Commission, Commission on Appeals and Complaints, and Ethics Commission on Scientific Research and Evaluation Processes.
- The new commissions, which have been established since the panel's visit in line with THEQC's need, and their duties are given below [Table 6].

Table 6 New commissions and their duties.

Commission	Duties
Commission on International Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -To follow the universal norms and principles in the field of quality assurance in higher education. -To establish international collaboration with counterparts abroad. -To coordinate memberships with umbrella organizations in the field of quality assurance. -To organize various events and benchmarking activities with international stakeholders. -To propose international evaluator candidates to the Council. -To strengthen relations with international experts in the field of quality assurance. -To inform the Council about the latest developments and quality assurance problems in higher education.
Commission on Appeals and Complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -To assess the appeals filed against the decisions taken within the scope of the Institutional Accreditation Program carried out by the Council and to present the assessment results to the Council. -To assess the appeals filed against the Institutional Feedback Reports published within the scope of the Institutional External Evaluation Program carried out by the Council and to present the assessment results to the Council. -To assess the appeals filed against the Follow-up Reports published within the scope of the Follow-up Program carried out by the Council and to present the assessment results to the Council. -To assess the appeals filed against the decision taken for authorisation of national accreditation agencies and

	<p>recognition of international accreditation agencies and to present the assessment results to the Council.</p> <p>-To assess the complaints regarding the services carried out by the Council and to present the assessment results to the Council.</p>
Ethics Commission on Scientific Research and Evaluation Processes	<p>-To assess applications, documents or data related to the activities carried out by the Council in academic studies.</p> <p>- To conduct an annual evaluation of the applications filed to the Ethics Commission,</p>

Panel recommendation – 2: Related to the above, and in order to improve operational independence, the agency must continue to improve the balance between permanent staff who are on its payroll and those who work as consultants/advisors/experts. The current operational independence of the agency is not assured due to the presence of third parties in the daily job of the agency whose interests may be compromised due to conflicting loyalties related to involvement in the agency's operations.

THEQC's response:

- The response to this panel recommendation is present in the response written for EQAR Register Committee in Chapter 1 - ESG 3.3.
- As an example of THEQC's attempts to increase its expert staff, it is possible to give the example of replacing the staff positions open to two civil servants in 2020 with two expert staff to be employed in 2021. As a result of another attempt in 2021 which includes 23 permanent staff have been considered by the Human Resources Office under the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye and six staff have been allocated to the THEQC so far.
- In this context, due to the recruitments made since 2020, the number of Council staff, including the President, is 40. The number of permanent staff is 29, and the number of academic experts is 11, as previously explained.
- On the other hand, in accordance with the higher education legislation in Türkiye, it is essential that academic experts who work full-time at the Council maintain staff ties to a university in order to protect both their titles and academic promotion rights. This staff cadre obliges that the payments be made from the same institution. Except that, academic experts assigned to THEQC or any similar public institution do not have a relationship with their universities in terms of any duties and responsibilities (education-teaching, research-development, administrative duties) during their term of office. Apart from this principle determined according to the legislation, THEQC signs an Ethical Agreement³² with all its staff members, Council members and external evaluators in order to prevent possible conflicts/coincidences of interest regarding processes.
- In an addition to this explanation, THEQC has defined the authorities and roles of its staff.
THEQC developed the RACI matrices, used as a project management tool while determining process-based and unit-based authorities and roles, for its staff, as a part of its internal quality assurance system. In this context, the following roles are defined for each of the work steps identified in the process cards:

³²[THEQC Statement of Confidentiality and Code of Ethics](#)

- Responsible: The person who is responsible for implementing and completing the work. Responsibility may be shared in some cases. A determines the degree of responsibility.
- Accountable: The person who is responsible for the results of the activity or decision. This person is authorized to approve and veto. Only one "A" may be assigned to a duty.
- Consulted: The person who is consulted for duties and final decisions.
- Informed: The person who should be informed after taking a decision or step.
- It has been planned to examine RACI matrices vertically and horizontally on an annual basis as a part of internal quality assurance. In this framework, it has been made possible that conflicts on workload, employment requirements, personnel training, and duty responsibilities and the human resources risks can be managed. [Annex 6].

ESG 3.4 Thematic Analysis (partial compliance by the Board decision)

Standard:

Agencies should regularly publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities.

Board decision: The Board would like to use this opportunity to provide an articulation regarding standard 3.4 Thematic analysis, where their judgement differs from that of the panel. Contrary to the conclusion of the panel, the Board notes that the Annual Situation Reports cannot be fully considered as thematic analysis of THEQC as they do not describe and analyse the general findings of the agency's external quality assurance activities. Following this, in the opinion of the Board, the standard can be considered only as substantially compliant with the ESG.

Panel recommendation: Full compliance. No recommendations.

THEQC's response:

- THEQC publishes the thematic analyses regarding its activities and external evaluation activities every year with the "Higher Education Evaluation and Quality Assurance Status Report" [referred to as "Status Report" from this point on].³³
- In line with the ENQA Board's decision, the Council summarised the practices and activities of the previous year firstly while writing the Status Report and then included the findings from ISERs, IFRs, and FuRs. The Council also analysed and evaluated these findings in terms of the Turkish higher education system and the stakeholders. In this process, the data from 2020 were evaluated with an inductive view and by considering the experiences/feedback obtained from previous years.
- The 2020 Status Report consists of seven main sections:
 - The first section presents the general information about the Turkish higher education system and THEQC's activities in 2020,

³³ [Higher Education Evaluation and Quality Assurance Status Report](#)

- The second section focuses on the contributions of THEQC to HEIs' self-evaluation works, and the results of institutional self-evaluation processes,
 - The third section gives the general information about institutional external evaluation activities in 2020 and the evaluation results,
 - The fourth section elaborates on the HEIs' performance indicators and their relationships with the quality assurance system,
 - The fifth section presents the activities in 2020 of accreditation agencies authorised/recognised by THEQC,
 - The sixth section focuses on stakeholder evaluations regarding the activities in 2020, and
 - The seventh section includes the results from the report in general and the suggestions (for policy-developers, decision-makers, the business world, graduates, HEIs, accreditation institutions, students, and researchers related to the higher education system ecosystem).
- The 2020 Status Report also includes five in-depth analyses in the areas of quality of ISERs, quality assurance in distance education, leadership and transformation in HEIs, research performance of Turkish universities, and student involvement in quality assurance.³⁴ The subjects of the thematic analyses were shaped in line with the results present in previous years' status reports and various stakeholder opinions. While the thematic analysis reports are created, systematic data collection and analysis processes were carried out. In this direction, qualitative and quantitative research methods, descriptive statistics and content analyses were benefitted.
 - For example, an evaluation form was developed in the process of examining the institutional self-evaluation reports, five different experts evaluated the reports through this form, and then all these evaluations were integrated. The first annex of the 2020 Status Report, namely the "Evaluation of Institutional Self-Evaluation Reports and Giving Feedback: A Thematic Review of 2019 Institutional Self-Evaluation Reports"³⁵, presents the results obtained from this study.
 - Again, for the thematic analysis study on the quality assurance of distance education processes, an evaluation form containing a set of quality assurance criteria in distance education was sent to all institutions that are active in Türkiye and accept undergraduate students. This form was created in line with expert opinions, based on the THEQC Rubric. One hundred fifty-six institutions that entered the data fully were included in the analysis, and the general status across the country was revealed using descriptive statistics. The results were shared with the public in the second annex of the 2020 Status Report, "Higher Education Institutions' 2020 Status Report on Quality Assurance in Distance Education Activities"³⁶.
 - Regarding the research performances of HEIs, the relationships between the maturity levels of the institutions regarding the quality assurance criteria in the field of R&D and the performance indicators in these fields were examined with descriptive statistics. A part of the report written was included in the 2020 Status Report.

³⁴ [THEQC 2020 Status Report](#)

³⁵ [Evaluation of Institutional Self Evaluation Reports and Giving Feedback](#)

³⁶ [Quality Assurance in Distance Education of Higher Education Institutions 2020 Status Report](#)

ESG 3.5 Resources (partial compliance)

Standard:

Agencies should have adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, to carry out their work.

Panel recommendation – 1: The panel recommends that the agency continues to improve the balance between permanent staff who are on the payroll of the agency and those who work as consultants/advisors/experts.

THEQC's response:

- The response to the panel's this recommendation is present in Chapter I – ESG 3.3, written for the EQAR Register Committee, and Chapter II – ESG 3.3, written as an answer to the ENQA Panel's Recommendation.
- In this direction, THEQC increases the number of its staff.

Panel recommendation – 2: It is crucial for an agency to build its own capacity and expertise based on its own staff. A clear allocation of tasks and responsibilities in the permanent staff (functional profiles could be useful) and the establishment of an overall staff development plan, including annual training programs, are seen by the panel as useful measures in this field.

THEQC's response:

- RACI matrices are employed for a clear allocation of tasks and responsibilities of THEQC staff, which is the panel's first recommendation expressed here (Annex 6). The explanation about this subject is given in Chapter II – ESG 3.3 – Panel recommendation -2.
- Additionally, as expressed in Chapter II – ESG 3.3 – Panel recommendation -1, the allocation of tasks and responsibilities from the President to other staff has been clarified in line with the Panel's recommendation. In this context, the tasks and responsibilities of the staff in the units affiliated to the General Secretariat have been distributed in a way to carry out the secretarial work of THEQC Commissions. Unit staff actively work to carry out commission activities.
- The improvement work on a personnel development plan and in-service training, which is the Panel's other recommendation here, is explained in Chapter II – ESG 3.1 – Panel recommendation -2.

Panel recommendation – 3: THEQC should strengthen the capacity of the core of professional permanent staff.

THEQC's response:

- In-service training works carried out in line with the Panel's recommendation are explained in Chapter II – ESG 3.1 – Panel recommendation -2.
- In addition to these explanations, another regular activity carried out is the "THEQC Staff Meeting", with the moderation of the THEQC President, held on Mondays every week in order to keep the employees informed about the current work. The responsible staff inform the entire staff about works conducted on a weekly basis, tasks and responsibilities are monitored, and task distributions are made.

- Another work performed to increase the knowledge level of experts and keep their knowledge up-to-date is the practice of “Training of Trainers” carried out by THEQC before the trainings to be given to external evaluators and quality commissions. Before each training, the entire technical team, as well as the moderators and assistant moderators, attend the “Training of Trainers”, and the training schedule is followed in exactly the same way. The Training of Trainers and trainings to be given to external evaluators and quality commissions are designed by an academic expert and an advisor of THEQC who are specialized in educational sciences.
- On the other hand, it is ensured that the experts of the Council follow the studies carried out in the field of quality assurance in higher education at national and international levels to increase the level of knowledge of the staff about the processes carried out in the institution. They are also encouraged to participate in current webinars, workshops, forums, conferences, etc. The experts have attended activities organized by agencies such as ENQA, EQAR, EUA, INQAAHE, APQN, etc. so far.

Panel recommendation – 4: In order to safeguard the future sustainability of the agency, the THEQC’s budget should be planned and designed as part of the strategic planning process, taking into account previous year’s expenditure and upcoming years planned activities. Annual monitoring of the strategic plan is important in this regard.

THEQC’s response:

- In Türkiye, public institutions are obliged to develop a strategic plan in accordance with the Public Financial Management and Control Law No. 5018 and make their budget planning in line with their strategic plans. Public administrations must base their budgets and resource allocation for programs and projects on their strategic plans, annual goals and objectives, and performance indicators to ensure that they provide public services at the desired level and quality.
- Within the framework of this law, the issues related to strategic planning and budget are given below:
 - Public administrations cooperatively prepare strategic plans to form missions and visions for the future within the framework of their development plans, the policies, programs, relevant legislation designated by the President of the Republic of Türkiye, and the basic principles adopted; to determine strategic goals and measurable objectives; to measure their performances according to the predetermined indicators, and to monitor and evaluate this overall process.
 - In the framework of the principles stated in their strategic plans and the Budget Preparation Guide published by the Presidency of Strategy and Budget affiliated to the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, public administrations prepare their budget revenue and expenditure proposals accompanied by the statement of reasons and signed by their competent authorities and send them to the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye until the end of September at the latest.
 - Public administrations must prepare their budgets in compliance with a development plan, the Presidential program, medium-term program, the Presidential annual program, their strategic plans, and the program structure, and based on performance. THEQC, a public administration,

prepares its budget in integration with its strategic plan due to this obligation.

- The President of the Republic of Türkiye determines compliance of public administrations' budgets with the performance indicators stated in the strategic plans, the activities to be carried out by the administrations in this respect, and other issues regarding performance-based budgeting. For this reason, THEQC's strategic plan and budgeting processes are executed subject to the issues determined by the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye.
- Public administrations collect and analyze data objectively, systematically and regularly to monitor and evaluate their budgets, strategic plans and performance programs. Follow-up and evaluation results are shown in the administrative activity reports. Follow-up and evaluation results are communicated to the Presidency of Strategy and Budget in the administrative activity reports and shared with the public.³⁷.

ESG 3.6 Internal Quality Assurance and Professional Conduct (partial compliance by Boars decision)

Standard:

Agencies should have in place processes for internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities.

Panel recommendation – 1: THEQC should develop a clear definition of responsibilities for internal quality assurance issues within the agency, in order to improve its organization and effectiveness.

THEQC's response:

- Since the panel visit, THEQC has continued to improve its internal quality assurance system. This recommendation of the panel is explained in Chapter I – ESG 3.6.
- Additionally, another example is the "Quality Management Sub-Process" in which all services given within THEQC are planned, measured and improved [Annex 6]. The owner of this sub-process is the General Secretariat, and the executer is the Administrative Services Unit. Also "Process Management Sub-Process" is carried out too. If it is required additional document regarding process management can also be provided.
- In this context, the conduct of stakeholder satisfaction surveys to determine the quality policy, the analysis of the strategic plan and process performance results, and the carrying out of relevant works if the Council is externally evaluated are defined as the activities of this process.

Panel recommendation – 2: THEQC should further use the data they have to really develop the agency's internal quality systems rather than just to comply with external feedback from different stakeholders [see also 2.2].

THEQC's response:

³⁷ [Administration Activity Reports](#)

- In line with this opinion of the panel, follow-up of process performances and internal quality assurance works are supported for THEQC's activities, and internal data is collected regarding these processes. Regarding this panel recommendation, the data obtained by monitoring the process performances and, for example, the data obtained from the IAP process are explained in Chapter I – ESG 3.6.
- THEQC developed the RACI matrices to execute its internal quality assurance activities more systematically. They have been put into practice as of 2022. THEQC identified performance indicators to monitor each workflow matrix. However, as RACI matrices have only just begun to be implemented, these follow-ups are ongoing and have not been reported.
- In addition, THEQC's vision and status in line with its institutional objectives are evaluated by monitoring the strategic performance indicators set in Strategic Plan, and the institutional improvements are made.
- Another way is the improvements made through suggestions and complaints obtained with QAMIS.

Panel recommendation – 3: The panel recommends a full implementation of the Internal Quality Assurance System, with the definition of indicators in all the agency's processes.

THEQC's response:

- Within the scope of internal quality assurance works, 29 sub-processes under five main processes were determined, and workflow charts, performance indicators, duties and responsibilities were determined and systematized. It has been ensured that these are applied to all processes carried out within THEQC. For each main process, a performance indicator has been defined in the form of the success rate average in the goals of the sub-processes. Accordingly, the total number of performance indicators defined for each sub-process is 103. This is explained in Chapter I – ESG 3.6.
- In addition to this work, a risk plan has been created in the scope of the Internal Quality Assurance System. At the same time, this systematic document and demand management is managed with an integrated information management system that allows reporting. In this context, software supply has been completed, and data input and integration works are ongoing. After the system is put into use, annual follow-up and improvement works will be continued through this system.

ESG PART 2: EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

ESG 2.1 Consideration of Internal Quality Assurance (substantial compliance)

Standard:

External quality assurance should address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the ESG.

Panel recommendation: The panel recommends that the agency provide more focus on the provision of feedback on the ISERs which are elaborated by HEIs, in order to increase the impact of these reports on the quality improvement of institutions and to further develop their capacity to align with the standards in part one of the ESG.

THEQC's response:

- THEQC gives individual feedback to ISERs in line with the panel's opinions. In this framework, a working group consisting of the experts and the academic members of the Council examined ISERs written in 2019 by 54 institutions that applied to IAP voluntarily in 2020 by employing the Institutional Self-Evaluation Feedback Report in Annex 1. Consistency checks of the reports written for each institution were made by cross-checking by the working group members who are commission members and THEQC staff. The Evaluation of Institutional Self-Evaluation Reports and Giving Feedback³⁸ was written after an analysis of these reports.
- The findings obtained were shared at sharing meetings held with institution managers, Quality Commissions, and evaluation teams. In addition, in line with the findings obtained from the report, the needs of institutions' quality commissions were determined and used as content in Higher Education Institutions' Quality Commission Training.
- Scores have been analysed in the scope of maturity levels given by HEIs for themselves in ISERs written in 2019, 2020, and 2021. How the grading is made and the related explanations are present in Chapter 3. Of 189 HEIs, the average score for 2019 ISER is 533, the average score for 2020 ISER is 543, and the average score for 2021 ISER is 687. Maturity levels in ISERs increase as the years pass. A comparison of 2019 ISERs and 2020 ISERs reveals that ISER scores of 76 HEIs decreased averagely by 61 points, and the average scores of these HEIs for 2019 was 586, while their average scores for 2020 was 525. The number of HEIs that increased their ISER scores in 2020 compared to the previous year is 110. ISER scores of these HEIs increased by 60 points, and the average score of these HEIs for 2019 was 495, while their average score for 2020 was 555. It is evaluated that HEIs could not internalise enough the Rubric method, which THEQC started to use in 2019 as of the first year. In this respect, training given to HEIs explains the reason for the development of sub-criterion explanations in the Rubric systematic and the change in the maturity levels after examining them. It is seen that the majority of HEIs increased their scores when 2020 and 2021 ISERs are compared. One hundred eighty-eight HEIs increased their score by 157 points on average in 2021 ISERs, compared to 2020 ISERs. The number of HEIs whose scores decreased is

³⁸ [Evaluation of Institutional Self-Evaluation Reports and Giving Feedback: A Thematic Review of 2019 Institutional Self-Evaluation Reports](#)

five. One of the most significant factors that enabled this increase in scores is that the Follow-up Program was completed in the majority of the HEIs, and the HEIs performed improvement works. However, simplifying the Rubric and increasing its clarity have been vital factors in this increase. After completing 2022 and 2023 ISERs, it is planned to make a more detailed ISER score evaluation at criteria and sub-criteria levels.

ESG 2.2 Designing Methodologies Fit for Purpose (substantial compliance)

Standard:

External quality assurance should be defined and designed specifically to ensure its fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for it, while taking into account relevant regulations. Stakeholders should be involved in its design and continuous improvement.

Panel recommendations: The panel recommends THEQC to carry out an internal review of the current evaluation process, as it is very new and will move to one of institutional accreditation; particular focus should be on follow-up and on how stakeholders – in the widest sense and not only those represented in the Council – are involved in the design of methodologies, not just in the review of criteria and processes.

THEQC's response:

- After the ENQA panel's visit, the evaluation method and the documents and guides and training contents to be used were comprehensively evaluated and updated with stakeholder involvement³⁹ (universities, Quality Commissions, team leaders, evaluators, students, educational researchers, sector representatives, etc.). All psychometric studies have been completed on the methodology (Rubric). It is seen that reliability and validity are ensured.
- THEQC Rubric's validity has been addressed as both content and construct validity. To test the content validity, the Rubric form was sent to a group of 10 experts who have academic and application expertise in higher education, quality assurance, and educational measurement and evaluation fields. They were asked to evaluate each sub-criterion as 0 or 1 in terms of relevance for purpose, relevance to content, appropriateness of language, and relevance to the target audience. This process continued by making necessary revisions until all experts evaluate each sub-criterion as "1". To test the construct validity of the tool, an online simulated assessment activity, in which more than 200 evaluators participated with nearly 40 teams, was conducted. Here, a fictional ISER report was independently evaluated by the teams and also by 10 different experts (moderators). In these evaluations, a consistency above the 0.90 level was reached. Then, a reliability form for the THEQC Rubric was conducted on the same participant group, and the

³⁹ [Meeting with rectors of universities included in 2020 IAP](#)
[Meeting with ARACIS \(Romania\)](#)
[Meeting with NAQA \(Ukraine\)](#)
["Team Leaders Feedback Meetings" within 2019 Institutional External Evaluation Program](#)
[Meeting with international experts \(Teresa and Douglas Franklin\)](#)
[Meeting with the senior administrators of HEIs and National Accreditation Agencies](#)
[Turkey-UK Workshop on Quality in Higher Education](#)

results were analyzed. The results of all these studies indicate the validity, reliability and consistency of the tool. The results are summarized in the 2020 Status Report.

- Opinions of evaluation teams, the evaluated institutions, and the experts in this field from Türkiye and abroad regarding the Rubric were collected in 2021, and the Rubric's structure was simplified in line with these opinions. As these simplifications did not change the structure, a new construct validity study was not considered necessary. Moreover, THEQC added an explanation that covers the expectations from that sub-criterion under each sub-criterion to make the use of the Rubric easy. The advisor opinion collection processes were carried out for all explanations (Annex 7).

ESG 2.3 Implementing Processes (substantial compliance)

Standard:

External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published. They include:

- a self-assessment or equivalent
- an external assessment normally including a site visit
- a report resulting from the external assessment
- a consistent follow-up

Panel recommendation – 1: The panel recommends THEQC to further develop clearly defined follow-up activities after Institutional external evaluation.

THEQC's response:

- Follow-up Program has been structured in detail in line with the ENQA panel's opinions.⁴⁰ HEIs, whose external evaluation is completed within the scope of the Institutional External Evaluation Program carried out by THEQC, are included in the follow-up process in the second year or following the evaluation year, at the earliest. The Follow-up Program, which was started in 2020, has been monitored with THEQC experts' attendance to site visits as follow-up coordinators. Follow-up coordinators attended site visits only once as this program was implemented for the first time and gave feedback to THEQC about the process. In line with this feedback, the guide was updated. After the Follow-up Program was completed in 2020, the course of the process and its benefit were evaluated with meetings with stakeholders (observers, institution managers, evaluators, etc.), and feedback was received.
- In 2020, 58 HEIs that had previously undergone external evaluation were included in the Follow-up Program. The teams that will carry out follow-up in institutions were created with three persons who involved in external evaluation before. The Follow-up Program was carried out online for one day due to the pandemic. On the other hand, 45 HEIs were involved in the Follow-up Program in 2021.
- All reports of the Follow-up Program are shared with public on the THEQC's website. A sample report related to this program is given in Annex 8.

Annex 9. Sample report for 2020 Follow-up Program

⁴⁰ [The Institutional External Evaluation Accreditation and Follow-up Program Guide \(Version 2.1\)](#)

Panel recommendation – 2: THEQC should reconsider the organization of site visits to avoid the implications of conflicts of interest raised by HEIs providing travel, accommodation and meals for the evaluation team; this has the potential to affect the independence and integrity of the process and may become even more relevant with the implementation of institutional accreditation in the near future.

THEQC's response:

- Until a new legal regulation is made related to meeting evaluators' expenses arising from field visits by the Council, the expenses (transportation, accommodation and meeting basic needs) will be covered by the evaluated institutions as per the legislation in force.
- We continue negotiations with the related lawmakers about the amendment of the law in this respect.
- As another explanation for the concerns in the panel's recommendation, it can also be stated that THEQC signs an Ethical Agreement with evaluators before external evaluation and makes both evaluators and HEIs give statements regarding the absence of any conflict or coincidence of interest.

ESG 2.4 Peer-Review Experts (substantial compliance)

Standard:

External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include [a] student member[s].

Panel recommendation – 1: The panel recommends that THEQC reconsider the voluntary nature of the work of evaluators (and others) who work for THEQC and that it considers the implications of such a situation in relation to the agency's operational independence.

THEQC's response:

- Although it is a voluntary basis work, a lot of people apply to become a THEQC external evaluator as they consider it as a public service. Between 2018-2022 THEQC has received a total of 5748 applications, 1171 of them were included in the evaluator pool. More than 700 evaluator candidates have been trained and 527 of them have been assigned in the evaluation teams.
- Until a new legal regulation is made on this subject, evaluators will work voluntarily in accordance with the legislation in force. We continue negotiations with the related lawmakers about the amendment of the law in this respect.

Panel recommendation – 2: The panel recommends THEQC to recruit experts from outside Turkey, in particular for its external evaluation panels, as well as continuing with current plans for including representatives from the business sector in the evaluation panels.

THEQC's response:

- THEQC's external evaluation teams consisted of academic and administrative staff, who were working in HEIs, and student evaluators, during ENQA's external review in 2019. In line with the panel's recommendations, a call for international

evaluators to take part in evaluation teams was made through ENQA in 2020.⁴¹ An international evaluators pool was created out of the candidates applied. There are currently 66 international evaluators in the pool, 39 of whom are from EU countries.

- First of all, a meeting was held for these evaluators to help them learn about THEQC, and afterwards they received a training for preparing them to attend the Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation. The training content was the same with the entry-level training created for national evaluators, and additional information and documents about Turkish higher education system were also presented as additional materials.
- International evaluators have to attend the training before taking part in teams, as applies to the national evaluators. The national/international who do not attend the training will not be able to take part in IEEP and IAP teams of the relevant year. 11 [for IAP] international evaluators took part in the teams in 2020, and 16 [12 for IAP, 4 for Follow-up] international evaluators took part in the teams in 2021.
- On the other hand, an amendment has been made in the clause 3 of article 21 in the Regulation on Higher Education Quality Assurance and the Higher Education Quality Council to include business world representatives in the evaluation teams.⁴²

ESG 2.5 Criteria for Outcomes (substantial compliance)

Standard:

Any outcomes or judgements made as the result of external quality assurance should be based on explicit and published criteria that are applied consistently, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision.

Panel recommendation – 1: The panel recommends THEQC to put in place mechanisms for ensuring the consistency of judgements within external review panels.

THEQC's response:

- First of all, the most important work carried out to ensure external evaluators' consistency in their decisions is the Evaluator Trainings. In these trainings, case studies or reporting works ensure that evaluators judge the matters consistently. Again, the structural standardization of IFR and IAP writing on information system facilitates reports writing by evaluators.
- A Consistency Directive (Annex 2) was developed and put into practice as of 2021 to ensure consistency between judgements of external evaluation teams. The purpose of this directive is to ensure the consistency of the reports and decisions resulting from the evaluation programs carried out by THEQC. Commission on Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation has the primary liability to execute consistency works.
- Reporter groups of two, one is a Commission member and the other is a THEQC expert, carry out the consistency work on evaluation reports. The consistency work is carried out by taking into account the following:

⁴¹ [International Evaluator Call for Applications](#)

⁴² [The Regulation on Higher Education Quality Assurance and the Higher Education Quality Council](#)

- 1) Compatibility of the sub-criteria maturity levels in the reports with the report content.
- 2) Evidence-based evaluation of sub-criterion maturity levels.
- 3) The language of the reports should be objective, and not be judgmental and/or comparative with other institutions.

- After reporters complete the consistency works and write Consistency Evaluation Reports (Annex 4), and the reports are submitted to the Council. The doubted issues in the scope of reports are identified by the Commission, and the consistency evaluation reports and the doubted issues are conveyed to the team leader. The team leader is invited to a meeting with the Commission to discuss the doubted issues. In the meeting held by the team leader and the Commission, if the team leader's explanations and evidence regarding the doubted issues are found sufficient, the original evaluation report written by the team is submitted to the Council. Otherwise, the doubted issues are indicated, and the report is forwarded to the Council. The Council makes the final decision regarding the evaluation reports submitted by the Commission to the Council.
- Table 7 shows that substantially high-level and statistically significant relationships are seen between both the evaluation results, achieved by evaluation teams and THEQC's experts, and the IAR-ISER difference and final evaluation-ISER difference. This strongly illustrates the IAR evaluations' compliance both with THEQC's evaluation understanding and the inter-consistency.

Table 7 2020 consistency work result⁴³

	IAR Score	IAR-ISER difference
Consistency (Final) Score	.949**	
Consistency (Final)-ISER difference		.961**

** p<.01

ESG 2.6 Reporting (partial compliance)

Standard:

Full reports by the experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals. If the agency takes any formal decision based on the reports, the decision should be published together with the report.

Panel recommendation – 1: The panel recommends that maturity level grades form part of the published reports.

THEQC's response:

- In line with the panel's recommendations, maturity levels are added to all reports (ISER, IFR, and IAR) in written form starting from 2020. Maturity levels can be seen

⁴³ [Institutional Accreditation Program Status Report](#)

by all stakeholders in these reports shared with public through THEQC's official website.⁴⁴

Panel recommendation – 2: THEQC should develop mechanisms to ensure consistency not only of the structure of the reports but also of the in-depth analysis they provide.

THEQC's response:

- The explanation for panel's opinions on this subject is given in Chapter I – ESG 2.6, and Chapter II – ESG 2.5.

ESG 2.7 Complaints and Appeals (partial compliance)

Standard:

Complaints and appeals processes should be clearly defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and communicated to the institutions.

Panel recommendation – 1: The panel recommends the agency to clarify the definitions of the terms 'complaints and appeals', ensuring that there is no confusion with and a separation from other mechanisms designed for the purposes of feedback.

THEQC's response:

- In 2019 when the ENQA panel visit was made, the appeal to be filed against the IFRs published in the scope of the Institutional External Evaluation Program conducted by THEQC was addressed in Article 12 of the Institutional External Evaluation Directive, titled "Appeals". Moreover, the appeal process regarding the authorization and recognition activities for accreditation agencies were defined in the part "Appeals" of Chapter 4 of the Guide on the Authorization, Recognition, and Follow-up of External Evaluation and Accreditation Agencies. In addition, other stakeholder opinions such as recommendations, complaints, or satisfaction were taken as feedback in written form or orally through stakeholder meetings, THEQC's institutional communication tools, etc.
- Complaints and appeals processes have been improved in line with the ENQA panel's recommendations. First of all, the "THEQC Complaints and Appeals Directive" which includes clear definitions regarding complaints and appeals was published and shared on THEQC's official website.⁴⁵ The explanations on this subject is given in Chapter I - ESG 2.7.

Panel recommendation – 2: The panel recommends that the agency ensures that its website clearly differentiates between pages that allow users to submit feedback and those that include information of separate processes for making a complaint or an appeal.

THEQC's response:

- THEQC established the THEQC Feedback Management System to receive stakeholder feedback through its official website. This information management

⁴⁴ [Institutional Feedback Reports](#)

⁴⁵ [THEQC Directive on Appeals and Complaints](#)

system enables the communication of all kinds of information request, recommendation, demand, satisfaction, complaint or appeal to THEQC.⁴⁶ As recommended by the panel, a separate button was added to the homepage of THEQC website to increase visibility of a complaint and appeal channel under the information management system and draw attention of stakeholders.

Panel recommendation – 3: The agency should supplement what is currently in the legal article to document and publish clear processes for complaints and appeals on its website.

THEQC's response:

- To realize this recommendation, THEQC added the Complaints and Appeals Directive to 'Legislation' page under 'About us' tab on the official website, as a separate document.⁴⁷ On the other hand, those, who want to file a complaint or appeal through the official website, can click on this button directly, then they will view a pop-up window showing the directive and the explanation regarding the process. They are informed about the legislation, in this way. When they close this window, they are directed to the website on which they may file their complaints and appeals.

Panel recommendation – 4: The agency should ensure that any new mechanism for dealing with complaints and appeals allows for a degree of independence from the Council in order to avoid any conflict of interest.

THEQC's response:

- THEQC Appeals and Complaints Directive also includes the matters related to the organization of the related Commission. In this respect, Commission members are determined independently of the Council and in a way to avoid any conflict of interest⁴⁸:
 - a) One of the Commission members should be a former Council member.
 - b) One of the Commission members should have experience in evaluation processes.
 - c) One of the Commission members should have administrative experience in an accreditation agency.
 - ç) Current members of the Council cannot be members to the Commission.
- The Commission members' term of duty is three years. One cannot be a Commission member for more than two terms. Two of the members serving in the current Commission are former Council members, one is a former external evaluator and the other is a representative of the stakeholder institution (the Vocational Qualifications Authority).

⁴⁶ [Quality Management Information System](#)

⁴⁷ [THEQC Related Legislation](#)

⁴⁸ [THEQC Directive on Appeals and Complaints](#)

CHAPTER III:

THEQC'S ACTIVITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH ENQA AND EQAR REVIEW REPORTS

In this section, the processes of the THEQC Institutional Accreditation Program, which is expected to be addressed within the scope of ToR, are explained. The program, which has been carried out since 2020, is considered within the scope of ESG 2, as it is a new quality assurance activity of THEQC.

Introduction

Until 2022, according to the Regulation on Higher Education Quality Assurance and the Higher Education Quality Council all HEIs in Türkiye were included into the Institutional External Evaluation Program (IEEP) by THEQC at least once every five years. To this end, THEQC has evaluated 185 of 207 HEIs in Türkiye within the scope of the IEEP since 2016. However, with the new amendments made in the regulation, institutions that are evaluated within the scope of the IEEP are now included in the Institutional Accreditation Program (IAP). The IEEP will continue to be carried out as a preparation program for IAP only for institutions that will be evaluated for the first time [institutions that have graduated their first cohort of students]. One of the most important reasons for this change is that institutional accreditation has more solid results and includes an accreditation decision in line with the opinion most commonly expressed by the stakeholders. Moreover, it is known that the importance given to institutional accreditation is increasing with global developments and trends. THEQC, as a national organization, has developed the IAP by taking these issues into account in order to improve the relevant processes.

In this section, the Institutional Accreditation Program (IAP), which is the new external evaluation activity implemented by THEQC since the panel visit, is discussed. The IAP is an external evaluation method that enables the evaluation of quality assurance, learning-teaching, research-development, service to society and governance system processes in HEIs within the scope of the “planning, doing, checking and acting” cycle.

The IAP is carried out by the evaluation teams formed by the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council within the scope of the Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation Criteria and the Institutional External Evaluation, Accreditation, and Follow-up Program Guide.

Each year, the HEIs to be included in the IAP are determined by THEQC and evaluation teams are formed in accordance with the structure of these HEIs. One preliminary meeting about the ISERs and two visits (pre-visit and site visit) are carried out by the aforementioned evaluation teams to the relevant HEIs.

As a result of the preliminary evaluations and visits, Institutional Accreditation Reports (IAR) are written by the evaluation teams and a decision regarding accreditation is made by THEQC considering these reports. Although the basic processes of IAP are similar to the Institutional External Evaluation Program (IEEP), there is an accreditation decision made for the relevant HEI at the end of the IAP process.

In the IAP to be carried out within the scope of Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation Criteria, evaluation will be based on the following grading;

- Quality Assurance System 200,
- Learning and teaching 400,
- Research and Development 150,
- Service to Society 100 points and
- the Governance System 150 points, all totalling up to 1000 points.

The maturity level of each sub-criterion will be determined by the evaluation team within the scope of the Institutional Accreditation Program; and the general approach to the maturity level of the sub-criteria is as follows: In the evaluation, the maturity level of "5" corresponds to the full score, and the maturity level of "1" corresponds to the lowest score. The IAP score chart is included in the appendix of Institutional External Evaluation, Accreditation and Follow-up Program Guide⁴⁹.

The following decisions can be made by THEQC within the scope of the IAP:

- Full accreditation (for five years)
- Conditional accreditation (for two years)
- Decision of rejection of accreditation

Higher education institutions whose accreditation has been rejected can re-apply to IAP two years after the decision at the earliest. HEIs evaluated in the IAP are exempt from IEEP. So far, HEIs have been included in the IAP as a result of a call made for volunteering HEIs. 11 HEIs, included in IAP in 2020, have been accredited and announced on the official website of THEQC. The decisions for 13 HEIs, included in IAP in 2021, 5 of them have been announced. According to the regulation, all HEIs will be included in the IAP until 2027.

In the next part of this section, there are explanations regarding the compatibility of the IAP process with the ESG according to the ESG Part 2.

ESG PART 2: EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

ESG 2.1 Consideration of Internal Quality Assurance

Standard:

External quality assurance should address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the ESG.

Evidence showing that the standard has been met is as following:

- The integration of the THEQC Institutional Accreditation Program with the institutional internal evaluation process.

The institutional external evaluation and accreditation criteria of THEQC was created and updated with reference to the 3rd section of the ESG 2015. The feedback of HEIs, national and international external evaluation and accreditation agencies, as well as all other internal and external stakeholders are taken into account while making revisions to the criteria. Therefore, the criteria have been broken down into components so that a more transparent, detailed and consistent evaluation system can be established. All criteria were made self-explanatory by adding explanations, evidence and indicators for each criterion component. The updated criteria provide autonomy for HEIs to make decisions about how they can create and develop their

⁴⁹ [Institutional External Evaluation, Accreditation and Follow-up Program Guide \(V2.1\)](#)

internal quality culture in line with their mission, vision, uniqueness, teaching and research philosophies.

During the last update of the national quality assurance system in higher education established by THEQC, the main focus was to encourage all stakeholders to develop internal quality processes and mechanisms, as well as to increase the quality of education and research. Updated and improved metrics and processes promote the link between internal and external quality assurance and are part of ESG 2015. It takes into account the standards and rules specified in the section. Table 8 shows the compliance of THEQC Institutional Accreditation Program criteria [V2.1] with ESG.

Table 8 Compliance of THEQC External Evaluation and Accreditation Criteria [V2.1] with ESG

Standards in Part 1 of ESG	Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation Criteria of THEQC
1.1. Policy for Quality Assurance	A. Quality Assurance System A.1. Mission and Strategic Goals A.2. Internal Quality Assurance A.3. Stakeholder Involvement E. Governance System E.1. Structure of Governance and Administrative Units
1.2. Design and Approval of Programs	B. Learning and Teaching B.1. Design and Approval of Programs
1.3. Student-centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment	B. Learning and Teaching B.3. Student-Centered Learning, Teaching and Evaluation
1.4. Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification	B. Learning and Teaching B.2. Student Admission and Progression
1.5. Teaching Staff	B. Learning and Teaching B.4. Teaching Staff
1.6. Learning Resources and Student Support	B. Learning and Teaching B.5. Learning Resources
1.7. Information Management	E. Governance System E.3. Information Management System
1.8. Public Information	E. Governance System E.5. Public Disclosure and Accountability

1.9. On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes	B. Learning and Teaching B.6. Follow-up and Updating of Programs
1.10. Cyclical External Quality Assurance	A. Quality Assurance System A.2. Internal Quality Assurance
	A. Quality Assurance System A.4. Internationalization C. Research and Development C.1. Research Strategy C.2. Research Resources C.3. Research Competence C.4. Research Performance D. Service to Society D.1. Service to Society Strategy D.2. Service to Society Resources D.3. Service to Society Performance E. Governance System E.2. Resource Management E.4. Support Services

The IAP process is carried out within the framework of the ISER writing process, which constitutes an internal evaluation process for HEIs, and certain criteria supported by the IAP legislation.

The evaluations made by the teams during the site visit are based on the ISER of the relevant institution. Thus, the internal quality assurance system and structure of the institution are taken into account when applying the same criteria. For example, during a site visit to a HEI with a health mission, a particular focus is set on units, employees and practices in the fields of medicine and health sciences.

Related documents:

- [Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation Criteria \(V2.0\)](#)
- [The Institutional External Evaluation Accreditation and Follow-up Program Guide of THEQC \(V2.1\)](#)
- [THEQC Institutional Self-Evaluation Report Writing Guide \(V2.1\)](#)

ESG 2.2 Designing Methodologies Fit for Purpose

Standard:

External quality assurance should be defined and designed specifically to ensure its fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for it, while taking into account relevant regulations. Stakeholders should be involved in its design and continuous improvement.

Evidence showing that the standard has been met is as following:

- THEQC quality assurance methodology,
- Integration of internal and external quality assurance systems,
- Workshops with stakeholders,
- Training and information platforms.

THEQC carries out external evaluation processes in order to make evaluations according to national and international quality standards regarding the learning-teaching, research-development and service to society activities of HEIs and the quality levels of their governance systems. The processes have been prepared by considering the national higher education ecosystem, stakeholder views³⁹ and international standards (ESG 2015 and EUA-IEP) to reflect the goals and objectives of THEQC.

Dimensions of THEQC institutional accreditation methodology, which is determined by considering national and international regulations are quality assurance system, learning-teaching, research-development, service to society and governance system. The institutional accreditation process is carried out with criteria that are compliant with the 1st section of ESG. Within the framework of these criteria, THEQC publishes the Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation Criteria, the Institutional External Evaluation Directive and the Institutional External Evaluation, Accreditation and Follow-up Program Guide in order to guide external evaluation teams and institutions that will begin external evaluation. Updated versions of these Criteria and the Guide (V3.0) have been published as of 2022⁵⁰.

In addition to these, THEQC has all HEIs write an ISER annually on the basis of the calendar year in order to secure the institutional accreditation process and carries out the institutional accreditation process in an integrated manner with the internal quality assurance processes of the institutions. The processes designed for the ISER are defined and shared with the ISER Writing Guide. In order to ensure that the ISER is written as a basis for institutional accreditation, the ISER Writing Guide has been created in accordance with the Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation Criteria and the Institutional External Evaluation Accreditation and Follow-Up Programs Guide.

Since the institutional accreditation process is carried out free of charge by THEQC, which is a public institution, there are no costs for HEIs other than the transportation and accommodation costs of the evaluators. Also, in order to ease the workload, it was ensured that the ISER process is carried out over the web-based system and that the establishment of the institution quality commissions was secured with the relevant regulation in order to establish/develop the internal quality assurance system in the institutions. In addition, it is ensured that also the quality commissions of the institution receive training support and meetings on the quality assurance system are held with the representatives of the quality commission in groups at different times. Online training modules have been developed in order to disseminate the training of quality commissions and to appeal to a wider audience. Workshops are organized within THEQC to enable institutions to reflect on the improvements they have made and to share good practice examples in thematic topics with all other

⁵⁰ [Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation Criteria \(Version 3.0\)](#)

HEIs.⁵¹ In addition, it is ensured that the accredited programs of the institutions are made known to the students transitioning to higher education in the system. For this purpose, accredited program information is included in the HEIE Higher Education Programs and Quotas Guide published by Students Selection and Placement Center annually and the data regarding this is provided by THEQC. The ISERs written by the institutions annually are shared with the public both on the official website of THEQC and on the official websites of the institutions. In the process following the ISER writing, the IARs of the institutions that entered the institutional accreditation are also shared with the public on the official website of THEQC. In addition, institutional accreditation information will be published in the HEIE Higher Education Programs and Quotas Guide by 2022.

Related documents:

- [The Institutional External Evaluation Accreditation and Follow-up Program Guide of THEQC \(V2.1\)](#)
- [THEQC Institutional Self-Evaluation Report Writing Guide \(V2.1\)](#)

ESG 2.3 Implementing Processes

Standard:

External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published⁵². They include:

- a self-assessment or equivalent
- an external assessment normally including a site visit
- a report resulting from the external assessment
- a consistent follow-up

Evidence showing that the standard has been met is as following:

- Institutional accreditation starts with the institutional self-evaluation report, is carried out with a site visit, and concluded with reports,
- All stages of the institutional accreditation process⁵² are carried out with the support of QAMIS,
- Follow-up of the institutions after the external evaluation by a team formed from the evaluation team.

One of the main fields of activity of THEQC is “Making evaluations regarding the quality levels of learning-teaching, research and service to society activities, and administrative services of HEIs according to national and international quality standards.” Institutional accreditation processes carried out by THEQC within the scope of this field of activity are as follows:

- Writing and publication of ISERs,
- Announcement of the institutional external evaluation calendar,
- Establishing external evaluation teams for site visits and carrying out site visits,

⁵¹ [THEQC All Announcements and News](#)

⁵² [IAP process description.](#)

- Writing of IARs,
- Consistency works,
- Accreditation decision,
- Publication of IAR and accreditation decision,
- Publication of the Higher Education Evaluation and Quality Assurance Status Report.
- Mid-term evaluation

THEQC institutional accreditation activities are carried out in an integrated manner with the self-evaluation process of the institution. The processes are carried out by recording the data and reports regarding the self-evaluation activities of the institution through the QAMIS on the official website of THEQC. Institutions first record their annual self-evaluation reports on the QAMIS together with the relevant evidence and indicators. Thus, the ISERs of the institutions that will undergo external evaluation during the year are formed. In addition, the “areas for improvement” about the institutions stated in the IFRs can also be viewed on the QAMIS during the ISER writing process and the activities carried out regarding the areas for improvement are inquired. Since the institutional accreditation processes are also carried out through the “evaluator system” on the THEQC official website, the evaluation team can access all ISERs, indicator values and evidence of the evaluated institution.

For each HEI included in the IAP, IARs written by external evaluators at the end of the evaluation process are also readied over this system. This report comprises the institution’s learning-teaching, research and development activities, regional/national service to society activities that stand out, if any, quality assurance system employed in the institutional decision-making processes and governance services as well as the institution’s strengths and areas open for improvement.

During the institutional accreditation process, site visits are carried out according to the THEQC site visit plan. The number of evaluators in the team varies between 6 and 10, depending on the size of the institution being evaluated. Based on the feedback received after the first 2.5-day site visits, the visit schedule was rearranged as a one-day pre-visit followed by a 2.5-day site visit. The purpose of the pre-visit is to allow the evaluation team to get to know the institution and to plan the site visit together with the evaluated institution. The duration of the site visit may be extended to cover the key interviews included in the Site Visit Plan Sample presented in the Institutional External Evaluation, Accreditation and Follow-up Program Guide (V2.1). A blended visit approach has been developed during the pandemic period and the pre-visit processes were carried out remotely with the infrastructure provided by THEQC. After site-visit the team prepares IAR and submit it to THEQC via QAMIS. The Commission on Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation carries out the consistency work [please refer to Chapter I, ESG 2.6]. Considering the IAR prepared by evaluation team, the Council decides on the basis of full accreditation for five years, conditional accreditation for two years, and refusal of accreditation [please refer to Chapter III, ESG 2.5].

Higher education institutions that are granted institutional accreditation are subject to mid-term evaluation after two years. Conditional accredited institutions that showed the recommended improvements from the IAR are granted full accreditation. Otherwise, accreditation period is refused and terminated. Higher education

institutions that are granted full accreditation for five years are also subjected to mid-term evaluation at earliest in the second year following the accreditation. The decision to refuse accreditation is taken for the higher education institutions that cannot maintain the conditions of full accreditation as a result of the mid-term evaluation.

Related documents:

- [The Regulation on Higher Education Assurance and the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council](#)
- [The Institutional External Evaluation Accreditation and Follow-up Program Guide \(V2.1\)](#)

Annex 10. Blended Visit Plan

ESG 2.4 Peer-Review Experts

Standard:
External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include [a] student member[s].

Evidence showing that the standard has been met is as following:

- Presence of over 700 trained and experienced evaluators in THEQC's evaluator pool,
- Presence of nearly 300 student evaluators in THEQC's evaluator pool,
- Presence of 66 evaluators in THEQC's international evaluator pool,
- Defined THEQC evaluator selection and training processes,
- THEQC evaluator training modules and feedback.

Since the establishment of THEQC, the evaluation processes have been carried out by expert external evaluators. Evaluators consist of academic and administrative staff, students and international experts. In this context, in the Institutional External Evaluation Accreditation and Follow-up Program Guide published on the official website of THEQC, the qualifications expected of evaluators who will take part in the evaluation teams are determined as, experience in higher education and/or quality assurance in higher education, adopting ethical principles, being open to cooperation and teamwork, strong communication skills, time management and effective organizational skills. In addition, THEQC ensures the selection, training of peer reviewers and their commitment to ethical values, considering ESG 2015.

Evaluator candidates can apply to THEQC through the evaluator system throughout the calendar year via the official website of THEQC⁵³. Then, evaluators are determined by various criteria from this pool (knowledge of EUA and Bologna processes, experience in accreditation processes, etc.) and the test results they got following the training. The selection process for student evaluators, who were included in evaluation teams for the first time in 2018, is described in Section II – ESG 3.1.

⁵³ [Evaluator Applications and Determination of Evaluators](#)

The external evaluator candidates selected from this pool are included in a series of trainings about duties and responsibilities of the evaluation team, the behavioral dimension, ISER review, evaluation according to institutional external evaluation and accreditation criteria, ethical principles, etc. The flipped classroom model is implemented in which information is first provided to the evaluators through online training videos and presentations, and then practical face-to-face training, case studies and preparation of the IAR section trainings are carried out. In these trainings, evaluator candidates receive information about the accreditation process, observe practices, and are also trained on the behavioral dimension of the evaluation process. In addition to all these, evaluator candidates are also informed about important issues such as ethical principles, transparency and accountability. Before and after the interactive online trainings based on group work tests are carried out.

The success in the aforementioned tests is taken into account as a criterion in determining the external evaluators. After the trainings, the opinions and suggestions of the evaluator candidates about the trainings they attend are taken. After these trainings given in the spring and summer months, the external evaluators are ready for the site visit.

In addition, the content of the trainings given to the evaluators are updated as a result of the feedback. Evaluator trainings comprises 3 stages:

1. Entry level training [16 hours, 4 hours of individual preparation, 12 hours of training]
2. In-depth training [16 hours, 4 hours of individual preparation, 12 hours of training]
3. Preparation to Site Visit Training [10 hours, 2 hours individual preparation, 8 hours of training]

These trainings are largely designed on the basis of group work and peer learning with a learner-centered approach. The contents are determined mainly according to needs. A lot of progress was achieved through evaluator trainings in the areas for improvement which were determined as a result of the evaluations and feedback. In order to increase the number of practical examples, case studies, discussions and report writing practices are given wide coverage in the trainings. Evaluators can be evaluated individually through the tests on the online system used to carry out the trainings. The evaluation of the trainings is carried out through the satisfaction surveys given at the end of the training and the feedback received after the site visits.

External evaluation teams are formed by considering the size of the institutions to be included in the scope of institutional accreditation. It is ensured with dual confirmation both from the institution and the candidate evaluators that the evaluators who will work in these teams have no ties to the institution to be visited [graduates, employees of the institution, etc.] Evaluators who have no previous experience gain experience by taking part in the team as "observers", and students are included in the process and take part in evaluation teams. In addition, THEQC ensures that international evaluators/observers are included in the evaluation teams.

THEQC has established the THEQC Code of Ethics in order to make its activities transparent and accountable in line with its core values. THEQC members, commission members, advisory board members and evaluators must comply with the ethical rules. In the last part of the code of ethics, there is "The Statement of

Confidentiality and Code of Ethics” and those responsible for ethical rules are required to sign this statement. It is ensured that the evaluators act within the framework of ethical rules, especially in case of conflicts or coincidences of interest that may arise for the evaluators.

Since its establishment, the Council has developed its own expert pool by improving the training of evaluators and enriched the pool of experts, which was initially more limited. As the awareness about the training provided and the activities of the Council has increased over time, the pool of evaluators has also expanded. In addition, the time limit on evaluator applications has been removed. Currently, evaluator candidates can apply at any time of the calendar year. In addition, the expert pool is also enriched by including “observers” who do not have external evaluation experience to the evaluation teams in each evaluation process.

Related documents:

- [The Statement of Confidentiality and Code of Ethics of THEQC](#)

ESG 2.5 Criteria for Outcomes

Standard:

Any outcomes or judgements made as the result of external quality assurance should be based on explicit and published criteria that are applied consistently, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision.

Evidence showing that the standard has been met is as following:

- All guides and criteria prepared for the processes,
- Development of web-based information systems.

Among the important outputs of the institution/organization evaluations made by THEQC are the IARs written for HEIs. THEQC has determined the defined criteria to reach these outputs and shares these criteria with the public on its official website.

THEQC has put forward a national evaluation model based on national (TQF and NQF-HETR) and international (ESG, EQF and EHEA) standards in its evaluation criteria. Institutional accreditation decisions are based on these criteria.

The most important output of the accreditation process of HEIs is the IARs (Annex 1) written by the evaluation teams after the site visits. The report is written by the team in accordance with the Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation Guide, following the review of the ISERs of the evaluated institution for that year and previous years, and the site visits. It is reviewed by the THEQC Commission on Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation through consistency works and submitted to the decision of THEQC members by the Commission. As a result of the decisions taken, the IARs of the evaluations carried out every year are made available on the official website of THEQC and the official website of the evaluated institution.

The decision regarding accreditation is made by THEQC considering IARs. Although the basic processes of IAP are similar to the Institutional External Evaluation Program (IEEP), there is an accreditation decision made for the relevant HEI at the end of the IAP process.

In the IAP to be carried out within the scope of Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation Criteria, evaluation will be based on the following grading;

- Quality Assurance System 200,
- Learning and teaching 400,
- Research and Development 150,
- Service to Society 100 points and
- the Governance System 150 points, all totalling up to 1000 points.

The maturity level of each sub-criterion will be determined by the evaluation team within the scope of the Institutional Accreditation Program; and the general approach to the maturity level of the sub-criteria is as follows: In the evaluation, the maturity level of "5" corresponds to the full score, and the maturity level of "1" corresponds to the lowest score. The IAP score chart is included in the appendix of Institutional External Evaluation, Accreditation and Follow-up Program Guide⁵⁴.

The following decisions can be made by THEQC within the scope of the IAP:

- Full accreditation [for five years]
- Conditional accreditation [for two years]
- Decision of rejection of accreditation

HEIs whose accreditation has been rejected can re-apply to IAP two years after the decision at the earliest.

Being the output of the accreditation process, IARs present the strengths and areas for improvement of institutions. In addition, the reports include the maturity levels of the institution regarding the sub-criteria. According to these maturity levels, the Council decides on full accreditation for five years, conditional accreditation for two years or rejection of accreditation. In addition, institutional accreditation information will be published in the HEIE Higher Education Programs and Quotas Guide as of 2022.

Related documents:

- [Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation Criteria \[V2.0\]](#)
- [The Institutional External Evaluation Accreditation and Follow-up Program Guide \[V2.1\]](#)
- [Institutional Self-Evaluation Report Writing Guide \[V2.1\]](#)
- [European Qualifications Framework \[EQF\]](#)
- [Turkish Qualifications Framework \[TQF\]](#)
- [National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in Turkey \[NQF-HETR\]](#)

ESG 2.6 Reporting

Standard:

Full reports by the experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals. If the agency takes

⁵⁴ [Institutional External Evaluation, Accreditation and Follow-up Program Guide \[V2.1\]](#)

any formal decision based on the reports, the decision should be published together with the report.

Evidence showing that the standard has been met is as following:

- Existing reports published by THEQC.
- The reports written within the scope of each field of activity of THEQC are as follows:
- Institutional Self-Evaluation Reports
- Institutional Accreditation Reports
- Higher Education Evaluation and Quality Assurance Status Report

In accordance with the Regulation on Higher Education Quality Assurance and the Higher Education Quality Council all HEIs have to write an Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER) annually in accordance with THEQC's Institutional Self-Evaluation Report Writing Guide. These reports, in which HEIs evaluate their current status according to the criteria determined by THEQC, is submitted to THEQC through the information system since 2018, and they are published both on the official websites of THEQC and the relevant institution and provide all stakeholders open access anytime.⁵⁵

Other reports produced within the scope of THEQCs quality assurance processes are the IARs written by the evaluators and include the institutional accreditation results. IARs written in accordance with the THEQC Institutional External Evaluation Accreditation and Follow-up Program Guide are written through the information system. In this system, evaluators can see the evaluation criteria, the institution's ISERs for the current and previous years, and related evidence, and they can write the IAR on the same system. The main headings used in the writing of the IAR are the headings used by the institution in the ISER. Evaluation teams can reflect to the IAR from the system in written form whether the relevant criterion is met in the institution, by examining the ISERs and their evidence, and by performing a site visit to the relevant institution. According to the guide, basic principles such as impartiality, accuracy, being evidence-based, format, grammar and spelling should be taken into account by the evaluation teams while writing IARs. According to this format, IARs need to comprise;

- In the first part, information on the institutional accreditation process (introducing the evaluation team, planning the visit and how it will be implemented, etc.),
- In the second part, general information about the visited institution (location of the institution, year of establishment, number of campuses, number of faculties/institutes/units, number of students, number of academic and administrative staff, etc.),
- In the third part, the quality assurance system of the institution visited is explained, and information and opinions written in the sections about its activities in fields such as learning-teaching, research and development, and service to society, as well as the governance system and institutional decision-

⁵⁵ [Institutional Self-Evaluation Reports](#)

making process should be objective, evidence based and written in a clear and precise manner.

All these information and opinions should be prepared by considering documents such as the ISER and the strategic plan of the institution, as well as the face-to-face interviews and observations made during the site visit. In the final part, the evaluation team concludes the IAR by summarizing the strengths and areas for improvement of the institution in the above-mentioned areas and making recommendations when necessary. The main benefit obtained as a result of institutional accreditation is these opinions written in the conclusion and evaluation sections. HEIs are expected to carry out improvement works according to these views and thus to develop their quality assurance systems. Institutions are also expected to reflect their improvement efforts in the ISERs they will write in the following years.

IARs are completed within 21 days following the evaluation teams' visit to HEIs and sent to the relevant institution, and the opinions of the institution regarding the IAR are received within 21 days. Then, the evaluation team, considers the opinions that are based on evidence and agrees on them with the institution, finalizes the IAR and forwards it to the Commission. After the consistency checks are made by the commission, the final IAR is submitted to THEQC for approval and decision. With the accreditation decision, IARs are simultaneously published on the official websites of HEIs and on the official website of THEQC, in an easily accessible manner.⁵⁶ Up to now 9 HEIs granted 5 years full accreditation, 7 HEIs granted 2 years conditional accreditation. There has been no negative decision. According to the Regulation⁵⁷ (Article 24) all decisions regarding IAP are published on official website of THEQC.

Within the scope of the Regulation on Higher Education Quality Assurance and the Higher Education Quality Council, THEQC is responsible for writing a Status Report annually, taking into account the institutional evaluation reports of HEIs. In this context, the IARs of the institutions evaluated annually, and the ISERs written by all HEIs are taken into account along with the opinions of all relevant stakeholders regarding the process and a Higher Education Evaluation and Quality Assurance Status Report is written regularly every year.

Related documents:

- [Institutional Self-Evaluation Reports](#)
- [Institutional Accreditation Reports](#)
- [Higher Education Evaluation and Quality Assurance Status Report 2020](#)

⁵⁶[Institutional Accreditation Reports](#)

⁵⁷ [The Regulation on Higher Education Quality Assurance and The Turkish Higher Education Quality Council](#)

ESG 2.7 Complaints and Appeals

Standard:

Complaints and appeals processes should be clearly defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and communicated to the institutions.

Evidence showing that the standard has been met is as following:

- THEQC Directive on Appeals and Complaints

THEQC reviewed the appeal and complaint procedures as explained in the previous sections and aimed to manage these processes by creating the Complaints and Appeals Directive. Appeal and complaint procedures are carried out similarly also for the IAP process.

The policy adopted by THEQC in the case of appeals and complaints is as follows:

- To provide systems and environments that will enable all stakeholders to convey their appeals and complaints easily and reliably,
- To ensure that all appeals and complaints are evaluated impartially,
- To ensure that the parties who appeal or complain are informed and aware of the results,
- To make necessary improvements in processes and services based on appeals and complaints.

Complaints are handled by the Commission on Appeals and Complaints, which is established in accordance with the directive. Review of complaints is carried out as follows:

1. Complaints are subject to a preliminary review by the Commission on Appeals and Complaints secretariat within seven days. As a result of the preliminary review, the complaints made without providing appropriate justification and evidence will be rejected.
2. The complaints which have not been rejected are forwarded to the Commission within seven days following the preliminary review.
3. The complaints submitted to the Commission are re-evaluated and submitted to the Council within 30 days at the latest.
4. The commission may meet the parties if need be. The commission includes a recommendation on the acceptance or rejection of the complaint in their reviews.
5. The final decision on the complaints is made by the Higher Education Quality Council, considering the recommendation of the Commission.
6. The final decision is submitted in writing to the entities or institutions making the complaint within 30 days.
7. The decision on the complaint is final.

If there is an appeal to a decision or result within the scope of the following services carried out within THEQC, then appeal procedures are applied:

- Appeal to the Institutional Accreditation Decision
- Appeal to the Recognition and Authorization of Accreditation Agencies

- Appeal to the Result of Institutional External Evaluation
- Appeal to the Results of the Follow-up Program

Appeals are handled by the Commission on Appeals and Complaints, which is established in accordance with the directive. Review of appeals is carried out as follows:

1. Appeals can be made within sixty days from the notification of the decision regarding the IAP decision, and within sixty days from the publication date of the report regarding the IFR and the Follow-up Report. Appeals can be made regarding decisions on the authorization of national accreditation agencies and the recognition of international accreditation agencies within thirty days from the notification of the decision.
2. Appeals are made either in written form or electronically, supported with appropriate justification and evidence.
3. Appeals are subject to preliminary review within seven days by the Commission Secretariat. As a result of the preliminary review, the appeals made without providing appropriate justification and evidence will be rejected.
4. The appeals which have not been rejected are forwarded to the Commission on Appeals and Complaints within seven days following the preliminary review.
5. Appeals submitted to the commission are evaluated within 30 days at the latest and submitted to the Higher Education Quality Council. The commission may meet the parties if need be. The commission includes their recommendation on the acceptance or rejection of the appeal in the reviews.
6. The final decision on appeals is made by the Council, considering the recommendation of the Commission.
7. The final decision is submitted in writing to the entities or institutions making the appeal within 30 days.
8. The decisions on appeal are final.

Related documents:

- [THEQC Directive on Appeals and Complaints](#)

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