



Higher Education Quality Council
Turkey

**SELF-ASSESSMENT
REPORT OF HIGHER
EDUCATION
QUALITY COUNCIL
OF TURKEY (THEQC)**

June 2019, Ankara



Higher Education Quality Council
Turkey

SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT OF HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY COUNCIL OF TURKEY (THEQC)

June 2019, Ankara



CONTENTS

1. Introduction / 5
2. Development of the Self-Assessment Report / 6
3. Higher Education and QA of Higher Education in the Context of the Agency / 7
 - 3.1 Turkish Higher Education System / 7
 - 3.2. Quality Assurance System / 9
4. History, Profile and Activities of the Agency / 12
 - 4.1. History / 12
 - 4.2. Organizational Structure / 13
5. Higher Education Quality Assurance Activities of the Agency / 16
6. Processes and Their Methodologies / 21
 - 6.1. Institutional Self-Evaluation Process and Schedule / 24
 - 6.2. Institutional External Evaluation Program / 26
 - 6.3. Thematic Review (External Evaluation of English Preparatory Schools) / 28
 - 6.4. Independent External Evaluation and Accreditation Agencies / 29
 - 6.5. Higher Education Evaluation and Quality Assurance Annual Situation Report / 31
7. Agency's Internal Quality Assurance / 31
8. Agency's International Activities / 34
9. Compliance with European Standards and Guidelines – Part 3 / 35
 - 9.1 ESG Standard 3.1. Activities, Policy and Processes for Quality Assurance / 35
 - 9.2 ESG Standard 3.2. Official Status / 36
 - 9.3 ESG Standard 3.3. Independence / 37
 - 9.4 ESG Standard 3.4. Thematic Analysis / 40
 - 9.5 ESG Standard 3.5. Resources / 41
 - 9.6 ESG Standard 3.6 Internal Quality Assurance And Professional Conduct / 44
 - 9.7 ESG Standard 3.7 Cyclical External Review of Agencies / 47
10. Compliance with European Standards and Guidelines – Part 2 / 48
 - 10.1 ESG Standard 2.1 Consideration of Internal Quality Assurance / 48



10.2 ESG Standard 2.2 Designing Methodologies Fit for Purpose /	49
10.3 ESG Standard 2.3 Implementing Processes /	50
10.4 ESG Standard 2.4. Peer-Review Experts /	52
10.5 ESG Standard 2.5 Criteria for Outcomes /	54
10.6 ESG Standard 2.6 Reporting /	56
10.7 ESG Standard 2.7 Complaints and Appeals /	57
11. Information and Comments of Stakeholders /	59
12. SWOT Analysis /	62
13. Current Challenges And Areas for Future Development /	70
Glossary of Terms /	76
ANNEXES /	78



1. INTRODUCTION

The global trends in higher education systems have intensified the competition and cross-border cooperation between institutions, which led higher education institutions to become more transparent, cooperative and quality-oriented. Integrated to international higher education systems, the Turkish higher education system has been experiencing similar developments under the effect of the same trends. The implementations as part of the Bologna Process were initiated in Turkey at the national level in 2001 and this has made significant contributions to the field of quality assurance in higher education in Turkey over the past years. One of the leading outcomes of the developments in this field is the establishment of the Higher Education Quality Council of Turkey (THEQC) as one of the primary actors regulating and guiding **QA in** higher education in Turkey.

One of the primary institutional goals of the THEQC, which has been taking international QA systems, methodologies and models as reference point since its establishment, is to improve its international recognition by getting ENQA membership. One of the most significant steps within this process is the self-assessment work conducted by the Council. This report presents the results of the self-assessment work conducted as part of the ENQA membership endeavours. "Guidelines for ENQA Agency Review" was taken as a reference for the writing and the content of the report.

2. Development of the self-assessment report

The THEQC appointed a self-assessment work group following the decision to initiate ENQA membership efforts at the THEQC general meeting dated 13 December 2018. The group started working by evaluating the compliance between THEQC methodology and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) of 2015. The strategic planning of the Council was also conducted in the same period with the self-assessment work. Therefore, the self-assessment work maintained for the strategic planning was integrated into the process of writing the self-assessment report for ENQA.

The self-assessment team members include:

- ◆ Prof. Dr. Muzaffer ELMAS, President
- ◆ Prof. Dr. Sibel AKSU YILDIRIM, Vice President
- ◆ Prof. Dr. Aslıhan NASIR, Council Member
- ◆ Prof. Dr. Tuncay DÖĞEROĞLU, Council Member
- ◆ Prof. Dr. Tuğba YANPAR YELKEN, Council Member
- ◆ Prof. Dr. Sina ERCAN, Council Member
- ◆ Mehmet YILMAZ, General Secretary
- ◆ Assoc. Prof. Dilek AVŞAROĞLU ERKAN, Academic Expert
- ◆ Assoc. Prof. Enes GÖK, Consultant
- ◆ **Asst. Prof.** Tuba CANVAR KAHVECİ, Consultant
- ◆ **Asst. Prof.** Kazım KARABOĞA, Consultant
- ◆ **Asst. Prof.** M. Deniz KOZANOĞLU, Consultant
- ◆ **Asst. Prof.** Gonca ULUDAĞ, Academic Expert
- ◆ Ayhan KOÇER, Expert
- ◆ Funda ÇANKAYA, Translator

While preparing the first draft of the self-assessment report, the self-assessment team collected and analysed relevant data by employing a number of research methods in concordance with the strategic planning work.

In the context of higher education and QA of higher education; the history, profile and activities of the THEQC, as well as the work conducted on the Council's legal duties and responsibilities since its establishment, are presented in the report. The processes and methodologies employed by the THEQC and its internal QA practices and international activities are presented with evidence. In the part related to the compliance with the ESG, the Council's regulations and directives, institutional external evaluation criteria and other relevant aspects are presented in tables with reference to similar criteria in the ESG. Information on stakeholders, stakeholder opinions and SWOT analysis are provided on the basis of the data the strategic planning team obtained from stakeholders. The part on current challenges and areas for future development was written on the basis of the meetings held with the active participation of the Council members, consultants and self-assessment



team members. The stakeholder participation in the self-assessment report writing process was assured by obtaining stakeholder opinions as part of strategic planning work and suggestions from the Council members, consultants and experts.

The first draft of the report was formed in February 2019. The report was finalized on June 1st, 2019 after subsequent evaluations. Following the approval of the final version of the report by the THEQC on June 19th, 2019, the report was submitted to the ENQA Secretariat on August 31st, 2019.

3. Higher education and QA of higher education in the context of the agency

3.1 Turkish Higher Education System

The higher education system in Turkey consists of the HEIs regulated according to Law No. 2547 on Higher Education and Law No. 2809 on the Organization of Higher Education Institutions. The Law No. 2547 defines the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) and the Inter-University Council (ÜAK) as senior bodies that regulate higher education nationwide. The CoHE is an autonomous public legal entity that regulates higher education in Turkey and guides the activities of HEIs in the country. The CoHE comprises of an Inspection Board and a number of units in charge of planning, research and development, evaluation, budget, investment and coordination activities. The main duties of the CoHE include enabling the practice of educational activities, training academic staff in accordance with requirements, monitoring and supervising the use of the resources allocated to universities, and assuring cooperation and coordination between HEIs in an integrative, continuous, coherent and constructive manner in line with the principles and goals set for universities.

The ÜAK is an academic outlet. The duties of the ÜAK include coordinating universities' education, scientific research and publishing activities, evaluating relevant practices, offering recommendations to the CoHE and universities, suggesting measures to meet universities' need for academic staff, and engaging in practices pertinent to education, scientific research and publishing activities parallel to the national higher education planning. The CoHE is an institution that regulates higher education and steers the activities of HEIs. The regulations on the academic staff employed in HEIs are determined as part of the personnel regime related to academic staff stated in the Law No. 2914 on Higher Education Personnel.

The HEIs in Turkey include state universities, foundation universities and foundational vocational schools of higher education. State and foundation HEIs are composed of universities and technology institutes; faculties, institutes, schools, conservatories, research and applied studies centres within universities and technology institutes; vocational schools of higher education affiliated with universities or technology institutes; and foundational vocational schools of higher education independent from universities or technology institutions and established by foundations without profit-making purposes. Table 1 illustrates the change in the number of universities by years.

Table 1. Change in the number of HEIs by years

	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Number of HEIs	207	206	183	193
State Universities	129	129	112	109
Foundation Universities	73	72	65	76
Foundational Vocational Schools of Higher Education	5	5	6	8

As Table 1 shows, the Turkish higher education system comprises a total of 207 HEIs as of 2018-2019 academic year; including 129 state universities, 73 foundation universities and 5 foundational vocational schools of higher education. These institutions house 26,198 programs, 12,628 master's programs and 5,539 doctoral programs. For 2018-2019 academic year, a total of 7,740,502 students were enrolled in HEIs; including 7,134,674 in state universities, 595,116 in foundation universities; and 2,829,430 in associate degree programs, 4,420,699 in bachelor's programs, 394,174 in master's programs and 96,199 in doctoral programs (See: <https://istatistik.yok.gov.tr/>). For associate and bachelor's **degree** programs, student placements are conducted by the Measuring, Selection and Placement Centre of Turkey (ÖSYM) according to the results of standardized national examinations and university preferences of students. Placements in graduate programs are coordinated by HEIs in line with the regulations declared by the CoHE.

The current structure of the Turkish higher education system follows the three-cycle system (bachelor's degree, master's degree, doctoral degree) introduced by the Bologna Process. Besides, the associate degree programs in the Turkish higher education system correspond to the short cycle (Short-Cycle QF-EHEA and 5th Level EQF-LLL) characterized as intermediate qualifications in both versions of the European Qualifications Framework. Therefore, the current version of NQF-HETR defines four cycles including associate, bachelor's, master's and doctoral **degree** programs (<http://tyyc.yok.gov.tr/?pid=20>). Figure 1 outlines the Turkish higher education system.

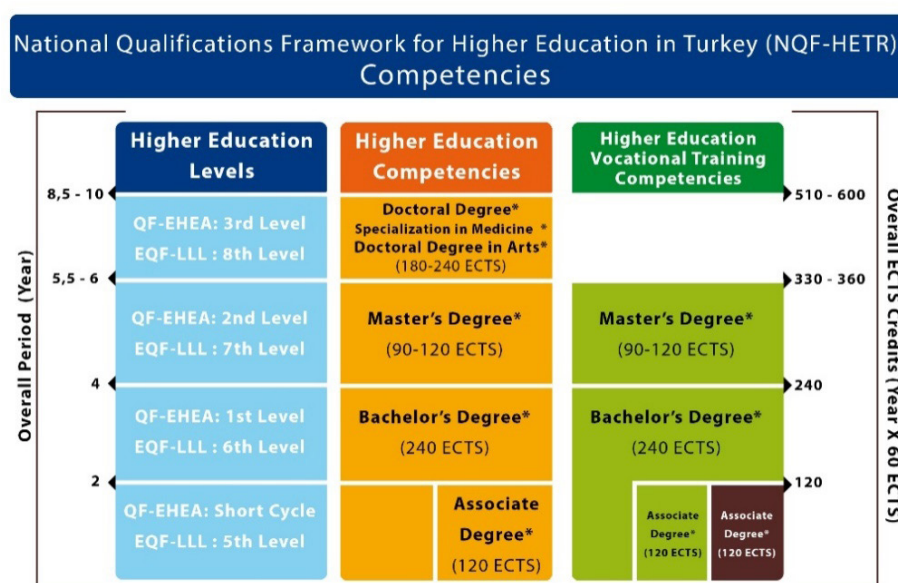


Figure 1. Turkish Higher Education System

Other **major** institutions in the Turkish higher education system and their duties are listed below:

- ♦ The Presidential Education Policies Council is a senior council formed by a presidential decree in July 2018. The Council is in charge of making policy recommendations on educational activities in line with Turkey's goals, determining and developing higher education strategies and goals, monitoring the practices related to the implementation of educational activities, improving activities by engaging in needs analysis, building an education system based on the principles of quality, equality and effectiveness as well as national and societal values, making suggestions on strategic



planning by conducting needs analysis for the faculties and departments to be opened in universities, making policy recommendations on education by taking the country's labour force planning into account, engaging in work to determine, monitor and evaluate the general policies related to the implementation of the EU education and youth programs, making policy recommendations on planning, developing and evaluating the vocational training in vocational and technical schools and institutions, and implementing vocational and technical training programs.

- ◆ The Ministry of National Education (MEB) is the national authority responsible for coordinating, implementing, monitoring and supervising the work for the formulation of educational policies and strategies, and updating and developing these policies and strategies in accordance with new service models for every level of education in the Republic of Turkey, including pre-primary education (ISCED 0), primary education (ISCED 1) and secondary education (ISCED 2, ISCED 3).
- ◆ The Measuring, Selection and Placement Centre of Turkey (ÖSYM) provides the examination and placement services required for the transition from secondary education level (ISCED 3) to the level of higher education (ISCED 5/6).
- ◆ Vocational Qualification Institution (MYK) collaborates in the preparation of the National Occupational Standards in technical and vocational fields in order to establish and execute the national qualification system that is in compliance with the European Union and with ensured quality assurance at an international level, in the development and the implementation of national qualifications on the basis of national and international occupational standards, and the authorization, supervision, assessment, evaluation, documentation and coordination of Europass documents.

3.2. Quality Assurance System

The Law No. 2547 on Higher Education enacted in 1981 set out the role and responsibilities of the CoHE in QA of higher education in the Turkish higher education system. In 1994, ABET initiated evaluation activities in a number of engineering programs in Turkey. In 1997, a quality assessment project was conducted in Turkish universities. In 1998, activities on the accreditation and improvement of quality in teacher training programs were conducted.

The first systematic work regarding QA in the Turkish higher education system started with Turkey's participation in the Bologna Process in 2001. As of that date, Turkey has played an active role in the practices and activities as part of the Process. The country's last two reports regarding the Bologna Process implementation are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Turkey's reports on the Bologna Process implementation (2015-2018)

	2015	2018
<i>Stage of implementation of ECTS</i>		
<i>Stage of implementation of the Diploma Supplement</i>		
<i>Stage of implementation of national qualifications frameworks</i>		
<i>Level of student participation in external quality assurance system</i>		
<i>Level of international participation in external quality assurance</i>		
<i>Level of openness to cross border quality assurance activity of EQAR registered agencies</i>		
<i>Stage of development of external quality assurance system</i>		

Measures to support the access of under-represented groups to higher education		
Recognition of prior non-formal and informal learning		
Measures to support the retention and completion of students from under-represented groups	new	
Portability of public grants and publicly-subsidised loans		
Supporting the mobility of students from under-represented groups		

*Colour indicators of Table 2 (See: "The Higher Education Area in 2015 Bologna Process Implementation Report and The Higher Education Area in 2018 Bologna Process Implementation Report" for detailed information on colour indicators since each of which indicates different criteria related to its topic).

	All criteria are met
	Almost all criteria are met
	Some criteria are met
	Only one criteria is met / None
	None of the criteria are met / Data not available

As the first step of the Bologna Process implementation, works to harmonize the study programs in Turkey into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) were conducted in all the universities nationwide. EUA-IEP started its evaluation activities in Turkey in 1999. Also, MÜDEK started its evaluation and accreditation activities in engineering programs in 2002. In 2005, the Regulation of Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement in Higher Education (see: <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2005/09/20050920-9.htm>) was published and the Commission for Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement in Higher Education (YÖDEK) was established. In this scope, Academic Evaluation and Quality Improvement Boards (ADEK) were established in universities and universities' quality processes were evaluated via the ADEK reports submitted by universities annually. YÖDEK, the first **national level quality** initiative in the Turkish higher education system in this regard, operated until 2015 as a Commission of the CoHE, but it was not an independent body.. The Law No. 5018 on Public Fiscal Administration and Control and the **Principles and Basis of Strategic Planning in Public Administrations** came into effect in 2006. In 2010, the CoHE developed and approved the NQF-HETR. As of 2009, new accreditation agencies focusing on various disciplines and programs have been established.

In 2011, some amendments were made in the Higher Education Law No. 2547 with the inclusion of a new article, numbered 6111, which introduced a set of changes regarding QA activities in HEIs. For instance, the overall ECTS credits required for graduate qualifications were defined under certain categories. Between 2009 and 2013, 73 HEIs in Turkey ($\approx 22,5$ % of all fields) received the label DS while 31 (\approx to 35 % of all fields) received the label ECTS. Bologna projects formed a basis for the processes required for quality assurance. Until 2015, the CoHE executed the work in this regard via the commissions focusing on quality and accreditation.

Quality assurance efforts in the Turkish higher education system gained a new momentum with the enactment of the Higher Education Quality Assurance Regulation upon its publication in the Official Gazette No. 29423 of 23 July 2015 and the establishment of the Higher Education Quality Board in the light of this regulation. The Board was independent in its formal decisions but not in terms of its official status and organizational structure until 2017. The Board was reorganized and renamed as the Higher Education Quality Council of Turkey (THEQC) according to the Additional Article No. 35 added to the Law No. 2547 on Higher Education following the enactment of the Law No. 7033 on Amendment of Certain Laws, and Executive Orders for the Development of Industrial Zones and Subsidization of Production on 1 July 2017 (hereinafter referred to the THEQC Establishment Law, See: Annex 1). As a result, the THEQC became an independent national body

responsible for quality assurance in the Turkish higher education system, which has been a milestone in terms of ensuring Turkey’s alignment with QA processes in EHEA.

Defined by the above-stated law, the Turkish Higher Education Quality Assurance System comprises the principles regarding the processes of internal and external QA in higher education as well as the authorization and recognition of independent external evaluation and accreditation agencies. The structure of the Turkish Higher Education Quality Assurance System, the organizational structure and working principles of the THEQC, and the organization of quality commissions within HEIs were reorganized (in order to consolidate intra-institutional representation, participation and inclusiveness) by the Regulation No. 30604 on Higher Education Quality Assurance and the Higher Education Quality Council, which entered into force on 23 November 2018 (See: Annex 2). According to the regulation, all HEIs in Turkey (state universities, foundation universities and foundational vocational schools of higher education) are required to submit annual self-evaluation reports to the THEQC and be evaluated by the THEQC as part of the Institutional External Evaluation Program at least once every five years. Figure 2 illustrates the Turkish Higher Education Quality Assurance System.

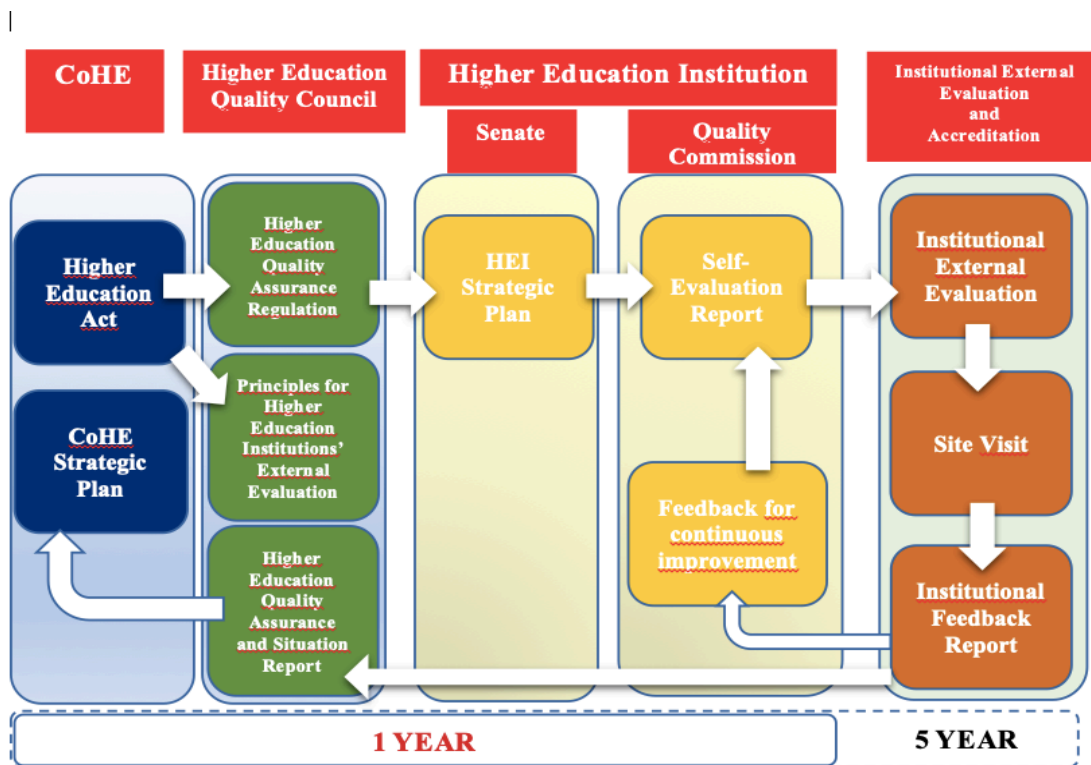


Figure 2. Turkish Higher Education Quality Assurance System

Other organizations operating in the Turkish Higher Education Quality Assurance System are the accreditation agencies engaging in program level accreditation. External evaluation services for program accreditation in HEIs can be conducted by the independent external evaluation and accreditation agencies authorized or recognized by the THEQC. Program accreditation process in Turkey is maintained according to the demands of HEIs.

The outcomes of quality assurance system endeavours in the Turkish higher education system, which began in 2001 with Turkey’s participation in the Bologna Process, can be listed as follows:

- ◆ Field qualifications were established with the NQF-HETR and the NQF-HETR Commission was founded.
- ◆ There has been a considerable increase in the number of accreditation agencies. MÜDEK was established in 2002 as the first agency operating in the field of program accreditation, which was followed by the establishment of FEDEK, TEPDAD, VEDEK, EPDAD, TPD, HEPDAK, ECZAKDER, SABAK, TUADER-TURAK and ILAD-ILEDKAK respectively.
- ◆ The number of accredited programs has increased over the years. The number of accredited programs is recorded as 670 in 2019 (corresponding to 7.37 % of all programs), 529 in 2018, (6.03 %), 504 in 2017 (5.91 %) and 433 in 2016 (5.56 %).
- ◆ The THEQC was established and the national QA system was developed with the enactment of the THEQC Establishment Law and the Higher Education Quality Assurance Regulation.
- ◆ Within a 4-year period, all HEIs (with graduates) were included in the THEQC Institutional External Evaluation Program. The number of universities benefiting from the program was 20 in 2016, 50 in 2017, 45 in 2018 and 45 in 2019.
- ◆ The establishment of the THEQC and the increase of QA activities in higher education raised awareness for quality among HEIs. Quality commissions were established in all HEIs.

4. History, profile and activities of the agency

4.1. History

The THEQC was first established as the Higher Education Quality Board of the CoHE in 2015 as part of the Higher Education Quality Assurance Regulation with the aim of evaluating the quality of HEIs' education and research activities and administrative services in accordance with the national and international quality standards, and coordinating the processes of accreditation, internal and external QA, and authorization of independent external evaluation organizations. It operated within the CoHE until 1 July 2017.

The Board was reorganized and renamed as the Higher Education Quality Council of Turkey according to the THEQC Establishment Law by its enactment on 1 July 2017. After this regulation, the THEQC became a public legal entity with administrative and financial autonomy and special budget. With the reorganization, the number of Council members decreased from 21 to 13 (**See: Annex 1**).

The THEQC's activities in QA of higher education are defined by the Regulation on Higher Education Quality Assurance and the Higher Education Quality Council, which was published in the Official Gazette No. 30604 of 23 November 2018 (**See: Annex 2**). The regulation comprises articles regarding the implementation and execution of the processes related to the organizational structure, duties and authorities of the THEQC; the establishment, duties and authorities of the quality commissions of HEIs; internal and external QA systems in HEIs, and authorization and recognition of accreditation agencies.

According to the regulation, the THEQC is a national organization authorized to conduct external evaluation of HEIs and contributes to the establishment of internal and external QA systems in HEIs. The THEQC also monitors the accreditation activities of national and international accreditation agencies operating in Turkey and conducts the processes of authorization and recognition of agencies.



4.2. Organizational Structure

The Regulation on Higher Education Quality Assurance and the Higher Education Quality Council 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 quality evaluation registration certificates, 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.

The THEQC's administrative organization is composed of the Council and the General Secretariat. General Secretariat consists of Institutional External Evaluation and External Evaluation Agencies Registry Unit, Publicity and Stakeholder Relations Unit and Administrative Services Unit. Figure 3 shows the organizational structure of the THEQC.

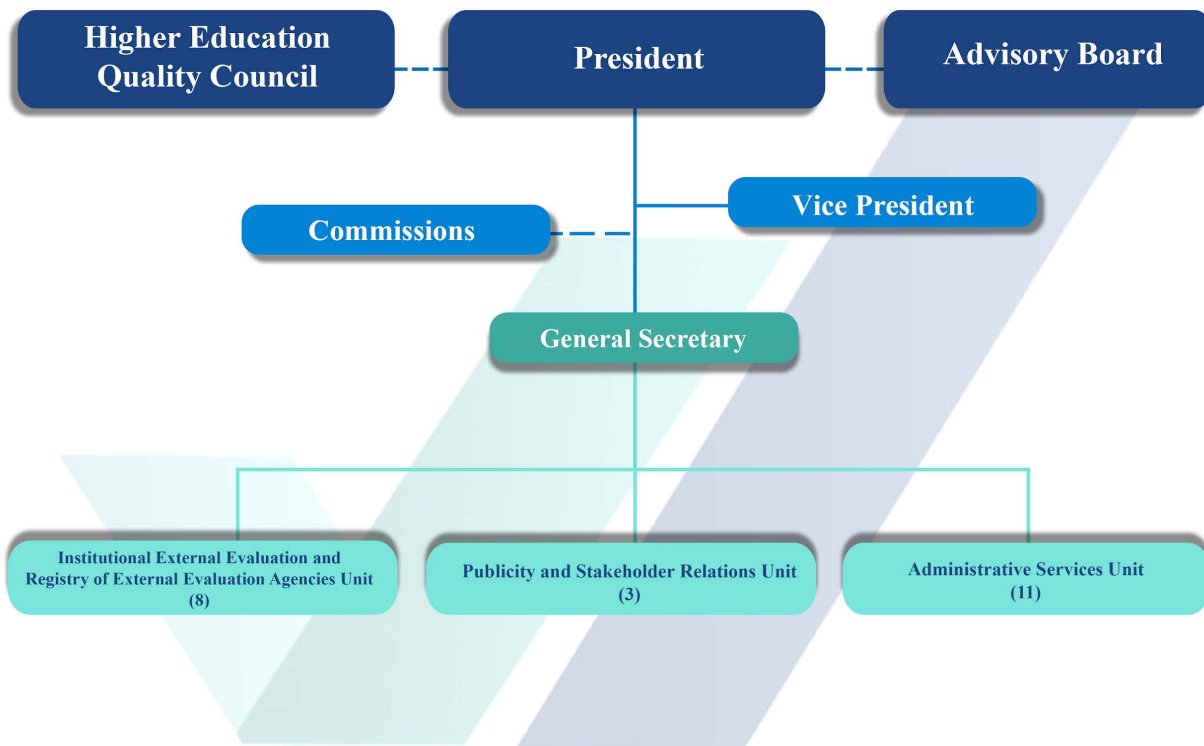


Figure 3. THEQC Organization Chart (number of staff is given in brackets)

The main duties of the Council, President, Vice President, General Secretary and Units are explained in detail in Annex 2, whereas the duties of the Commissions are listed in Table 4.

The THEQC is made up of 13 members (Table 3), including the President. The members comprise of:

- three members elected by the Council of Higher Education General Board (CoHE - www.yok.gov.tr),
- three members elected by the Inter-University Council (ÜAK - www.uak.gov.tr),
- one member elected by the Ministry of National Education (MEB - www.meb.gov.tr),
- one member representing the Vocational Qualification Institution (MYK - www.myk.gov.tr),

- e. one member representing the Turkish Accreditation Agency (TURKAK - web.turkak.org.tr),
- f. one member representing the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK - www.tubitak.gov.tr),
- g. one member representing the Health Institutes of Turkey (TÜSEB - www.tuseb.gov.tr),
- h. one member representing the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB - www.tobb.org.tr),
- i. one student member (See: Annex 3 for election procedure).

Table 3. THEQC Members (2019)

Represented Agency/Organization	Name
Council of Higher Education	Prof. Dr. Sina ERCAN
	Prof. Dr. Tuğba YANPAR YELKEN
	Prof. Dr. Tuncay DÖĞEROĞLU
Inter-University Council	Prof. Dr. Aslıhan NASIR
	Prof. Dr. Muzaffer ELMAS
	Prof. Dr. Sibel AKSU YILDIRIM
Ministry of National Education	Prof. Dr. Çetin EROL
Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey	Prof. Dr. İlker Murat AR
Health Institutes of Turkey	Prof. Dr. Figen ÇİZMECİ ŞENEL
Vocational Qualification Institution	Adem CEYLAN
Turkish Accreditation Agency	Orbay EVRENSEVDİ
Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey	Hakan ÜLKEN
Student Member	Berk ER

The THEQC adopts the following principles defined by the regulation in the election of members:

- ♦ The members elected by the CoHE and the ÜAK, each of whom works in different HEIs, should be designated amongst faculty members who are experienced in the organization, operation and administration of higher education as well as in quality evaluation and improvement practices, have worked at HEIs at home or abroad for at least ten years, and specialized in different fields. As for the appointment process of these members, the CoHE and the ÜAK announce that they accept applications to assign representatives in the THEQC by paying regard to equal distribution of fields (science, engineering, health sciences, social sciences, humanities etc.). The candidates file in-person applications with their resumes to the CoHE and the ÜAK. Following applications, they are interviewed based on the above-stated requirements, and the general board of each institution elects three members to be appointed in the THEQC.
- ♦ The member elected by the MEB should be a faculty member in a higher education institution who is experienced in the organization, operation and administration of higher education system as well as in quality evaluation and improvement practices with minimum ten years of work experience in HEIs at home or abroad. For the members elected by the MEB and the other institutions listed in Table 3, the THEQC calls each relevant institution to present a name for Council membership and appoints them. The institutions are entitled to determine their own election procedures.



- ◆ The student member should be appointed in accordance with the “Procedures and Principles for the Election of Student Member of the Higher Education Quality Council of Turkey” (See: Annex 3). For the student member appointment process, the THEQC **made** a call to all HEIs to select an institutional student candidate. HEIs **sent** their institutional student candidates’ names and resumes to the THEQC. The resumes of candidates **were** assessed by the IEEC and 6 students that **were** shortlisted out of 200 candidates **were** interviewed by the President and the Vice President of the THEQC. Finally, the Council **appointed** one student member out of 6 interviewed candidates based on their involvement in QA processes.
- ◆ The Council members shall fulfil the general conditions stated in Article 48 of the Law No. 657 on Civil Servants.

The decision-making and rules of procedures of the THEQC are as follows:

- ◆ The Council shall elect a president and a vice president with absolute majority of the total number of members. The President and the Vice President shall be appointed on a full-time basis.
- ◆ Term of office for the Council members shall be one year for the student member and four years for the rest of the members. Membership cannot last more than two terms.
- ◆ The Council shall convene with at least two third majority of the total number of members and take decisions with the absolute majority of the total number of members.
- ◆ The President and the Vice President shall not work for any public or private organization, with or without pay, except in the case of exceptional temporary duties assigned by the President of the Republic of Turkey, during their term in office.

The THEQC maintains its activities explicated in Part 5 of the report via three commissions, the details of the duties and membership of which are presented in Table 4.

1. Institutional External Evaluation Commission (IEEC)
2. Recognition and Authorization of External Evaluation and Accreditation Agencies Commission
3. Publicity and Stakeholder Relations Commission

Table 4. THEQC Commissions

Commissions	Duties	Members
Institutional External Evaluation Commission	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Drawing the calendar for Institutional External Evaluation Program b. Providing evaluator trainings c. Forming evaluation teams d. Reviewing Institutional Self-Evaluation and Institutional Feedback Reports and presenting them to the Council e. Reviewing complaints and appeals and presenting them to the Council f. Preparing relevant guidelines and documents and presenting them to the Council 	Prof. Dr. Tuncay Döğeroğlu (Chair) Prof. Dr. Aslıhan Nasır Prof. Dr. Sibel Aksu Yıldırım Prof. Dr. Tuğba Yanpar Yelken Prof. Dr. İlker Murat Ar

Recognition and Authorization of External Evaluation and Accreditation Agencies Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Reviewing registry applications and presenting them to the Council b. Reviewing recognition applications and presenting them to the Council c. Presenting institutions' accreditation information to the CoHE d. Reviewing complaints and appeals and presenting them to the Council e. Preparing relevant guidelines and documents and presenting them to the Council 	Prof. Dr. Sibel Aksu Yıldırım (Chair) Prof. Dr. Sina Ercan Prof. Dr. Tuncay Döğeroğlu Prof. Dr. Figen Çizmeçi Şenel Prof. Dr. İlker Murat Ar
Publicity and Stakeholder Relations Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Disseminating higher education quality assurance system b. Organizing meetings with internal and external stakeholders and receiving their opinions c. Informing the higher education community via prepared documents and website 	Prof. Dr. Tuğba Yanpar Yelken (Chair) Prof. Dr. Aslihan Nasır Prof. Dr. Çetin Erol Hakan Ülken Orbay Evrensevdi

The Council's staff is subject to the Law No. 657 on Civil Servants. The revenue of the THEQC consists of treasury grants, operating revenues, donations and grants, and other revenues.

5. Higher education quality assurance activities of the agency

The THEQC was established with the aim of evaluating the quality levels of HEIs' learning and teaching, research and development activities and governance systems in accordance with the national and international quality standards, and coordinating internal and external QA, and authorization and recognition of independent external evaluation organizations.

The aim, organizational structure, duties, authorities and activity areas of the THEQC are set out by the Regulation No. 30604 on Higher Education Quality Assurance and the Higher Education Quality Council published on 23 November 2018 (**See: Annex 2**). According to the regulation, the duties of the THEQC are:

- a) to define national policies and strategies for QA in higher education system and publicly announce them,
- b) to organize activities for the improvement and dissemination of quality culture in higher education system,
- c) to support building internal QA systems in HEIs and provide HEIs with guidance on the issue,
- d) to monitor activities regarding QA systems in higher education at national and international level, and organize joint activities at national and international level,
- e) to set out the principles, quality indicators and rules applied in external evaluation and accreditation,
- f) to conduct external evaluation of HEIs regarding the quality of their learning and teaching, research and development, social contribution and governance systems at least once every five years and evaluate higher education programs when deemed necessary.
- g) to evaluate and monitor activities of HEIs within the mission differentiation and specialization project and submit their results to the CoHE,
- h) to organize activities and issue publications for informing HEIs on the procedures to be applied in external evaluation and accreditation,



- i) to annually prepare and publish the Higher Education Evaluation and Quality Assurance Annual Situation Report that comprises recommendations for quality enhancement by evaluating the Institutional Feedback Reports (IFRs) after the external evaluation process of HEIs, and present it for the relevant stakeholders' information, including the CoHE,
- j) to issue decisions by examining registration applications of private law legal persons applying to the Council to become registered for carrying out activities in the areas of external evaluation and accreditation within the framework of the set principles and rules; to monitor the activities of the organizations and obtain information, to issue warnings, or to terminate their registration when deemed necessary,
- k) to represent Turkey in international organizations for QA in higher education,
- l) to cooperate with Turkish Qualifications Framework Committee in areas pertinent to QA system in higher education,
- m) to evaluate the application of the provisions within "the Rules and Procedures on Quality Assurance of Qualifications within Turkish Qualifications Framework" at HEIs.

The activity areas of the THEQC are as follows:

1. Establishment of internal and external QA mechanisms in higher education system and ensuring their effectiveness;
2. Evaluation of the quality of HEIs' learning and teaching, research and development, and governance systems in accordance with the national and international quality standards;
3. Recognition and authorization of independent external evaluation and accreditation agencies;
4. Internalization and dissemination of QA culture in higher education system.

With the aim of establishing internal and external QA mechanisms in the Turkish higher education system and ensuring their effectiveness, the THEQC develops and encourages the implementation of the National Quality Assurance System, which consists of the principles, quality indicators and related processes that would set a reference point for HEIs in developing internal QA systems. Furthermore, the THEQC aims to evaluate internal QA systems of institutions via the Institutional Self-Evaluation Reports (ISERs) submitted annually by institutions to the THEQC (See: Part 6.1). Other processes coordinated by the THEQC involve organizing the educational services on QA needed by HEIs.

Another activity area of the THEQC is evaluating the quality of HEIs' learning and teaching, research and development, and governance systems in accordance with the national and international quality standards. In this scope, the THEQC organizes and coordinates the Institutional External Evaluation Program (See: Part 6.2). **The Institutional External Evaluation Program organized by the THEQC aims to evaluate the procedures related to education and research-development activities and administrative systems of higher education institutions within the scope of the Institutional External Evaluation Criteria. Higher education institutions are required to take part in the Program at least once every five years.** CoHE - one of the main stakeholders of THEQC – has launched a project in designating certain HEIs for mission differentiation and specialization. In this sense, 10 regional development focused and 15 research focused state universities were assigned by CoHE. When performing external evaluation of these assigned universities, the THEQC uses an extra set of sub-standards and detailed performance indicators added to the regular QA procedure. The evaluation is based on the weighting of the focus area (i.e. research, agriculture, husbandry, etc.) of the relevant HEI in their learning and teaching, research and development, and governance systems. The evaluation results are included in the IFRs of these HEIs. This is a complimentary evaluation for the other performance monitoring mechanisms used by the CoHE. The CoHE uses these external evaluation results to allocate appropriate funding and supporting these universities. Another QA activity of THEQC is a thematic

review that covers the external evaluation of English preparatory schools (EPSs) upon the request of the CoHE based on a set of specific criteria and guidelines (Areas and Minimum Standards, See: Annex 9). The evaluation is based on a peer evaluation process of aspects related to teaching and learning in higher education and it is voluntary in nature. Since there is not yet any national independent accreditation agency in Turkey operating in the field of foreign language education, EPSs are demanding an external evaluation from a national institution to improve their own QA systems. The voluntary nature of EPSs external evaluation comes from not only this demand but also the national policies of the CoHE to improve EPSs teaching and learning outcomes quality. Other activities carried out by the THEQC as part of the external evaluation process include the selection, appointment, training and performance review of external evaluators (See: Part 10.4).

Another activity area of the THEQC is to coordinate the authorization and recognition processes of national and international agencies operating or planning to operate in the field of program accreditation of HEIs. The THEQC also forms the criteria to be employed in evaluations in this scope and monitors the authorized agencies. (See: Part 6.4)

In addition, the THEQC provides guidance services, organizes events and engages in various publishing activities that address HEIs with the aim of disseminating and consolidating QA culture in higher education system. The presentations made in trainings, workshops and meetings; and other documents, including the Council's e-newsletter, are available on the official website of the THEQC. Following the external evaluation process of HEIs, the THEQC also publishes the Higher Education Evaluation and Quality Assurance Annual Situation Report every year, which encompasses recommendations for quality improvements based on the evaluation of ISERs and IFRs. The report is submitted for relevant stakeholders' information, particularly the CoHE. Other activities of the THEQC include representing Turkey in international organizations for QA of higher education and cooperating with a variety of institutions and organizations such as the CoHE, the Turkish Qualifications Framework Committee, international QA agencies and HEIs on subjects pertinent to QA systems in higher education.

The activities conducted by the THEQC as of 2015 are listed below:

- ◆ In 2015, the THEQC completed its organisational structure as a Board and further restructured as a Council in 2017 by the THEQC Establishment Law as mentioned above.
- ◆ In 2016, the THEQC completed the institutional external evaluation of 20 HEIs by an experienced group of evaluators, and one national accreditation agency was authorized. In addition, for the first time, all HEIs were requested by the THEQC to form "Quality Commissions" within their organizations and to develop their internal quality assurance systems and prepare ISERs. Furthermore, all HEIs were required to share these ISERs for year 2015 (previous year's self-evaluation reports) through their websites with their stakeholders. The THEQC also started to publish these ISERs on its official website. In addition, the first IFRs for the 20 HEIs, which were visited by external evaluation teams, were published (All IFRs are available on: <http://yokak.gov.tr/raporlar/kurumsal-geri-bildirim-raporlari>), **(All ISERs are available on: <http://yokak.gov.tr/raporlar/kurum-ici-degerlendirme-raporlari>).**
- ◆ In 2016, the first external evaluator application call was done via the THEQC's website and sending official letters and e-mails to HEIs. The external evaluator pool was composed of evaluator candidates of academic and administrative staff. The first external evaluator training was given to all of these candidates, and the evaluation teams were formed among those candidates based on their experience and interest in QA in higher education. At the end of the training program, a survey was carried out



to explore the satisfaction level of participants. The results of this survey guided the THEQC to better design its latter training programs.

- ◆ In 2017, 50 HEIs underwent institutional external evaluation, and two national accreditation agencies were authorized for five years. Annual ISERs for all HEIs were published on the official websites of both the THEQC and the related institutions. The IFRs for the 50 HEIs were prepared by the external evaluation teams and shared on the website of the THEQC as well as that of the HEIs.
- ◆ By 2017, the THEQC organized its first “Workshop on Quality Assurance in Higher Education”. Besides, 15 presentations about the activities of the THEQC were made in different higher education institutions based on their invitation so that a widespread awareness was generated about the THEQC and its activities.
- ◆ In 2018, the first student evaluators joined THEQC’s external evaluation teams.
- ◆ In 2018, the THEQC finalized the institutional external evaluation of 45 HEIs. In addition, seven national accreditation agencies were authorized for five years.
- ◆ In 2018, the THEQC organized English Preparatory Schools External Evaluation Pilot Program, in which the EPSs of 10 national HEIs underwent an external evaluation. This is a pilot project initiated upon the request of the CoHE. The results of the program were presented to the CoHE in 2019 and are currently being reviewed by the CoHE. The EPSs included in the project constitute about 5% of the national HEIs offering EPSs.
- ◆ By 2018, both the number and the scope of the THEQC’s activities were proliferated. The THEQC organized four regional workshops on writing ISERs for HEIs. The THEQC also organized an event on “Integrated Quality Management Practices” for HEIs. Besides its regular external evaluator trainings, which were designed for academic and administrative evaluators, the Council organized a special event for student evaluators. The THEQC also coordinated several interactive workshops and training programs, which can be downloaded and/or accessed through the Council’s website. Also, another thematic training specifically addressing the evaluators of the EPSs was organized.
- ◆ By 2018, the THEQC launched its “Quality Assurance Management Information System-QAMIS” which is still expanding as new modules are added on-demand. The QAMIS has several interfaces for different users, including HEIs, external evaluation teams, accreditation agencies, and the members of the THEQC. The QAMIS facilitates procedures, enables monitoring of the improvements over the years for HEIs, and reduces the workload of different users. This system also provides an online platform for the evaluators and quality commission members of HEIs.
- ◆ By the end of 2018, the THEQC launched its online application system for the candidate accreditation agencies to make their registration and applications for obtaining authorization.

- ◇ In 2019, the remaining 45 HEIs underwent the institutional external evaluation process. Hence, all the HEIs that produce graduates (160 out of 206) were included within the institutional external evaluation process. In 2019, one national accreditation agency, namely TPD, was authorized.
- ◇ In 2019, the THEQC built up mutual collaboration with three international accreditation agencies, **namely AACSB, FIBAA and AQAS**, which show evidence of compliance with ESG as well as with national standards and principles. It should be noted that this does not necessarily mean a limitation to other international accreditation agencies that operate in Turkey.
- ◇ During 2018 and 2019, the THEQC introduced its Mentorship Program for the HEIs subject to external evaluation. Within the scope of this program, experts whom the institutions could invite for detailed presentations and would ask for guidance during their institutional external evaluation process were assigned for each of these HEIs.
- ◇ In line with its internationalization vision, the THEQC started to attend several reputable events and organizations about quality assurance in higher education that took place in different countries and arranged by distinguished organizations.
- ◇ Annually, the THEQC publishes the Higher Education Evaluation and Quality Assurance Annual Situation Report based on the ISERs prepared by each HEI for the previous year and the IFRs that are drawn up by the external evaluation teams after site visits of the HEIs subject to institutional external evaluation. Until today, the THEQC has published and distributed three Annual Situation Reports, which provided invaluable insights for the stakeholders of the higher education system for their policy-making and strategy development activities (<http://yokak.gov.tr/raporlar/faaliyet-raporlari>).
- ◇ Annually, the THEQC organized special sessions with the rectors of the visited HEIs in order to learn their opinions regarding the site visits to their institutions and their general experience about institutional external evaluation process. Their comments, complaints, compliments, and suggestions were all reflected in Annual Situation Reports and shared publicly. Furthermore, based on these reflections, the THEQC has redesigned some of its activities so that satisfaction level from the evaluation process steadily increases among the HEIs over years.
- ◇ Annually, the THEQC organized special sessions with the leaders of the external evaluation teams to get their opinions and comments regarding their experience with the HEI, which they had visited during the external evaluation process. All these opinions, comments and suggestions were reflected in the Annual Situation Reports published by the THEQC, so that continuous improvement in the external evaluation process could be achieved.
- ◇ To complete the “Plan-Do-Check-Act” cycle, the THEQC cares for the opinions and comments of its both internal and external stakeholders. For this purpose, the Council arranges regular meetings and interviews with university executives, external evaluation team leaders, students, and its own staff. At the end of every event, a survey was carried out to depict strengths as well as the areas that need improvement for the whole system. Based on the inferences from these interviews and surveys, the THEQC takes necessary steps into action for the continuous improvement of the quality assurance system in Turkey.



Since the establishment of the THEQC and especially in the last two years, activities and meetings of the THEQC with its stakeholders in line with the demands from HEIs, quality commissions and other stakeholders have increased. HEIs also demand trainings not only for quality teams, but also for different segments of the organization (leaders, other employees, etc.). The THEQC tries to meet these demands by increasing the number of trainings, information meetings and institutional visits. At the same time, access to information has been facilitated through applications such as Information Portal and QAMIS. These activities have also enabled to enhance the recognition of the Council at national level by sharing with the public and universities via the THEQC's web page and social media, bulletins and information meetings held by visiting universities. In addition, the members and staff of the Council have participated in national and international QA meetings.

6. Processes and their methodologies

As stated above, the activity areas of the THEQC can be categorized into four main groups:

1. Establishment of internal and external QA mechanisms in higher education system and ensuring their effectiveness,
2. Evaluating the quality of HEIs' learning and teaching, research and development, and governance system in accordance with the national and international quality standards,
3. Recognition and authorization of independent external evaluation and accreditation agencies,
4. Internalization and dissemination of QA culture in higher education system.

The evaluation processes carried out by the THEQC within the scope of these activities are:

1. Monitoring of HEIs via their ISERs,
2. Performing external evaluations of HEIs at least once every five years,
3. Thematic review (External evaluation of EPSs),
4. Evaluation of external evaluation and accreditation agencies in the process of their authorization or recognition.

In evaluating the quality of HEIs, the THEQC refers to its own evaluation criteria developed in consideration of national (TQF and NQF-HETR) and international (ESG and EHEA) standards in addition to PDCA cycles. The processes and criteria for the evaluation activities are explained in relevant guidelines published by the THEQC and supported with the QAMIS developed by the THEQC.

The evaluation categories that constitute the basis of the national QA model, of which compliance with ESG is explicated in Part 10 (ESG Standard 2.1) of the report, are illustrated in Figure 4.



Figure 4. THEQC Quality Assurance System Evaluation Categories

The THEQC quality assurance criteria and ESG are compared in Table 5:

Table 5. THEQC Evaluation Criteria and ESG

THEQC Institutional External Evaluation Criteria		ESG Part 1
1. Quality Assurance System	1.1. Quality Policy 1.2. Duties, Responsibilities and Activities of Higher Education Quality Commissions 1.3. Stakeholder Participation	1.1.Policy for Quality Assurance 1.10. Cyclical External Quality Assurance
2. Learning and Teaching	2.1. Design and Approval of Programs 2.2. Continuous Monitoring and Updating of Programs 2.3. Student-Centred Learning, Teaching and Evaluation 2.4. Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification 2.5. Teaching Staff 2.6. Learning Resources, Accessibility and Supports	1.2. Design and Approval of Programmes 1.3. Student-Centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment 1.4. Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification 1.5. Teaching Staff 1.6. Learning Resources and Student Support 1.9. On-Going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
3. Research and Development	3.1. Institution's Research Strategy and Objectives 3.2. Institution's Research Resources 3.3. Institution's Research Staff 3.4. Monitoring and Improving Institution's Research Performance	
4. Governance System	5.1. Structure of Management and Administrative Units 5.2. Resource Management 5.3. Information Management System 5.4. Quality of Outsourced Services 5.5.Efficiency and Accountability of Management, Public Information	1.7. Information Management 1.8. Public Information



THEQC EPSs External Evaluation Criteria		ESG Part 1
1. Learning Outcomes	Learning outcomes and description of a B1+ learner inform the preparatory program and are evident in: 1.1. Curriculum objectives, 1.2. Instructional materials, 1.3. Assessment and evaluation.	1.4. Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification 1.10. Cyclical External Quality Assurance
2. Curriculum Design and Delivery	2.1. Needs analysis has been conducted and informs curriculum design. 2.2. Principles to teaching are explicitly stated/shared. 2.3. Principles to teaching are realized in the classroom. 2.4. Recent instructional technology is integrated into curriculum delivery. 2.5. Progression from one level to another is clearly and explicitly stated in accordance with the CEFR. 2.6. There are systems in place to select and use appropriate, challenging, motivating materials. 2.7. Student autonomy is encouraged. 2.8. Students receive systematic oral and written feedback. 2.9. Curriculum evaluation is based on systematic formative and summative evidence from a variety of sources.	1.2. Design and Approval of Programmes 1.3. Student-Centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment 1.4. Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification 1.6. Learning Resources and Student Support 1.8. Public Information 1.9. On-Going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
3. Student Assessment and Evaluation	3.1. There is a testing office/unit responsible for preparing and overseeing student assessment. 3.2. Exam specifications are present for exams. 3.3. There are systems in place to look at validity and reliability of different forms of assessment. 3.4. Measures are taken to ensure reliable marking. 3.5. Measures are taken to ensure equal difficulty levels across semesters/levels.	1.3. Student-Centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment 1.4. Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification
4. Teaching Staff	4.1. All instructors whose first language is not English have a B2 + from 4 skills exams. 4.2. All native speakers of English instructors have a relevant (ELT, literature, language related) graduate/postgraduate degree and/or teaching certification or diploma. (Relevant for all full and part time teaching staff). 4.3. All part-time Turkish instructors have a relevant graduate or postgraduate degree/ a teaching certificate or diploma. 4.4. There is an orientation programme for new instructors. 4.5. All teachers working in specialised positions receive training in their area of work. 4.6. All teachers are provided with systematic formal and informal professional development opportunities. 4.7. There is a clear and transparent performance evaluation system.	1.5. Teaching Staff

5. Governance	<p>5.1. The university has a clear language policy.</p> <p>5.2. The Preparatory Program mission is aligned with the university policy.</p> <p>5.3. There is an organisational structure in line with the mission.</p> <p>5.4. The facilities and physical environment are suitable for the realization of the stated teaching and learning principles.</p> <p>5.5. There are clearly defined job descriptions for the different positions in the organisational structure.</p> <p>5.6. The maximum teaching load of instructors is 25 hours per week.</p> <p>5.7. The maximum class size limited to 25 students.</p> <p>5.8. There is a system for communication and collaboration between the preparatory program, faculties and university management.</p> <p>5.9. There are clearly specified processes for recruitment purposes.</p> <p>5.10. There are clear systems available to ensure communication and feedback amongst internal and external stakeholders.</p> <p>5.11. There are clear systems in place to follow up on how students perform after they graduate from the Preparatory Program.</p>	<p>1.1. Policy for Quality Assurance</p> <p>1.4. Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification</p> <p>1.5. Teaching Staff</p> <p>1.7. Information Management</p> <p>1.8. Public Information</p> <p>1.9. On-Going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes</p>
---------------	---	---

Another evaluation process conducted by the THEQC is as part of the authorization and recognition of external evaluation and accreditation agencies. The criteria for this process (See: Annex 10) and their compliance with ESG are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Comparison between THEQC Criteria for the Authorization and Recognition of External Evaluation and Accreditation Agencies and ESG

THEQC Criteria	ESG Part 3
Criteria 1.1 : 1.1.1./ 1.1.4./1.1.6./1.1.7. Criteria 1.2: 1.2.1./1.2.2.	3.1. Activities, Policy and Processes for Quality Assurance
Criteria 1.1.: 1.1.1./ 1.1.2./ 1.1.3. Criteria 1.2.: 1.2.1.	3.2. Official Status
Criteria 1.1.: 1.1.1./ 1.1.3./ 1.1.7. Criteria 1.2.: 1.2.1.	3.3. Independence
Criteria 1.1.: 1.1.1./ 1.1.4./ 1.1.6. Criteria 1.2.: 1.2.1./ 1.2.2.	3.4. Thematic Analysis
Criteria 1.1.: 1.1.1./ 1.1.2./ 1.1.5. Criteria 1.2.: 1.2.1.	3.5. Resources
Criteria 1.1.: 1.1.1./1.1.4./1.1.5./1.1.6. Criteria 1.2.: 1.2.1./1.2.2.	3.6. Internal Quality Assurance and Professional Conduct
Criteria 1.1.: 1.1.7. Criteria 1.2.: 1.2.1.	3.7. Cyclical External Review of Agencies

6.1. Institutional Self-Evaluation Process and Schedule

The self-evaluation processes of HEIs are conducted in line with the Regulation on Higher Education Quality Assurance and the Higher Education Quality Council issued by the THEQC. The Council's expectations from HEIs within this process are stated in the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report Writing Guide (See: Annex 8), which is



available on the THEQC's website. The information system developed by the THEQC supports the process. The reports are expected to answer the following questions:

- ◆ What does the institution intend to achieve?
- ◆ What is the institution's roadmap to achieve its mission and objectives?
- ◆ How does the institution make sure that it has achieved its mission and objectives?
- ◆ How does the institution plan to improve its processes in future?

The self-evaluation process, which aims to evaluate the quality of HEIs' learning and teaching, research and development, and governance systems, consists of the following steps:

- a) Informing HEIs on the self-evaluation process and announcement of its schedule.
- b) Upload of ISERs by HEIs on **QAMIS** in January and March every year. ISERs are required to be based on the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report Writing Guide and present necessary evidence.
- c) Publication of ISERs on the official websites of relevant HEIs and the THEQC.

ISERs, which are written in accordance with the ISER Writing Guide and encompass all learning and teaching, research and development, and governance systems supporting these activities in integration with their strategic plan, annual performance program and activity report, are presented to the THEQC with annual indicator values and evidence. The information stated in the ISER Writing Guide was updated in line with stakeholder feedback.

The evaluation and feedback of HEIs and other stakeholders showed the growing need to base the ISER preparation process on more concrete data and to improve the process for the benefit of institutions. Therefore, the THEQC developed the "Web-Based ISER Writing System" in **QAMIS** to help HEIs write their evidence-based ISERs (<https://yonetim.yokak.gov.tr/account/login>) in 2018. Institutions can upload relevant evidence to the system in various document formats or by entering relevant website addresses. Therefore, the option of adding evidence to the information system, which is used by HEIs to prepare ISERs, has been included in the process to support the evaluations in the reports with evidence. During the report-writing process, institutions can view each Institutional External Evaluation criterion as a main heading. Under each heading, HEIs are expected to file reports on the subject by providing explanations in the line of the criteria. Also, 18 sub-criteria under the main headings are reflected in the reports via QAMIS, and the evidence proving that the related sub-criteria are met are uploaded on the system. Also, it has been requested to present the performance indicators of the institutions. HEIs can also evaluate their maturity levels on relevant criteria by grading each criterion from 1 to 5 with five-level Likert scale. With this method, the THEQC makes the reporting process more explicit for institutions by providing detailed explanations regarding how institutions meet relevant criteria. Consistency between reports is ensured by this way. The annual developments of HEIs are also monitored through the system by using these mechanisms. In 2019, in the light of stakeholder opinions, another revision was made and examples were included in the system regarding the evidence that can be presented by the institutions in their reporting, which facilitated reporting activities to a great extent. The evidence are grouped into sub-categories of "institutional documents" and "evidence for improvement", which solidified the evaluations about the institution's progress. The evidence for improvement presenting continuous improvement approaches of the institutions have been made more specific in the ISER writing process.

Since most of the feedback received from HEIs and other stakeholders is about to simplify the system, the THEQC has developed QAMIS, and secured the implementation process and made the whole system more comprehensible with additional information such as help, explanations and examples. In addition, it is possible to monitor the progress of the institutions over time as it is possible to access the reports of all years in the system via the special **reporting modules**.

The quality commissions of HEIs are important partners of the THEQC especially in terms of HEIs' internal quality management, and the needs and expectations of these commissions are also considered as stakeholders. Although the structural sustainability of the quality commissions responsible for the internal quality assurance system in the institutions is guaranteed by the Regulation, the needs to provide the sustainability, effectiveness and competence of these commissions have been identified by self-evaluations and feedback. While the THEQC increased the number of its trainings and information meetings in order to meet their needs and to strengthen the quality commissions of HEIs, it also provided a continuously accessible environment with the Information Portal developed within the Council. On the other hand, HEIs state that they need various support and incentive mechanisms while creating their own internal quality assurance systems. By taking these demands of the institutions into account, the THEQC has determined the strategic target (Target 1.4) to take initiatives to create such supports within the strategic plan and to benefit from the collaborations for this purpose.

6.2. Institutional External Evaluation Program

As part of the THEQC Institutional External Evaluation Program, the evaluation process of HEIs is defined by the Regulation on Higher Education Quality Assurance and the Higher Education Quality Council (See: Annex 2). The THEQC Institutional External Evaluation Criteria and Institutional External Evaluation Guide (See: Annexes 6-7) set out the conduct of the process. The Program is implemented with a focus on peer-review aspect, which means that its primary aim is to ensure sustainable internal quality assurance systems in HEIs while contributing to the continuous improvement of institutions. IFRs, which are prepared by peer-review experts, provide guidance to institutions in building up their quality assurance systems. External evaluation calendar is drawn and announced by the THEQC and executed by the independent external peer evaluators appointed by the THEQC (See: Part 10.4). The THEQC Institutional External Evaluation activities are integrated to the institutional self-evaluation process.

External evaluation of institutions, which aims to evaluate quality of HEIs' learning and teaching, research and development, and governance systems, is composed of the following steps:

- ◆ Informing the HEIs on the institutional external evaluation process and announcing the external evaluation calendar,
- ◆ The HEIs' proclamation to request external evaluation and the inclusion of the HEIs, which are required to undergo external evaluation due to their establishment date, in the program,
- ◆ Accepting and reviewing applications for evaluator candidates,
- ◆ Training evaluator candidates and reviewing the results,
- ◆ Forming evaluation teams,
- ◆ Informing the HEIs subject to external evaluation on the process,
- ◆ Appointing mentors to the HEIs subject to evaluation,
- ◆ Preliminary evaluation of the HEIs by evaluation teams on the basis of the ISERs,



- ◆ Evaluation of the HEIs by the evaluation teams through pre-visits (one-day visit to discuss the timeline of site-visit) and site visits (two and a half day evaluation visit) paid to the institutions (See: Annex 4 for further details of the visits),
- ◆ Submission of the IFR drafts to the evaluated institution by the evaluation teams via the information system,
- ◆ Finalization of the report by the evaluation team after building a consensus between the team and the evaluated institution on the report and its submission to the THEQC,
- ◆ Administration of surveys via the information system to receive the feedback from the evaluation teams and evaluated institutions on the process,
- ◆ Examination of the reports by the IEEC and their presentation to the Council,
- ◆ The THEQC makes **final decision on the IFRs and make them** publicly available,
- ◆ Organization of individual review meetings with the team leaders and the rectors of the evaluated institutions.

ISERs, which give the external evaluation teams an opportunity to examine the institutions prior to site visits, are prepared by the HEIs on the basis of calendar year and the relevant guideline, and submitted to the THEQC via **QAMIS**. ISER writing system is compatible with the web-based “Evaluator System” that has been active since 2018 for the teams participating in external evaluation (<http://yokak.gov.tr/ApplicantAccount/Login?returnUrl=%2F>). The headings of IFRs are compatible with those of ISERs in this system. By using the system, evaluation teams can indicate in their IFRs whether the relevant criteria are met in the institution after examining the ISERs and evidence presented, paying site visits to the institution and grading the maturity level of each heading **with 5-level Likert scale**. External evaluation team members are chosen by the THEQC among the academic and administrative staff, students and sector representatives within HEIs who have filed external evaluator applications. The factors such as the quality of independent peer-review experts and evaluation teams appointed by the THEQC and training provided by the Council are explained in detail in the section related to Standard 2.4 (See: Part 10.4).

As per the regulation, HEIs may object to the report in whole or in part within 60 days from the announcement date of IFRs. Objections are finalized after receiving the **IEEC's** opinion within 60 days at the latest and a written notification on the result is conveyed to the relevant institution (See: Part 10.7).

In the current national higher education system, the external evaluation period is determined by law every five years. Firstly, the monitoring system was initiated by annually presenting a collective analysis of internal evaluation reports to the institutions at the end of the site visits at the feedback meetings. Later on, online monitoring function has been improved by adding different monitoring modules to QAMIS system. By this system, the institutions prepare an ISER every year, which includes information on the annual improvements and the developmental aspects of the institution. For example, institutions were also requested to state their areas for further development in their ISERs. This means that every year the THEQC records improvements of institutions specifically in line with their IFRs via ISERs. At the end of each annual cycle, the maturity level of the

institutions regarding the internal quality assurance system was published in the meetings as well as in the annual **situation** reports.

In addition, the Council is currently working on a follow-up process model that takes into account the structure of HEIs and the maturity levels of internal QA systems. In this system, feedback will be given to each institution separately in different time periods for monitoring. According to this system, on-line monitoring will be supported by an on-site visit and monitoring report within a two-year period.

6.3. Thematic Review (External Evaluation of English Preparatory Schools)

The thematic review, namely the English Preparatory Schools (EPSs) External Evaluation Pilot Program, was an **ad-hoc** evaluation process carried out by the THEQC in 2018 upon the request of the CoHE. The results of the program were presented to the CoHE in 2019 and are currently being reviewed by the CoHE. The Program covered the evaluation process of 10 schools through evaluation teams appointed by the THEQC by employing the internal evaluation processes of these schools. It focuses on the evaluation of learning and teaching activities of English preparatory programs and its main features are given below:

- ◇ It is the national evaluation process of teaching English from an internationally accepted perspective.
- ◇ It is based on the internal evaluation (self-evaluation) of the English Preparatory School.
- ◇ The School is evaluated qualitatively and quantitatively within the framework of external evaluation principles in terms of meeting levels with the "Areas and Minimum Standards" determined by the THEQC (See: Annex 9).
- ◇ It is a peer evaluation process in which the opinions of the internal and external stakeholders of the institution are also taken.

The EPSs External Evaluation Pilot Program generally follows an approach to seek answers to the following five key questions:

- ◇ What are the learning outcomes targeted by the English Preparatory School at the end of the program? (Learning outcomes)
- ◇ How is the English Preparatory School's training program designed and communicated to achieve targeted learning outcomes? (Curriculum design and transfer)
- ◇ How are learning outcomes measured and evaluated? (Student assessment and evaluation)
- ◇ What competencies do faculty have and how are they supported by the English Preparatory School? (Teaching staff)
- ◇ What administrative processes are in place to ensure the achievement of targeted learning outcomes? (Administrative processes)

The EPSs External Evaluation Pilot Program consists of three main phases as described in EPS External Evaluation Guide (<http://yokak.gov.tr/degerlendirme-sureci/ingilizce-hazirlik-okullari-degerlendirme-pilot-programi>):



- ◆ Preliminary evaluation through the EPS Self-Evaluation Report, which will be prepared through the EPS Self-Evaluation Form,
- ◆ Visit to the EPS (Site visit: two-day long visit by evaluation teams composed of one foreign expert, three national experts and one national student evaluator),
- ◆ Post-visit activities through writing and sending of EPS Feedback Report to the school and the THEQC, which will be prepared through EPS Feedback Form by the evaluation team.

Since one of the THEQC's primary objectives is to develop, strengthen and implement the national higher education quality assurance system, the development and adoption of a holistic national quality assurance methodology **has been** the first aim of the Council's activities. After the national quality assurance methodology is developed, THEQC plans to diversify its methodology in line with the different policies in the field of higher education and set this in its strategic objectives (Target 1.2.). The external evaluation of EPSs as a pilot project is an example in this context.

6.4. External Evaluation and Accreditation Agencies

In line with the THEQC Establishment Law and in accordance with the Regulation on Higher Education Quality Assurance and the THEQC, the authorization of national external evaluation and accreditation agencies and the recognition of international agencies are carried out by the THEQC. For this purpose, the Recognition and Authorization of Independent External Evaluation and Accreditation Agencies Commission, consisting of THEQC members, has been appointed. In January 2019, "The Guide on the Authorization and Recognition of External Evaluation and Accreditation Agencies" was published and an online system, namely Accreditation Agencies System (AAS), was developed to execute the process. The process of authorizing and recognizing external evaluation and accreditation agencies, in accordance with the relevant guide, consists of the following stages:

- a) Application,
- b) Pre-review of the application,
- c) Preparation of the review report and decision-making,
- d) Appeal process in case of objections by agencies.

The accreditation agencies operating in Turkey vary as national and international agencies. For this reason, two different processes are executed, namely the authorization process for national agencies and the recognition process for international agencies. Both processes are explained separately in the relevant guide. However, the main process in the decision-making stage is to ensure compliance with national and international (especially ESG) standards by securing output-oriented accreditation in both cases whether or not the agency is EQAR registered/ENQA member.

Application Stage: The application stage, which is executed separately for national and international agencies, is presented below:

a) For National Agencies: The agencies that apply for *Quality Evaluation Registration Certificate* submit their applications in written or electronic form via the AAS with the application file they have prepared. In addition,

documents such as “a letter of application with wet or electronic signature (by a person having signature authority)”, “organizational history and activities” and “self-evaluation reports” should be submitted. The agencies should clearly state the names of the fields of study and programs they wish to operate in.

b) For International Agencies: Applications for the recognition of international accreditation agencies can be submitted in two ways: directly by international accreditation agencies themselves or the HEIs subject to evaluation by international accreditation agencies. The application is submitted to the Council via the written or electronic application form providing information about the aspects stated below:

- ◇ The titles and levels of the programs which the agency requests to perform accreditation activities,
- ◇ Evidence proving that the agency meets the criteria for the recognition of international external evaluation and accreditation agencies.

Review Stage: The review stage of the agencies’ applications consists of three steps, namely the pre-review, preparation of the review report and decision-making.

- ◇ **Pre-review:** It relates to the accuracy and adequacy of the documents submitted according to form requirements. The documents submitted to the THEQC are evaluated within 15 days and the agencies are requested to complete the missing documents within 30 days.
- ◇ **Preparation of the review report:** The application file deemed appropriate at the pre-review step is sent to the Commission (Recognition and Authorization of External Evaluation and Accreditation Agencies Commission, See: Table 4). The application file is examined by the Commission within 30 days and the review report, including the Commission’s opinion, is prepared and submitted to the Council. A decision is made according to the level of meeting the criteria.
- ◇ **Decision-making:** The review report is shared with the Council members prior to the Council meeting and is included in the agenda. The decision-making authority for the authorization of national agencies rests with the THEQC. The Council issues a final decision after reviewing the report written by the Commission. The Council may make one of the following decisions regarding the authorization of national organizations: five-year authorization, two-year authorization or refusal. The THEQC may issue “recognition” or “non-recognition” decisions about the recognition of international external evaluation and accreditation agencies. These decisions include information on how long the agency will be recognized. Information on **authorization or recognition** is published on the official website of the Council.

Appeal Process: National or international **agencies** make their objections to the Council in written or electronic form within 30 days following the notification of the decision. The relevant standard and the evidence that this standard is met should be included in the petition of objection. Objections are examined by the Recognition and Authorization of External Evaluation and Accreditation Agencies Commission. The Commission submits the Objection Assessment Report, including its opinion on the objection, to the Council. The Council decides on the objection by taking into account the report in question and the agency is notified about the decision.

In accordance with the feedback of stakeholders and assessments of the process, AAS has been developed in 2019, and all applications are received through this system and evaluations are carried out with the support of this system in order to shorten and increase the effectiveness of the process. This system also provides monitoring the application and evaluation time since the Council cares that the writing and submitting of the

evaluation report to the Council’s decision is completed within 30 days in case all application documents are provided in the pre-review. On the other hand, the participation of the Commission in site visits of accreditation bodies has been defined in the process of authorizing and recognizing by the Commission. However, the implementation starts after the Council decision.

6.5. Higher Education Evaluation and Quality Assurance Annual Situation Report

The THEQC shares the results of QA studies in Turkish higher education with all stakeholders and the public in the Higher Education Evaluation and Quality Assurance Annual Situation Report prepared annually by using data obtained through the evaluation of studies such as the ISERs and IFRs. This report, which is described in detail in Part 9.4. ESG Standard 3.4. Thematic Analysis, presents the outputs of the QA studies for the relevant year. In this report, the THEQC makes recommendations for itself, HEIs and the CoHE (see: Part 9.4).

7. Agency’s internal quality assurance

The THEQC has established its internal QA system by taking into account the quality cycle (PDCA). The THEQC has determined its mission, vision and strategies with strategic planning and monitors its activities on a regular basis in order to reach its planned targets. The stakeholder opinions and evaluations at each stage are continually being improved. Figure 5 shows the Internal Quality Assurance of the THEQC.

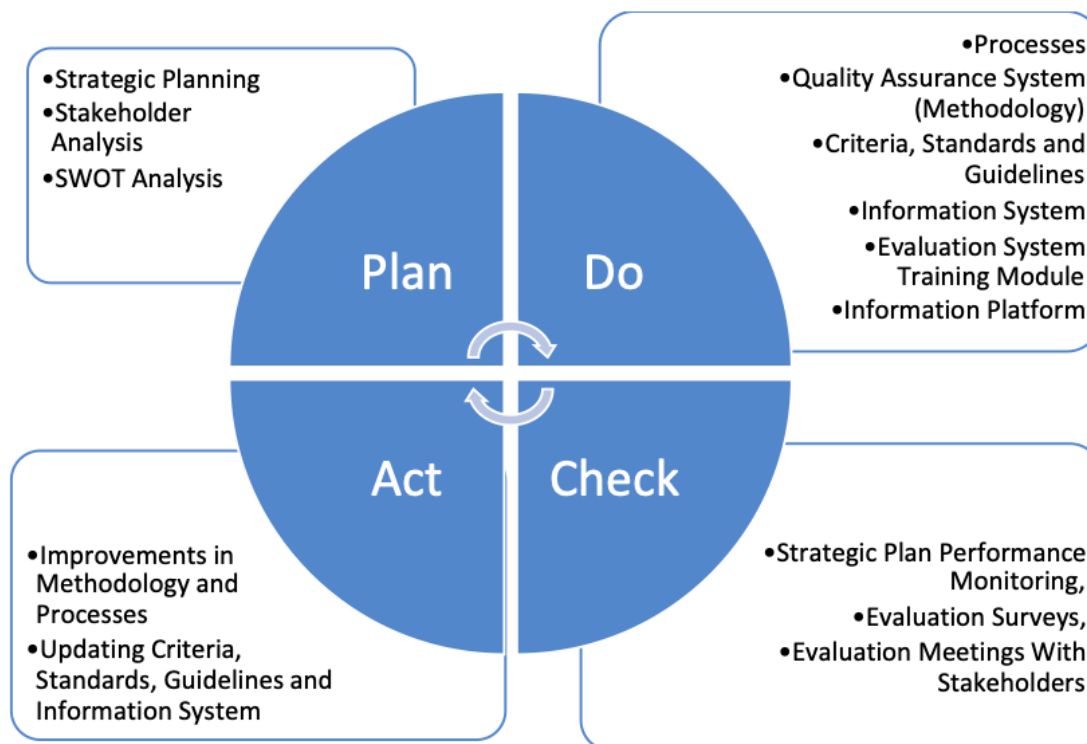


Figure 5. Internal Quality Assurance of the THEQC

The Council's first Strategic Plan was prepared in 2018, covering the years 2019-2023. As a public organization, the Council has to take the Strategic Planning Guideline for Public Administrations, in accordance with the Law No. 5018 on Public Fiscal Administration and Control, as a basis for the preparation of its strategic plan for five years period. According to the guide, the process started with the analysis of legislation and top policy documents, then continued with stakeholder analysis (see: Part 11) and situation analysis. Therefore, the THEQC has prepared its strategic plan for five years and has to update this plan in line with the Law No. 5018.

The Council identified its internal and external stakeholders, which are related to its activities, through stakeholder analysis and prioritized its stakeholders according to their Importance-Impact Levels (see: Part 11-Table 9). In this context, the THEQC gathered the opinions of its internal and external stakeholders, analysed the results and prepared the Stakeholder Analysis Report. In addition, a SWOT analysis was performed by analysing internal and external institutions (see: Parts 12 and 13). Based on all these analyses, the mission, vision, core values, policies, strategic objectives and targets of the THEQC were determined. The THEQC defined and stated its mission and vision as follows:

Mission: *"To strengthen the quality assurance system in higher education in order to contribute to the continuous development of HEIs in Turkey and the achievement of universal qualifications by individuals."*

Vision: *"To be an effective and internationally recognized institution in the field of higher education quality assurance."*

The THEQC established five strategic objectives to realize its vision:

1. To construct and disseminate the bureaucratic burden-reduced quality assurance system in higher education with innovative applications and to ensure the continuous improvement of the system,
2. To promote the development of quality assurance system in higher education,
3. To encourage the dissemination of quality culture and establish cooperative relations among all stakeholders,
4. To become an independent, reliable, expert and institutionalized organization in the evaluation of quality assurance,
5. And to heighten the recognition of the THEQC by increasing its internationalization level.

Each strategic objective consists of specific targets and projects. The strategic objectives are planned and monitored with specific performance indicators (See: Annex 4). By taking into consideration the opinions of all stakeholders and institutional analyses, the THEQC determined its core values as Objectivity, Transparency, Ethical Behaviour, Independence, Openness to Cooperation, Guidance, Innovation, and Respect for Diversity. The THEQC's policies, which constitute the basis of its activities, are defined in the context of quality and institutional management.

The Council's quality policy is as follows:

- ◆ To improve services offered in line with the expectations of stakeholders continuously,
- ◆ To provide climate and an environment that will strengthen the quality culture inside and outside the Council,



- ◆ And to ensure service quality through a strong internal quality assurance system.

The THEQC's institutional management policy can be summarized as follows:

- ◆ To adopt and implement universal ethical principles while maintaining core values in the activities carried out,
- ◆ To ensure that all stakeholders are represented in the management by enabling their participation,
- ◆ To support the development of staff in line with institutional development goals,
- ◆ And to maintain resource planning and resource utilization with a sense of institutional responsibility.

In line with its quality and institutional management policies, the THEQC ensures the quality of its activities and processes by enabling the participation of all its stakeholders in these activities and processes. As a result of all feedback, the THEQC updates its related processes, guides, and **QAMIS**. The methods applied by the Council to involve stakeholder engagement in processes are evaluation meetings, focus group interviews and surveys. For this purpose, regular evaluations made by the THEQC are summarized below:

- ◆ The implementation of a survey for externally evaluated HEIs to evaluate both the evaluation process and the evaluators,
- ◆ A survey for members of external evaluation teams to evaluate each other,
- ◆ Evaluation meetings with HEIs representatives before and after the institutional external evaluation processes,
- ◆ Information and evaluation meetings with the quality commissions of HEIs,
- ◆ Information and evaluation meetings with the senates of HEIs,
- ◆ Surveys conducted at the end of evaluator trainings,
- ◆ A stakeholder opinion survey conducted under the strategic plan.

In line with its core values, the THEQC has adopted a Code of Ethics in order to ensure that its operations are transparent and accountable (See: Annex 5). The Code of Ethics must be respected by THEQC members, commissioners, advisory board members, mentors and evaluators. In the last section of the Code of Ethics, there is "the Statement of Confidentiality and Commitment to the THEQC Code of Ethics". Those responsible for the Code of Ethics sign this statement.

The THEQC continuously monitors its activities in line with its quality policy and shares the outcomes of these activities with public. The Higher Education Evaluation and Quality Assurance Annual Situation Report is published every year by the THEQC.

As the THEQC is a public **organization**, it is financially subject to the audit of Turkish Court of Accounts. This audit controls and evaluates the use of financial resources. In this context, the audit of the Court of Accounts was carried out in 2018 and an audit report is expected.

8. Agency's international activities

As an affiliate of the ENQA since February 2019, the THEQC is structured as a national quality assurance agency and it has conducted its QA activities only in Turkey since the day it was founded.

The objective of the THEQC in terms of its international activities is defined in the THEQC Strategic Plan 2019-2023 as follows: "*Heightening the recognition of the THEQC by increasing its internationalization level*". The Council has identified the following targets and projects to achieve this objective:

- ◇ Target 5.1. Taking active part in international cooperation networks,
- ◇ Target 5.2. Increasing the international recognition of the THEQC,
- ◇ Project 5.1. Becoming a member of ENQA and EQAR until March 2019,
- ◇ Project 5.2. Organizing an international event on QA until December 2020,
- ◇ Project 5.3. Setting up the English version of the information system used in THEQC's processes until December 2020 to make this system also suitable for the use of international evaluators.

Since cooperation with international agencies is one of the priority areas for the THEQC, the following cooperation agreements were made in 2019:

- ◇ Cooperation between THEQC and HCERES (France): On January 9, 2019, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the THEQC and the French Higher Education Evaluation Council (HCERES) in the field of "Quality Assurance and Evaluation in Higher Education".
- ◇ Cooperation between THEQC and UK Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA): On February 18, 2019, the THEQC and the QAA agreed on the establishment of a cooperation agreement in the field of "Quality Assurance and Evaluation in Higher Education".

In addition, several information sharing meetings with international agencies that perform accreditation activities in Turkey were held on the following dates:

- ◇ On January 30, 2019, with the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB),
- ◇ On February 15, 2019, with the Agency for Quality Assurance (AQAS),
- ◇ On February 19, 2019, with the Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation (FIBAA).

International organizations that are taken as a reference by the THEQC in the field of quality assurance are listed below:

- ◇ ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education)
- ◇ INQAAHE (International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies)
- ◇ APQN (Asia Pacific Quality Network)

In order to enhance the international cooperation and recognition, the Council has made intensive efforts by participating in important events in the field, participating in international networks, initiating cooperation with international agencies and conducting benchmarking meetings. In addition, **organizing an international event** in this field until December 2020 has been determined as a strategic performance indicator (Target 5.2.).



9. Compliance with European Standards and Guidelines – Part 3

9.1 ESG Standard 3.1. Activities, Policy and Processes for Quality Assurance

Agencies 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.

Evidence:

- ◆ External quality assurance is among the founding purposes of the THEQC,
- ◆ Consideration of stakeholder engagement in the organization of the Council and the presence of Council members representing stakeholder institutions and a student member,
- ◆ The inclusion of the objective of quality assurance in the THEQC's mission that has been defined and announced on its official website,
- ◆ The expression of the cooperation with stakeholders in THEQC's quality policy and institutional management policy,
- ◆ The mission's incorporation into the THEQC's strategic objectives and targets in relation to the Council's activities,
- ◆ Institutional external evaluations conducted by the THEQC in recent years: 20 HEIs in 2016, 50 HEIs in 2017, 45 HEIs in 2018. With the institutional external evaluations of 45 HEIs in 2019, all HEIs that produce graduates will have participated in the institutional external evaluation process.

As an agency responsible for the implementation of QA in Turkey's higher education system, the main duties of the THEQC identified in the relevant regulation (See: Part 5) are: 1- to make evaluations according to national and international quality standards related to the quality of education, research and social activities and administrative services of HEIs; 2- to carry out internal and external QA processes; 3- to perform the authorization or recognition of independent external evaluation organizations and accreditation agencies. The THEQC fulfils the above-mentioned main duties by applying its specific QA methodology (See: Part 6) and its processes.

The THEQC has determined its mission, vision, core values, policies and strategic objectives within the scope of strategic planning. The Council has stated its mission as: "to strengthen the quality assurance system in higher education in order to contribute to the continuous development of higher education institutions in Turkey and the achievement of universal qualifications by individuals". The THEQC has also defined its vision as: "to be an effective and internationally recognized institution in the field of higher education quality assurance". In order to realize its vision, the THEQC has strategically determined its strategic objectives in five areas in line with its main duties (see: Part 7). Each strategic objective has been categorized into sub-targets with objectives and projects, through which the action planning has been made (See: Annex 4). The role of stakeholder participation in the THEQC's activities is explained in detail in the THEQC Stakeholder-Activity Relation Matrix provided in the THEQC's 2019-2023 Strategic Plan (See: Annex 4).

In line with its mission and main duties, the THEQC develops and implements three main activities within the scope of QA. These activities are mentioned below:

1. Conducting institutional external evaluation of HEIs,
2. Performing the authorization and recognition processes of accreditation agencies,
3. Ensuring the internalization and dissemination of QA culture in HEIs.

The processes of the THEQC relative to all assessments in the above-mentioned activities are defined and stated in the relevant guides and related processes are described in detail in the Part 6 of this report. In all of these assessments, the THEQC receives continuous feedback from the senior administrators/representatives of HEIs directly involved in the processes, the experts in institutional external evaluation teams and the administrators/representatives of accreditation agencies. The Council continuously improves all dimensions of the QA system, developed by considering the feedback. (See: Part 7).

Other QA activities performed by the THEQC are guidance services (mentorship program, information portal etc.), publishing and event organizing activities (annual situation report, feedback meetings, etc.) in order to disseminate and strengthen QA culture in the higher education system, the THEQC's own institutional internal quality assurance activities, and other activities carried out upon requests of stakeholders such as evaluation of HEIs within "mission differentiation and specialization project" and external evaluation of EPSs.

Related documents:

- ◆ THEQC Establishment Law,
- ◆ Regulation on Higher Education Quality Assurance and the THEQC,
- ◆ THEQC Strategic Plan 2019-2023,
- ◆ THEQC Stakeholder Analysis Report.

9.2 ESG Standard 3.2.Official Status

Agencies should have an established legal basis and should be formally recognized as quality assurance agencies by competent public authorities.

Evidence:

- ◆ The THEQC is defined as the only national authority, authorized by law, to conduct institutional external evaluation of HEIs,
- ◆ The THEQC's organizational structure, work procedures and areas of activity are officially defined in the Regulation on Higher Education Quality Assurance and the THEQC,
- ◆ The THEQC activities are financially audited by the Turkish Court of Accounts on a regular basis.

The THEQC was established within the scope of the Higher Education Quality Assurance Regulation published in the Official Gazette No. 29423 of July 23, 2015. Then, in accordance with the THEQC Establishment Law enacted on July 1, 2017, the THEQC became an independent agency with administrative and financial



autonomy, public legal personality and **centrally allocated** budget. With the Regulation No. 30604 of November 23, 2018 relative to Higher Education Quality Assurance and the THEQC, the main objective, structure, duties, authorities and activity areas of the THEQC were clearly defined. In addition, arrangements related to the establishment of internal and external QA systems in HEIs were defined in this regulation.

THEQC activities have a sound legal ground with all these laws and regulations. However, the THEQC Establishment Law and the provisions of Article 1 and Article 6 of the Regulation on Higher Education Quality Assurance and the THEQC reveal that the THEQC is the only organization, authorized by the legislation of the Republic of Turkey, to establish and implement the mechanisms of the higher education QA system in Turkey. According to the Regulation, the THEQC carries out the authorization and recognition processes of national or international accreditation agencies operating in Turkey and monitors these agencies' accreditation activities.

Related documents:

- ◆ THEQC Establishment Law,
- ◆ Regulation on Higher Education Quality Assurance and the THEQC.

9.3 ESG Standard 3.3. Independence

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

Evidence:

- ◆ The operational and organizational independence of the THEQC are assured by the THEQC legislation,
- ◆ THEQC's organizational structure is defined in the Regulation on THEQC and ensured by the working principles of the Council.
- ◆ The publication and implementation of the criteria and evaluation processes performed by the THEQC can be done after approval by the THEQC,
- ◆ THEQC members are selected to represent many stakeholders,
- ◆ The Council members elect the THEQC President and Vice President among the Council members,
- ◆ External evaluators are independently appointed by the THEQC,
- ◆ THEQC is a Council with independent budget,
- ◆ **THEQC's** decisions are taken independently and are not affected by any external organization.

Organizational Independence

As stated in the THEQC Establishment Law, the THEQC was established as a Council with administrative and financial autonomy, public legal personality and **centrally allocated** budget. In accordance with the provisions of Article 5 of the Regulation No. 30604 of November 23, 2018 relative to Higher Education Quality Assurance and the THEQC, the President and Vice President of the THEQC are elected with absolute majority of the total number of THEQC members. In accordance with the provisions of the same article, the Council convenes with at least two-third majority of the total number of members and takes decisions with the absolute majority of the total number of members. In the event of an equality of votes, decision is considered in favour of the President's vote. The

members of the Council cannot participate in the meetings where issues related to institutions, they represent or work for or are affiliated with, are discussed. According to the provisions of Article 7 of the Regulation on Higher Education Quality Assurance and the THEQC, the President and Vice President cannot work for any public or private organization, with or without pay, except in the case of exceptional temporary duties assigned by the President of the Republic of Turkey, during their term in office.

The THEQC Establishment Law and the Article 1 and Article 6 of the Regulation on Higher Education Quality Assurance and the THEQC stipulate that as a public body with an independent character, the THEQC fulfils its duties and responsibilities without any influence or interference of public institutions, organizations or authorities, evaluated HEIs, authorized or recognized external evaluation and accreditation agencies and other stakeholders.

As the THEQC Establishment Law stipulates that the THEQC have administrative and financial autonomy, the THEQC has the right to make direct changes to its organizational structure by means of regulations which will be prepared by itself and which will come into force after being published in the Official Gazette. Any changes to be made to the Law No. 2547 on Higher Education should be approved by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey.

More detailed information on organizational independence can be found in Part 9.2, where THEQC's legal framework is covered, and in Part 4, where THEQC's organization and management structure is addressed.

Operational Independence

As stated in Part 9.2, where THEQC's legal framework and official status are described, it is within the THEQC's jurisdiction to adopt regulations specifying the requirements for quality assurance in accordance with the THEQC Establishment Law and the provisions of the Regulation on Higher Education Quality Assurance and the THEQC. It is the THEQC's responsibility to ensure that all HEIs comply with legal regulations on quality processes. In doing so, the THEQC is not only responsible for designing its own methodology, methods and procedures, but also for determining in which fields, disciplines, HEIs or study programs rational decisions on quality procedures or on institutional internal and external evaluations will be made.

The THEQC works in a fully independent way in the development, alteration and improvement of quality processes and institutional internal and external evaluation procedures which are based on ESG and the procedures of EUA-IEP, adapted to the requirements of Turkish higher education system and designed **as required**. Since its establishment, before taking an action to implement quality processes and evaluation procedures, the THEQC has consulted experts in higher education to review its methodology, the adequacy of its quality processes and evaluation procedures, and to include expert opinions and contributions.

The external evaluation teams participating in THEQC's quality processes and institutional external evaluation procedures are selected in accordance with the qualification requirements and procedures described in the Regulation on Higher Education Quality Assurance and the THEQC, the Institutional External Evaluation Directive and the THEQC Code of Ethics. External evaluation teams consist of external evaluators trained to conduct evaluations in accordance with the Council's institutional evaluation methodology (See: Part 10.4). Each year independent external evaluators participating in quality processes and institutional external evaluation procedures undergo planned trainings on the use of the tools designed by the THEQC. The evaluators are selected based on their knowledge, experience, scientific and technical skills and are not appointed to the HEIs they represent or work for, or are affiliated with. In addition, external evaluators are asked to sign ethical statements, which have been prepared and approved by the THEQC, stipulating that the evaluators will fulfil



their duties in a fully independent manner and indicating that the evaluators accept the above-mentioned THEQC Code of Ethics. Moreover, the THEQC receives a declaration from the evaluators that there is no conflict of interest between them and HEIs to be evaluated. Like other actors of the IEE process, the mentors assigned by the THEQC are also subjected to the THEQC Code of Ethics in order to avoid conflict of interest situations.

Independence of formal outcomes

As stated above, the status of the THEQC as an administratively and financially independent public legal entity with **centrally allocated** budget is guaranteed by the THEQC Establishment Law. The formal outcomes of the THEQC are the Council decisions on final IFRs and their publication, assignment of evaluation teams, authorization/recognition of independent accreditation agencies and the cancellation of their authorization/recognition, determination of the list of accredited programs published in the ÖSYM's Higher Education Programs and Quota Guide, internationalization activities, and publication of annual situation reports. The decisions issued by the THEQC are independent from any political or third-party influence. The THEQC is the sole and final arbitrator of all decisions related to the institutional external evaluation of HEIs, and authorization and recognition of independent external evaluation and accreditation agencies. The results of the quality processes and institutional external evaluation procedures conducted by the THEQC are independent and based solely on the decisions of external evaluation teams taken independently from the MEB, the CoHE and HEIs. Independent external evaluators appointed in evaluation teams are informed that they do not represent the HEIs they are affiliated with but act solely on behalf of the THEQC throughout the external evaluation process. In this scope, evaluation teams issue their decisions as a body of the THEQC and prepare IFRs on the evaluated institutions, which are announced to public by the THEQC.

The IFRs published on the official website of the THEQC present information for the MEB, CoHE, ÜAK, TÜBİTAK, TOBB, TÜSEB, TÜRKAK, MYK and other relevant stakeholders (Ministries, state institutions and organizations, HEIs, independent external evaluation and accreditation agencies, employers etc.). The procedures concerning the objections raised to the evaluation results of HEIs are defined in the Higher Education Quality Council Institutional External Evaluation Directive published on the official website of the THEQC. The objection process is performed in accordance with this directive.

External evaluation services for program accreditation in HEIs are provided by the independent external evaluation and accreditation agencies recognized or authorized by the THEQC in the field of program accreditation. The preferences and responsibilities of working with the national or international independent external evaluation and accreditation agencies recognized or authorized by the THEQC for program accreditation are **in discretion** of HEIs.

Related documents:

- ◆ THEQC Establishment Law
- ◆ Regulation on Higher Education Quality Assurance and the Higher Education Quality Council
- ◆ Institutional External Evaluation Directive
- ◆ Higher Education Quality Council Code of Ethics

9.4 ESG Standard 3.4. Thematic Analysis

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

Evidence:

- ◆ Higher Education Evaluation and Quality Assurance Annual Situation Report, which summarizes the activities undertaken by the THEQC,
- ◆ Publication of ISERs by HEIs,
- ◆ Publication of IFRs that comprise external evaluation results.

Based on its core values of transparency and accountability, the THEQC announces the data and information obtained about the quality of Turkish higher education ecosystem to relevant stakeholders and public. In this scope, HEIs are requested to prepare ISERs on a yearly basis. The ISERs submitted by HEIs are open to the access of all stakeholders on the official websites of the THEQC and the relevant institution (See: <http://yokak.gov.tr/raporlar/kurum-ici-degerlendirme-raporlari>). Another publication activity of the THEQC involves the IFRs that are published in an open and easily accessible way on the official websites of the relevant institutions and the THEQC simultaneously after their finalization by the evaluation team according to the process specified in Part 2.6 (See: <http://yokak.gov.tr/raporlar/kurumsal-geri-bildirim-2017-raporlari>).

As part of the Regulation on Higher Education Quality Assurance and the Higher Education Quality Council, the THEQC is in charge of preparing the Higher Education Evaluation and Quality Assurance Annual Situation Report in view of the institutional evaluation reports of HEIs. The IFRs on the evaluated institutions and the ISERs submitted by HEIs are reviewed and opinions of all relevant stakeholders are received in the preparation of this report. The report is penned and published every year by taking the results of the reviews and stakeholder opinions into consideration. In the drafting process of the report, the THEQC members and evaluation team leaders of the relevant year meet to exchange opinions, comments and suggestions regarding the process. In addition to this, meetings are organized with the administrators of the HEIs that are subject to evaluation in the relevant year to receive their opinions, comments and suggestions. Finally, after receiving the opinions and suggestions of all the institutions on the ISER writing process, the Higher Education Evaluation and Quality Assurance Annual Situation Report is penned. The first part of the report presents a general evaluation of the ISERs. The criteria employed in the review of the ISERs by the IEEC include providing a clear understanding of the report writing process, providing a justification of how the related processes (QA, learning and teaching, research, and administration) are executed in the institution, the compliance of the report with the institutional external evaluation criteria, the inclusion of required evidence in the report annex or via references to webpages, the preparation of the report in accordance with the ISER Writing Guide (in terms of language, format and page number), the report's internal consistency and the publication of the report on the institution's website in an easily accessible way. The Higher Education Evaluation and Quality Assurance Annual Situation Report also includes a general evaluation of the IFRs. With the aim of finding the strengths and areas for further development in QA systems of HEIs and making recommendations for development, the IFRs written in the relevant year are revised by the IEEC members in a standardized manner. Along with the governance and QA systems of HEIs, the operational processes (learning and teaching, research and development, and social contribution) are also taken into account in this framework. The evaluation incorporates a wide range of factors such as the completion of cycles in each process and stakeholder relations. The evaluations are elaborated with the inclusion of some additional indicators related to the "mission differentiation and specialization project" and "research university"



concept. In the final part of the Higher Education Evaluation and Quality Assurance Annual Situation Report, outcomes and recommendations are presented to HEIs, the THEQC and other stakeholders in the higher education system. The Annual Situation Reports, each of which comprises a review of the previous year, are published on the Council's website in a public and easily accessible way. The report also provides information on the accreditation activities of the agencies authorized or recognized by the THEQC in the relevant year (See: <http://yokak.gov.tr/raporlar/faaliyet-raporlari>).

Another main activity area of the THEQC is the recognition and authorization of external evaluation and accreditation agencies. The THEQC informs public by publishing information on its website regarding which measures are employed in the authorization of national accreditation agencies, which agencies comply with these criteria, and how long the authorization period lasts (See: <http://yokak.gov.tr/akreditasyon-kuruluslari/akreditasyon-kuruluslari-yetkilendirme-taninma>). Besides, a separate thematic analysis report will be published in 2019 for the program accreditation activities of national accreditation agencies.

Aside from the external evaluation activities and processes integrated into the internal evaluation processes, the THEQC also maintains monitoring, reporting and planning activities in the thematic areas structured according to the differences in program, faculty or university types. (See: <http://yokak.gov.tr/raporlar/faaliyet- raporlari> and <http://yokak.gov.tr/degerlendirme-sureci/ingilizce-hazirlik-okullari-degerlendirme-pilot-programi>). Furthermore, targets to enrich the thematic analysis by visualizing the existing analysis, increasing the comprehensibility, producing analyses for different stakeholder groups and reflecting the program level evaluations to the analyses are targeted within the strategic plan of the Council.

Related documents:

- ◆ Higher Education Evaluation and Quality Assurance Annual Situation Reports
- ◆ Institutional Self-Evaluation Report Writing Guide and Institutional Self-Evaluation Reports
- ◆ Institutional Feedback Reports

9.5 ESG Standard 3.5. Resources

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

Evidence:

- ◆ THEQC has sufficient human resources consisting of a staff of 13 members and 23 employees,
- ◆ There are 527 expert evaluators (academic, administrative and student evaluators) in the THEQC pool of evaluators,
- ◆ THEQC has financial capability with an increase of over 100% in its budget (2018-2019).

Financial Resources

The THEQC is an agency with administrative and financial autonomy, public legal personality and special budget within the framework of the relevant legislation. The THEQC's income sources are defined as treasury grants, operating revenues, all kinds of donations, financial aids and other revenues. The main financial source

for the THEQC are allowances provided under the Central Government Budget Law. Although the THEQC is allowed by the law to accept donations and financial aids, there has not been any of it put into practice.

While the Council's 2018 budget amounted to 3.143.000 TL, all revenues were made up of treasury grants. In 2019, the budget was set to 6.348.000 TL by the Central Government Budget Law (Figure 6). An allowance total of 3.143.000 TL was transferred to the Presidency of the THEQC in the fiscal year 2018 and 1.572.000 TL from this allowance was spent. In the 2019 fiscal year, an allowance of in total 6.348.000 TL was provided under the Central Government Budget Law. The total amount of expenditure for the first quarter of 2019 was recorded as 1.095.000 TL. While the expenditure rate was 50% in 2018 fiscal year, it is estimated that this rate will reach 70% in the 2019 fiscal year.

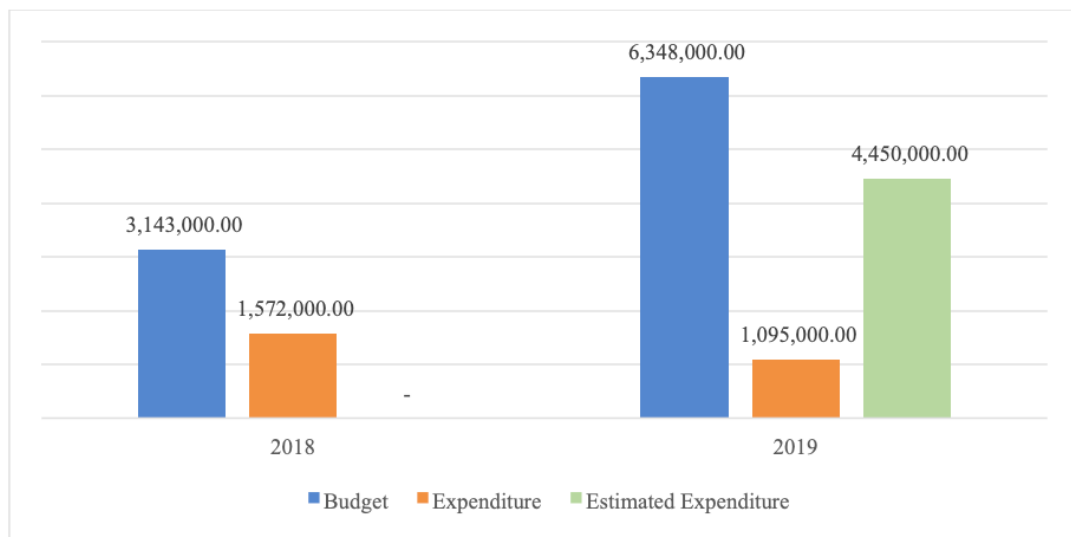


Figure 6. THEQC's Budget and Expenditures (TL).

The THEQC covers the costs of all activities within the scope of its duties and authorities specified in the Regulation from its own budget and in this sense the THEQC's budget is sufficient. The budget is distributed into staff costs and purchases of goods and services. The Council members are paid attendance fees **for their attendance to Council meetings**. On the other hand, the President and the Vice President work on a salary basis **since they are employed full-time**. Both the attendance fees and the salaries mentioned here are designated with the THEQC Establishment Law.

Human Resources

As explained in detail in Part 4, the THEQC consists of 13 members. In order to fulfil the duties specified in the legislation, the Council has been granted the right to employ 15 staff in the General Administrative Services status with the establishment of the Council. The THEQC also has the legal right to assign academic and/or administrative personnel on a full time basis from the staff of HEIs and other governmental bodies. The Council has exercised this right by assigning a group of experts in the Council in order to develop its human resources not only with administrative staff but also with experts who are specialized in the fields the Council needs to perform its activities. Currently, 4 personnel employed in the Council have the General Administrative Services status stated in the law, all of whom working as administrative staff. Also, 3 permanent workers were



appointed to the THEQC by the State Personnel Department of Turkey. In addition, 13 faculty members (8 full-time) and 3 administrative staff have been assigned from other institutions with the legal right explained above. All academic and administrative staff (except permanent workers) have undergraduate degrees and the majority of the staff consists of faculty members who have completed their doctoral studies. As of June 2019, the total number of staff employed in the Council is 23.

Qualification is a priority in the selection of staff to be employed in the Council and only those who are expert in their area are recruited in the THEQC. The professional and cultural qualifications of staff members are improved through in-service training activities.

Another human resource of the THEQC is external evaluators appointed from HEIs. Training workshops are held at different times throughout the year to train external evaluators. Furthermore, a web-based training platform named **Information Portal** has been established for the training of quality commissions of HEIs and external evaluators, and this platform is being actively used (See: Part 10.4).

Physical Infrastructure, Machinery and Equipment

The THEQC operates in an area of 1034 m² in the building owned by the CoHE. The Council provides all employees with their own offices and computers. The Council has a meeting room where it can hold meetings, a conference room for larger meetings and the necessary equipment.

Information System

Information systems and access to information are among the priorities of the THEQC. Therefore, works conducted by the Council are carried out through the information systems developed by the Council's own expert staff. The systems are listed below:

1. Quality Assurance Management Information System (QAMIS): QAMIS is a modular information system that enables the THEQC to manage all its internal and external evaluation processes. HEIs can submit their ISERs with evidences, log their performance indicators, and conduct many other procedures of external evaluation via QAMIS. Most of the processes in external evaluation are maintained through this system, such as the appointment of evaluation teams, monitoring the ISERs submitted by HEIs and the IFRs written by teams, conducting surveys and receiving feedback from both HEIs and evaluators (<https://yonetim.yokak.gov.tr/>).
2. Evaluator System: The THEQC's evaluator system is integrated into the QAMIS. The system comprises the application module through which candidate evaluators could file their applications, the training module that provides evaluators with online training, the reporting module that is used for drafting IFRs, and the survey module in which evaluator surveys and feedback are submitted. As evaluators use these modules, the data they log are conveyed to the related THEQC staff via the QAMIS (<http://yokak.gov.tr/ApplicantAccount/Login?returnUrl=%2F>).
3. Accreditation Agencies System (AAS): This system enables accreditation agencies to file applications for their authorization or the extension of their registry dates. Through the AAS, agencies can submit their application files and activity reports along with required evidence to the Council and check the steps of their application process. The rapporteurs who review the applications also conduct their reviewing procedures via the system (<http://akreditasyon.yokak.gov.tr/account/login>).

4. Information Portal for Quality Commissions: This portal, which was developed by the THEQC, aims to serve as an online source of information for HEIs regarding the establishment of their internal quality assurance systems as a knowledge-base. The contents in the Portal that are designed to help the work of quality commissions are categorized into main and sub-headings, making the interface more user-friendly. Each content is open to qualitative and quantitative review to ensure user interaction, and a forum page is available on the Portal to enable the interaction between users and moderators. Other pages of the Portal that are open to user access include FAQ page, which comprises the most frequently asked questions by quality commissions, and the Glossary page, which contains the definitions and explanations of the terms used in the contents. The Portal is optimized for mobile devices and offers an effective in-site search engine (<https://portal.yokak.gov.tr/>).

Related documents:

- ◆ THEQC's budget

9.6 ESG Standard 3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

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

Evidence:

- ◆ THEQC internal quality assurance system,
- ◆ Implementations aiming to promote stakeholder participation,
- ◆ Enhancements in methodology, system and processes,
- ◆ Implementations to prevent any potential conflict of interest.

The internal QA system of the THEQC, which is elaborated in Part 7, is based on PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle (See: Part 7, Figure 5). The Council determined its mission, vision and strategic objectives as part of its strategic planning efforts and periodically monitors its activities to achieve the planned targets. The implementations are continuously improved thanks to stakeholder opinions and reviews (See: Part 7).

Founded with the aim of evaluating the quality of HEIs' learning and teaching, research and development, and governance systems according to national and international quality standards and conducting the processes of accreditation, internal and external QA and authorization and recognition of independent external evaluation agencies, the THEQC enables the integrity of its activities with its founding purpose defined in related legislation. The main activity areas of the THEQC, which structures and conducts all its processes to achieve this purpose, are presented in Part 6..

The THEQC enables the integration of its plans with their implementation by defining its strategic objectives in relation to its activity areas (Table 7). Along with these strategic objectives, the THEQC set the strategic objective of "being an independent, reliable, specialized and institutionalized entity in the evaluation of quality assurance in higher education". The targets and projects determined to this end prioritize consolidating the Council's institutional structure (See: Annex 4). Table 7 shows the THEQC's activity areas and strategic objectives.



Table 7. THEQC's activity areas and strategic objectives.

Activity Area	Strategic Objective
1. Establishment of internal and external QA mechanisms in higher education system and ensuring/provision of their effectiveness	1. To construct and disseminate the bureaucratic burden-reduced QA systems in higher education with innovative applications and to ensure the continuous improvement of the system.
2. Recognition and authorization of independent external evaluation and accreditation agencies	
3. Evaluating the quality of HEIs' learning and teaching, research and development, and governance system in accordance with the national and international quality standards,	2. To promote the development of QA systems in higher education.
4. Internalization and dissemination of QA culture in higher education system	3. To encourage the dissemination of quality culture and establish cooperative relations among all stakeholders.

All the evaluation processes within the Council are defined in relevant guidelines and shared with stakeholders via the Council's website and QAMIS. The conduct of all the evaluation processes with the support of the information system developed by the THEQC assures the implementations. By means of the Information Portal for Quality Commissions and the Evaluator System, stakeholders are informed on the processes while the development of their competencies is encouraged.

The THEQC monitors and evaluates the levels of achieving the determined targets and meeting the expectations of stakeholders with the help of performance monitoring and receiving stakeholder opinions on a regular basis. The THEQC's main stakeholders within the internal and external evaluation processes include HEIs, evaluation team leaders and members taking part in the site visits throughout the external evaluation process. The methodology employed in receiving the opinions of these stakeholders and informing them is explained below:

1. In the first quarter of each year, institutions are expected to prepare their ISERs. Before the submission of the reports, meetings are organized with the representatives of the institutions to share the updates made according to the previous year's comments. During these meetings, institutions are guided regarding the report writing process whereas the representatives' opinions on the required enhancements are received. The latest update made in line with the comments has been the complete transfer of the ISER writing process to the QAMIS in order to reduce the workload of the institutions. In so doing, the institutions are provided with an opportunity to compare their reports with the ones submitted in previous years and include only the updated information in their new reports.
2. In the first quarter of each year, a meeting is organized with the administrators of the institutions that will be subject to external evaluation for that year. During the meeting, the institutional external evaluation process is explained in detail. The latest update made in line with the comments received from administrators of institutions is the introduction of the mentorship program. The mentors provide guidance to the institutions subject to external evaluation in the relevant year on various details of the Institutional External Evaluation Program (how to write ISERs or prepare for the different stages of the site visit etc.). The THEQC avoids conflict of interest situations while assigning mentors to HEIs. During the

mentorship program, the mentors do not write any report or bring up any improvement suggestions for the HEIs or give feedback to the evaluation teams.

3. In the second quarter of each year, the evaluators appointed to the teams are evaluated and evaluation trainings are organized. The trainings initially consisted of face-to-face workshops until the introduction of the new format that combines online and face-to-face trainings by using the “flipped classroom” technique. This format was developed and introduced upon feedback. During these trainings, the evaluators are trained in the framework of the institutional external evaluation criteria, including the factor of behavioural aspect, which is about working styles, compliance to the code of ethics, different evaluation decisions within the teams. After the trainings, the evaluator candidates are asked to share their opinions and suggestions for the trainings. The updates are also shared in the meetings organized with team leaders.
4. Site visits are organized in the second quarter of each year. Following site visits, 360-degree feedback surveys are conducted. Accordingly, the surveys are asked to be filled out by the rectors of the relevant institutions, team leaders and evaluators participating in the site visit in order to receive feedback on the competencies of the teams in the field alongside the main criteria and guidelines of the process. The feedback is used in the formation of teams in the following year. Remarks on the relevant year’s process and implementations are also asked in the 360-degree feedback surveys. Individual meetings are held with relevant rectors and team leaders, which allow them to verbally express their opinions.

The institutional external evaluation process is designed as a system open to complaints and objections. The operation of this process is explained in detail under the Standard 2.7. **(Part 10.7)**

To ensure stakeholder participation, meetings, during which stakeholder opinions are received verbally, are organized with national agencies twice a year. Stakeholder opinions are also requested in written form. Forming a guideline for the registry of accreditation agencies was suggested within these opinions, upon which the Guide for the Authorization and Recognition of External Evaluation and Accreditation Agencies was developed. Besides, in line with the opinions of relevant stakeholders, the defined processes regarding the recognition of international agencies were also included in the guide. The AAS was developed to reduce the workload during the registry applications. Agencies are able to file their registry applications and maintain the related proceedings via this system.

The improvements identified as a result of all these monitoring and reviewing steps are realized by updating relevant processes, documents and information systems after their presentation to the THEQC members. PDCA cycles are completed with the finalization of the improvement endeavours. Before the announcement of the updates to all stakeholders, the opinions of different stakeholder groups are received in the design process to assure that the implementations meet the expectations.

“Control” phase of PDCA cycle also provides organizational learning opportunity for the THEQC. The Council has executed organizational learning by using systematic approaches such as benchmarking to enhance its management structure. In this context, the THEQC conducts experience sharing and benchmarking meetings with international quality organizations. In addition, the Council engaged in learning on the basis of processes, systems and methodologies by organizing meetings with international reference institutions. The Council recognizes that leadership is very important for a strong governance structure and therefore the development of leaders within the Council will be supported by systematic practices. For this reason, the strategic objectives



are determined in order to measure the leadership attributes of the leaders of the Council with specially designed surveys and to implement development programs according to the results.

In all its processes, to avoid any conflict of interest, the THEQC applies the THEQC Code of Ethics and the Statement of Confidentiality and Commitment to the THEQC Code of Ethics to the evaluators, employees and members.

Related Documents:

- ◆ THEQC Code of Ethics, the Statement of Confidentiality and Commitment to THEQC Code of Ethics
- ◆ THEQC 2019-2023 Strategic Plan

9.7 ESG Standard 3.7 Cyclical external review of agencies

Agencies should undergo an external review at least once every five years in order to demonstrate their compliance with ESG.

Evidence:

- ◆ ENQA affiliation
- ◆ Evidence of compliance with ESG
- ◆ Application examples with completed PDCA cycles

This report marks the first official application of the THEQC, therefore the Council has not been subject to any external evaluation before. The THEQC has become an ENQA affiliate in 2019. As of its establishment in 2015, the THEQC has engaged in a variety of activities in the field of QA in higher education in order to meet the required conditions for application. Within this period, the Council has gained legal, administrative and financial independence whereas its activities have been assured under related laws. The THEQC maintained its activities during the legislative amendments and completed the first cycle of the institutional external evaluation for all HEIs **with graduates** in 2019. The THEQC also continued the processes of authorization and recognition of external evaluation and accreditation agencies and carried out the second cycles of the evaluations for some of the registered agencies. As stated in ESG criteria, the recent completion of quality cycles has provided the Council with a sufficient level of experience to file ENQA membership application. The THEQC, which considers ENQA membership a great opportunity for its institutional development, has included being externally evaluated on a regular basis as a strategic objective in its 2019-2023 strategic plan.

Related documents:

- ◆ ENQA affiliation document

10. Compliance with European Standards and Guidelines – Part 2

10.1 ESG Standard 2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance

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

Evidence:

- ◇ Integration of the THEQC Institutional External Evaluation Program to the Institutional Self-Evaluation process
- ◇ Integration of the EPSs External Evaluation Pilot Program to the EPS Self-Evaluation process

The THEQC's sub-criteria for external evaluation, evaluation of EPSs and the authorization and recognition of independent external evaluation and accreditation agencies, which are based on the THEQC Institutional External Evaluation Criteria that are in line with ESG, were formed and updated in relevant guides on the basis of the Part 3 of ESG 2015 (See: Part 6- Table 5 and Table 6 and Part 6.3 for EPS). The feedback from HEIs, national and international external evaluation and accreditation agencies, and all the other internal and external stakeholders has been considered while revising the sub-criteria. The THEQC has reviewed and updated its sub-criteria on a yearly basis to consolidate its evidence-based approach, participation, transparency, inclusiveness and consistency. For this purpose, the sub-criteria have been split into groups. Additional remarks, evidence and indicators have been added to each group to improve their clarity. Furthermore, the updated sub-criteria provide both HEIs and independent external evaluation and accreditation agencies with an autonomy to make decisions on how to formulate and develop their internal quality culture in line with their own missions, visions, uniqueness, and education and research philosophies.

During the latest update of the national QA system in higher education established by the THEQC, the focal point was encouraging all stakeholders to develop internal quality processes and mechanisms and improve the quality of education and research. The updated sub-criteria and processes promote the connection between internal and external QA in consideration of the standards and rules stated in the Part 1 of ESG 2015. Table 5 and 6 (See: Part 6) show the compliance of the criteria employed in the THEQC's Institutional External Evaluation Program, the EPSs External Evaluation Pilot Program, and the authorization and recognition of national and international external evaluation and accreditation agencies with ESG.

The ISER writing (as a self-evaluation process for HEIs) and the Institutional External Evaluation Program are carried out on the same criteria supported by the legislation. The evaluation of teams in the site visit process is based on the ISER of the relevant institution in accordance with the same criteria by considering the internal quality assurance system and structure of the institution. For example, in an HEI with a mission of health, site visit is conducted with emphasis on units, personnel and practices in the field of medicine and health sciences.

Related documents:

- ◇ THEQC Institutional External Evaluation Guide
- ◇ THEQC Institutional Self-Evaluation Report Writing Guide
- ◇ EPSs External Evaluation Pilot Programme Guide
- ◇ THEQC Guide for the Authorization and Recognition of External Evaluation and Accreditation Agencies



10.2 ESG Standard 2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose

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

Evidence:

- ◆ The THEQC's Quality Assurance Methodology
- ◆ Integration of internal and external quality assurance systems
- ◆ EPSs External Evaluation Pilot Program Guide
- ◆ Training and informing platforms

The THEQC conducts external evaluation processes with the aim of evaluating the quality of HEIs' learning and teaching, research and development activities and governance systems according to national and international quality standards. The processes have been designed in view of the national higher education ecosystem, stakeholder opinions and international standards (ESG 2015 and EUA-IEP) in a way to reflect the objectives of the THEQC.

The main evaluation categories in the THEQC's external evaluation methodology are "quality assurance system", "learning and teaching", "research and development" and "governance system". The methodology has been developed in consideration of national and international regulations. The external evaluation process, which is conducted on the basis of these criteria defined in compliance with the Part 1 of ESG, is explicated in Part 6. In the framework of these criteria, the THEQC has published **Institutional External Evaluation Criteria, Institutional External Evaluation Directive and Institutional External Evaluation Guide** in order to guide the external evaluation teams and the institutions subject to external evaluation.

In addition, the THEQC asks all HEIs to prepare ISERs on the basis of calendar year and maintains the institutional external evaluation process integrated to the internal QA processes of HEIs so as to guarantee the institutional external evaluation process. The processes designed for ISERs, which are explained in detail in Part 6, are defined in the Institutional Self Evaluation Report Writing Guide. To ensure that ISERs form a basis for the external evaluation, ISER Writing Guide was penned in compliance with Institutional External Evaluation Criteria and Institutional External Evaluation Guide.

The THEQC conducts the institutional external evaluation process without charging any fees from the HEIs other than the transportation and accommodation costs of evaluators. Besides, the relevant regulation guarantees the establishment of quality commissions in HEIs to maintain the ISER writing process on **QAMIS** and develop internal QA systems in HEIs with the purpose of reducing the workload. The THEQC has also formed a mentorship program with the aim of guiding HEIs in their external evaluation process. Furthermore, HEIs' quality commissions are provided with training, while a series of meetings on QA system are organized with quality commission representatives. In 2019, online training modules have been developed to disseminate the training of quality commissions and address a wider audience. The institutions are asked to share their good practice examples under the theme titles to display their improvement; and various workshops are organized by the THEQC to share these good practice examples with other HEIs (See: www.yokak.gov.tr/haberler-duyurular). Along with this, it is ensured that students are informed on accredited programs in HEIs during the process of transitioning to higher education. To that end, Higher Education Programs and Quota

Guide published annually by the ÖSYM presents information on accredited programs. The data regarding accredited programs in the guide are provided by the THEQC. The annually prepared ISERs are shared with public on the websites of the THEQC and the relevant HEIs. The IFRs written on the institutions subject to external evaluation are also shared with public on the THEQC official website.

For the EPSs External Evaluation Pilot Program, the main purpose is to evaluate the quality of EPSs' learning and teaching, teaching staff, and governance systems according to national and international quality standards. The program covers the self-evaluation report of the EPS, site visit of the evaluation team, and the feedback report of the evaluation team. The evaluation process was carried out in accordance with "Areas and Minimum Standards" of EPSs, which was composed by this field's experts following the international standards and national requirements.

Since the THEQC does not charge any fees from the agencies for the authorization and recognition processes, such processes do not bring any financial burden on agencies. The authorization period of agencies varies from 2 to 5 years with the aim of contributing to their development. The agencies that are unable to meet some requirements are authorized for 2 years and are provided with an opportunity to make progress within this period. The information regarding the authorized agencies and the expiry of authorizations are shared with all stakeholders and public on the THEQC's website.

The Higher Education Programs and Quota Guide published by the ÖSYM lists the programs accredited by the authorized national agencies or recognized international agencies by including the names of the agencies. Their inclusion in the guide supports the activities of relevant agencies.

Related Documents:

- ◆ Higher Education Programs and Quota Guide
- ◆ THEQC Institutional External Evaluation Guide
- ◆ THEQC Institutional Self-Evaluation Report Writing Guide
- ◆ EPSs' External Evaluation Guide
- ◆ EPSs' Areas and Minimum Standards
- ◆ THEQC Guide for the Authorization and Recognition of External Evaluation and Accreditation Agencies

10.3 ESG Standard 2.3 Implementing processes

External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, predefined, 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.***

Evidence:



- ◆ Beginning of the institutional external evaluation with self-evaluation reports, conduct of the external evaluation with site visits and the reports resulting from the evaluation,
- ◆ Execution of all the steps of the external evaluation process with the support of the QAMIS,
- ◆ Monitoring the institutions by the teams composed of evaluators after the external evaluation.

One of the main activity areas of the THEQC (See: Part 5) is to evaluate the quality of HEIs' learning and teaching, research and development, and governance system according to national and international quality standards. Within the scope of this area of activity, the institutional external evaluation process of the THEQC is completed with the implementation of the following steps (See: Part 6):

- ◆ Publication of ISERs,
- ◆ Announcement of the external evaluation schedule,
- ◆ Formation of the external evaluation teams and paying site visits,
- ◆ Preparation of IFRs,
- ◆ Publication of Higher Education Evaluation and Quality Assurance Annual Situation Report.

The THEQC's institutional external evaluation activities are integrated into the institutional self-evaluation process. The data and reports regarding the institutional self-evaluation process are saved in the QAMIS on the Council's website. The institutions can upload their annual ISERs in the QAMIS along with relevant evidence and indicators. The evidences of ISERs are separated into two parts, namely "institutional documents" and "evidence for improvement". Besides, "areas for further development" specified for each HEI in their IFRs are displayed in the QAMIS during ISER writing process and the activities performed for these areas are questioned. Since the external evaluation processes are conducted through the "evaluator system" on the THEQC's website, the evaluation team can have an access to all the ISERs, indicator values and evidence of the evaluated institution via the system.

At the end of the evaluation process, the external evaluators appointed by the Council write an IFR for each HEI included in the institutional external evaluation program by using this system. This report comprises the QA systems employed in the HEI's learning and teaching, research and development activities, regional/national social contribution activities (if any), administrative services, and institutional decision-making processes as well as the institution's strengths and areas for further development.

Program accreditation activities are carried out by the independent external evaluation and accreditation agencies authorized or recognized by the THEQC. National agencies are required to be authorized by the Council and hold a Quality Evaluation Registration Certificate, whereas international agencies are required to be recognized by the Council for the approval of program accreditation. The agencies are independent to implement their own standards and procedures for program accreditation. However, in order to gain authorization/recognition from THEQC, their criteria should be output-oriented and in line with ESG 2015.

In terms of EPSs, the evaluation process was designed as THEQC's external evaluation process and consists of peer review by experienced experts in this field. The EPSs External Evaluation Pilot Program consists of three main phases as described in EPSs' External Evaluation Guide:

- ◇ Preliminary evaluation through the EPS Self-Evaluation Report, which will be prepared through the EPS Self-Evaluation Form,
- ◇ Visit to the EPS (Site visit) by evaluation team,
- ◇ Post-visit activities through writing and sending of EPS Feedback Report to the school and the THEQC, which will be prepared through EPS Feedback Form.

Site visits during the external evaluation process are implemented according to the THEQC's site visit plan (See: Annex 7). At the same time, the number of evaluators in the team varies between 4 and 8 according to the size of the institution. The visit has been designed as a one-day pre-visit and a 2.5-day site visit in line with the feedback received following the first 2.5-day site visit implementations. The purpose of the pre-visit is to enable the evaluation team to get to know the institution and plan the site visit with the institution and initiate the site visit if necessary. Thus, the site visit period can be extended by maintaining the main interviews and structures in the Site Visit Plan Sample presented in the Institutional External Evaluation Guide (See: Annex 7).

Related documents:

- ◇ THEQC Institutional External Evaluation Guide
- ◇ EPSs' External Evaluation Guide
- ◇ THEQC Guide for the Authorization and Recognition of External Evaluation and Accreditation Agencies

10.4 ESG Standard 2.4. Peer-review experts

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

Evidence:

- ◇ Presence of 527 experienced and trained evaluators in the THEQC's evaluator pool,
- ◇ Defined processes in the THEQC's evaluator selection and training practices,
- ◇ The THEQC's evaluator training modules and the feedback from the evaluators,
- ◇ Presence of 61 student evaluators in the THEQC's evaluator pool,
- ◇ Presence of 30 evaluators including students, national experts and international experts in EPSs External Evaluation Pilot Program.

Since the THEQC's establishment, the institutional external evaluation process has been conducted by external experts, who consist of academic and administrative staff as well as students. The THEQC Institutional External Evaluation Guide, which is available on the Council's website, lists the qualities expected from evaluators as follows: experience in higher education and/or QA in higher education, accepting the ethical principles, being open to cooperation and teamwork, strong communication skills, time management and organizational skills. In addition, the THEQC carries out the selection and training of peer-review experts and assures their commitment to the ethical values set in consideration of ESG 2015.

An evaluator candidate can apply to be an evaluator of THEQC throughout each calendar year via Evaluator System. An evaluator candidate pool is formed in February each year with the help of the announcements



published on the THEQC's website, the calls made to HEIs and applications of evaluator candidates. The evaluator candidates are determined by considering various criteria (having a grasp of EUA and Bologna processes, experience in accreditation processes etc.) and the results of the test performed at the end of the training. The relevant regulation defines the qualities expected from student evaluators, who were included in external evaluation processes for the first time in 2018. For the external evaluations of 2019, it has been decided to include foreign experts and Erasmus students in Turkey in the process in addition to national students.

Subsequently, the external evaluator candidates selected from the pool are trained on certain subjects such as the duties and responsibilities of evaluation teams, behavioural dimensions, reviewing ISERs, evaluating in line with the institutional external evaluation criteria and ethical principles. By employing the flipped classroom model, the evaluators are firstly informed on the process via online training videos and presentations, which are followed by face-to-face training, case studies and workshops on writing IFRs. Throughout the training, the evaluator candidates are informed about the external evaluation process while examining the applications in this regard. They are also trained on the behavioural aspect of the evaluation process. In addition, they are informed of key concepts such as ethical principles, transparency and accountability. Some tests are performed before and after the online training.

The test scores are also among the criteria in the selection of external evaluators. After the training, the evaluator candidates are asked to share their opinions and suggestions about the training process. External evaluators get prepared to pay site visits following the trainings organized during spring and summer months of the year. However, some additional criteria (being an EUA evaluator, experience in international evaluation processes, being in a senior management position in HEIs, etc.) are sought in determining evaluation team leaders. In addition to this, evaluator training specifically addressing student evaluators are also organized (See: <http://yokak.gov.tr/Duyurular/GetDuyuru/7>).

The contents of the trainings are updated in view of the reviews and feedback. Three evaluator trainings were held in 2016, 2017 and 2018, contents of which were shaped according to more immediate needs. All improvement areas which were determined from evaluations and feedback have been eliminated and many improvements have been made in the evaluator training. In order to increase the practical components and real examples in the trainings, case studies, discussions, report writing practices were added to the trainings. Evaluators can be evaluated individually through the tests performed on the system which is used to carry out the trainings. The evaluation of the trainings is realized both through satisfaction surveys at the end of the trainings and with all the feedback received after the site visits.

External evaluation teams are formed in view of the size of the HEIs subject to evaluation. The THEQC receives confirmation from both the HEIs and the evaluators to guarantee that the evaluators are not affiliated with the HEIs (graduate, employee of the institution etc.) they are assigned to. The evaluators who do not have any experience in the field are included in the teams as "observers", and one observer is assigned to each team so that they could follow the external evaluation program steps and gain experience. Each team does also have a student member. The THEQC has a set of regulations for the inclusion of international evaluators/observers in the teams and attaches importance to their appointment in the HEIs with internationalization policy.

The THEQC has a code of ethics to guarantee the transparency and accountability of its activities in line with its core values. The THEQC members, commission members, advisory board members and evaluators are required to conform to the code of ethics. The last part of the THEQC Code of Ethics has the Statement of Confidentiality and Commitment to THEQC Code of Ethics. The persons who are required to conform to the

ethical rules are asked to sign this statement. With this practice, it is guaranteed that the evaluator acts within the boundaries of the ethical rules in the case of any conflict of interest.

For the EPSs external evaluation process, the evaluator pool has been composed of the national experts who are academic, teaching staffs and/or directors of EPSs, international experts who have QA experience in **English medium instruction** field, and students who have successfully completed EPSs and continue their bachelor's degree in a university. Evaluation teams has been composed of one foreign expert, three national experts and one national student evaluator. All the evaluators were expected sign and conform to the THEQC Code of Ethics, the Statement of Confidentiality and Commitment to THEQC Code of Ethics. The training of all the evaluators was carried out by the THEQC.

The evaluator pool was more limited at the time when the external evaluation services started. In particular, the Council has developed its own expert pool by improving and strengthening evaluator training. As the trainings and the awareness of the Council's activities increased in time, the evaluator pool has been expanded. Also, the time limitation to apply has been removed. Currently, evaluators can apply online at any time during the calendar year. In addition, in each evaluation period, team members with the status of "observer", who have no previous external evaluation experience, are added to the evaluation teams in the system to enrich the expert pool.

Related documents:

◆ THEQC Code of Ethics, the Statement of Confidentiality and Commitment to THEQC Code of

Ethics

10.5 ESG Standard 2.5 Criteria for outcomes

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:

- ◆ All guidelines and criteria prepared for processes,
- ◆ Development of the web-based information systems

The most important outputs of the THEQC institutional/organizational evaluations include the IFRs written for HEIs, the feedback reports of EPSs, and the authorization/recognition of accreditation agencies. In order to reach these outputs, the THEQC has specified its defined criteria and shares them with public through its official website (See: Part 6).

THEQC has developed a national evaluation model based on national (TQF and NQF-HETR) and international (ESG, EQF and EHEA) standards. Decisions regarding Institutional External Evaluation, evaluation of EPSs, and the authorization and recognition of accreditation agencies are given in the light of these criteria.

The most important output of the external evaluation process of HEIs is the IFRs written by evaluation teams after site visits. The report is written by the team according to the Institutional External Evaluation Guide following the examination of the IFRs of that year and previous years and the site visits, and then it is examined by the IEEC and submitted for the decision of THEQC members. As a result of the decisions, the IFRs for the evaluations carried out every year are published on the official websites of the THEQC and the evaluated institution. The same process was also carried out for external evaluation EPSs.



As the outcome of the external evaluation process, the IFRs only provide the strengths and areas of improvement. The most common feedback of the stakeholders about this outcome is that there is not any concrete decision such as institutional accreditations and related sanctions. On the other hand, latest developments and trends in the world strongly support institutional accreditation. As a national agency, the THEQC has started considering this issue in order to improve this process.

As previously explained, the THEQC has the authority to authorize and recognize the national and international accreditation agencies in the higher education system of our country. The THEQC primarily seeks compliance with national (especially TQF and NQF-HETR) and international standards (especially ESG 2015) in these organizations on the criteria of authorization and recognition. In addition, any membership/registration of umbrella organizations such as ENQA, EQAR etc. is also a criterion considered during the evaluation phase of the agencies.

In the case that the THEQC criteria are met by the accreditation agencies, the most important output is the THEQC Quality Evaluation Registration Certificate for national agencies and recognition for international agencies. In both cases, as explained in ESG 2.3 Standard, in the Higher Education Programs and Quota Guide the short names of the accreditation agencies are given for those accredited programs.

For the authorization of the national accreditation agencies, in-person application is required. Criteria for application, requirements for application, and decision mechanisms are explained in the Guide for the Authorization and Recognition of External Evaluation and Accreditation Agencies. The application file of the applicant agency is examined by the IEEC and submitted for the decision of the Council. Decisions of the Council are in three forms; a refusal, a 2-year authorization or a 5-year authorization. On the other hand, in international accreditations, the HEI accredited by the international agency or the HEI who applies for international accreditation informs THEQC and requests the examination of the recognition of related agency. Again, the related agency is reviewed/examined by the THEQC Authorization and Recognition of External Evaluation and Accreditation Agencies Commission and submitted for the decision of the Council. Recognition is determined after the decision of the Council.

Related Documents:

- ◆ Institutional External Evaluation Criteria
- ◆ Institutional External Evaluation Guide
- ◆ Institutional Self-Evaluation Report Writing Guide
- ◆ EPSs' External Evaluation Guide
- ◆ Guide for the Authorization and Recognition of External Evaluation and Accreditation Agencies
- ◆ European Qualifications Framework (EQF)
- ◆ Turkish Qualifications Framework (TQF)
- ◆ National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in Turkey (NQF-HETR)

10.6 ESG Standard 2.6 Reporting

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.

Evidence:

- ◆ Present reports published by THEQC.

The reports prepared within the scope of each activity area of THEQC are as follows:

- ◆ Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER),
- ◆ Institutional Feedback Report (IFR),
- ◆ EPSs' Self- Evaluation Report
- ◆ EPSs' Feedback Report
- ◆ Higher Education Evaluation and Quality Assurance Annual Situation Report,

In accordance with the Regulation on Higher Education Quality Assurance and the THEQC, all HEIs are required to prepare ISERs based on the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report Writing Guide each year. These reports that assess the current status of the HEIs based on the criteria determined by the THEQC have been submitted to the THEQC through the QAMIS since 2018. They are accessible to all stakeholders and published on the website of the THEQC and the related institution. (See: <http://yokak.gov.tr/raporlar/kurum-ici-degerlendirme-raporlari>).

Other reports produced within the scope of the THEQC's quality assurance processes are the IFRs, which include the results of the institutional external evaluation conducted by the evaluators. The IFRs prepared according to the THEQC's Institutional Self-Evaluation Report Writing Guide are uploaded via the QAMIS as of 2018. The evaluators can see the evaluation criteria, the relevant institution's ISERs of that year and previous years, and related evidences in this system; they can also complete the writing of the IFR through the same system. The main headings used in the writing of IFR are the headings used by the institution in ISER. The evaluators can reflect their findings in the IFR for whether the relevant criterion is met by examining ISERs and their evidences and site-visit to relevant institution.

According to the relevant guide, the evaluation teams consider such basic principles of impartiality, accuracy, being evidence-based, format, grammar and spelling rules in preparing IFR. In respect to this format, IFR should include:

- ◆ In the first section, information on the institutional external evaluation process (such as the introduction of the evaluation team, planning of the visit and how it will operate, etc.),
- ◆ In the second section, general information about the institution visited (place of institution, foundation year, number of campuses, number of faculties/institutes/units, number of students, number of academic staff, administrative staff, etc.)
- ◆ In the third section, explanation of the QA system of the institution visited, and in the following parts, activities in learning and teaching, research and development, and social contribution and



evidence-based, clear and objective information and opinions regarding the governance system and institutional decision-making process.

All this information and comments should be prepared by taking into consideration the face-to-face interviews and observations made during the site visit, as well as documents such as ISER and Strategic Plan. In the last section, evaluation team summarizes institution's strengths and areas for further development in the aforementioned areas, and finalizes the IFR, and makes recommendations when necessary. The main achievements obtained as a result of the institutional external evaluation are these comments written in the results and evaluation section. HEIs are expected to carry out tasks for improvement and thus to develop their QA systems based on these remarks. They are also expected to reflect the improvement efforts they have made in the ISERs they will prepare in the following years.

IFRs are completed within 21 days following the visits of the evaluation teams to HEIs and sent to the relevant institution and within 21 days, the feedback of the relevant institution on IFR is taken. After that, the evaluation team finalizes IFR by considering the evidence-based feedback and agreeing with the institution, and then submit it to the IEEC. Once the consistency checks are made by the IEEC, the final IFR is submitted to the THEQC for approval. The approved IFRs are published simultaneously on the web pages of HEIs and on the official website of the THEQC and are easily accessible by public. (See: <http://yokak.gov.tr/raporlar/kurumsal-geri-bildirim-2017-reports>).

In the case of EPSs External Evaluation Pilot Program, the EPSs prepared a self-evaluation report and the evaluation team pre-reviewed them. During the site visit, the teams evaluated the related EPS in the scope of the self-evaluation report and Areas and Minimum Standards by making face-to-face interviews. Following the site-visit, the teams were responsible to prepare feedback reports according to EPSs' External Evaluation Guide. The self-evaluation reports and the feedback reports were published on THEQC official website.

Within the scope of the Regulation on Higher Education Quality Assurance and the THEQC, the THEQC is obliged to prepare the Higher Education Evaluation and Quality Assurance Annual Situation Report by taking into consideration the institutional evaluation reports of the HEIs every year. Within this context, the Higher Education Evaluation and Quality Assurance Annual Situation Report is regularly prepared each year based on the examination of the IFRs of the evaluated institutions, the ISERs prepared by all HEIs every year and the opinions of all relevant stakeholders regarding the process (See: Part 9.4).

Related Documents:

- ◆ Institutional Self-Evaluation Reports
- ◆ Institutional Feedback Reports
- ◆ EPSs' Self- Evaluation Reports
- ◆ EPSs' Feedback Reports
- ◆ Higher Education Evaluation and Quality Assurance Annual Situation Report

10.7 ESG Standard 2.7 Complaints and appeals

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

Evidence:

- ◆ A separate article for appeals in the Institutional External Evaluation Directive,
- ◆ A separate article for appeals in the Guide for the Authorization and Recognition of External Evaluation and Accreditation Agencies,

Appeals to the IFRs published within the THEQC Institutional External Evaluation Program is regulated in the Article 12 of the Institutional External Evaluation Directive entitled “appeals”. In accordance with the relevant article, HEIs may object to the whole or part of the report within 60 days from the date of the announcement of the IFRs. The objections are finalized by the Council based on the IEEC’s remarks within 60 days at the latest, and the relevant institution is notified in writing. HEIs may also object to the evaluation team upon any concern regarding the breach of the code of ethics or any possible conflict of interest. There are two complaint mechanisms within the Institutional External Evaluation Program. The first one is the 360-degree feedback surveys, while the other one is the conveyance of complaints to the Council in written form via the Council’s website. The complaints may be filed by evaluators or evaluated institutions on the integrity of evaluation processes and decision-making mechanisms, and they may be presented to the IEEC at any time.

To date, only one HEI that was evaluated within the scope of the Institutional External Evaluation Program conducted in 2016 has objected to the IFRs. The IEEC submitted its conclusion to the Council by conducting the process regarding the objection in accordance with the principles laid down in the relevant directive and guide. The appeal process was finalized by the Council in this regard.

The process of objection to the activities carried out by the THEQC regarding the authorization and recognition of the accreditation agencies is defined in the “Objection Process” section within Part 4 of the Guide for the Authorization and Recognition of External Evaluation and Accreditation Agencies. The objection mechanism for the authorization of national accreditation agencies and the recognition of international agencies is the same.

All decisions of the Council regarding authorization or recognition may be appealed within 30 days of notification of the decision to the accreditation agency. Appeals can be made in writing or electronically. The petition of objection should include the areas for objection and evidences for these areas. The objections to authorization and recognition are reviewed by the Recognition and Authorization of External Evaluation and Accreditation Agencies Commission of the Council. The Commission prepares “Objection Assessment Report” and submits it to the Council. The Council decides on the objection by taking the Objection Assessment Report into consideration and notifies the accreditation body. There have been no objections to any decision on authorization or recognition to this date. Agencies may also convey their complaints to the Council in written form via the Council’s website at any time.

Related Documents:

- ◆ THEQC Institutional External Evaluation Directive,
- ◆ Guide for the Authorization and Recognition of External Evaluation and Accreditation Agencies



11. Information and comments of stakeholders

In relation to the activities of the THEQC, the Council has defined all its internal and external stakeholders providing services to the THEQC, receiving services from the THEQC and as business partners. Table 8 shows the stakeholders of the THEQC.

Table 8. THEQC Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Position	Stakeholder Role
THEQC Members	Internal Stakeholder	Service Provider
THEQC Staff	Internal Stakeholder	Service Provider
Consultants	Internal Stakeholder	Service Provider
Advisory Board Members	Internal Stakeholder	Service Provider
Evaluators	Internal Stakeholder	Service Provider
Mentors	Internal Stakeholder	Service Provider
CoHE	External Stakeholder	Service Provider and Receiver
Accreditation Agencies	External Stakeholder	Service Receiver
HEIs	External Stakeholder	Service Provider and Receiver
Institutions and Organizations Related to Higher Education System (MEB, ÖSYM, ÜAK, TÜBİTAK, Presidential Council of Education Policies etc.)	External Stakeholder	Business Partners
Institutions and Organizations Related to Quality (TÜRKAK, MYK, TÜSEB etc.)	External Stakeholder	Business Partners
Other Public and Private Institutions (TOBB, Ministries etc.)	External Stakeholder	Business Partners

The THEQC has prioritized among its stakeholders by evaluating the degree of **impact** of the stakeholders on the activities and decisions of the Council and their importance in terms of their activities (Table 9).

Table 9. Importance-Impact Matrix of THEQC Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Position	Stakeholder Role	Importance Level	Impact	Priority	Overall Impact/ Priority Score
THEQC Members	Internal Stakeholder	Service Provider	5	3	3	45
THEQC Staff	Internal Stakeholder	Service Provider	5	2	2	20
Consultants	Internal Stakeholder	Service Provider	4	2	2	16

Advisory Board Members	Internal Stakeholder	Service Provider	5	2	2	20
Evaluators	Internal Stakeholder	Service Provider	5	3	2	30
Mentors	Internal Stakeholder	Service Provider	4	2	2	16
CoHE	External Stakeholder	Service Provider and Receiver	4	2	3	24
Accreditation Agencies	External Stakeholder	Service Receiver	4	2	2	16
HEIs	External Stakeholder	Service Provider and Receiver	5	3	3	45
Institutions and Organizations Related to Higher Education System	External Stakeholder	Business Partners	4	2	2	16
Institutions and Organizations Related to Quality	External Stakeholder	Business Partners	3	2	2	12
Other Public and Private Institutions	External Stakeholder	Business Partners	3	2	2	12

* Importance Level Identification: 1: Not at all important, 2: Low importance, 3: Moderately important, 4: Significantly important and 5: Extremely important. ** Impact Level Definition: 1: Low impact, 2: Moderate impact and 3: High impact. *** Priority Degree Identification: 1: Low priority, 2: Moderate priority and 3: High priority.

In line with this prioritization, the Council started to prepare its strategic plan by taking the views of its stakeholders. For this purpose; in order to obtain stakeholder views, expectations from various perspectives were systematically and structurally questioned by developing a semi-structured survey on the basis of the activities of the THEQC. This survey is designed in three different structures. First, based on the activities of the THEQC (Product/ Service), the importance of these to the stakeholders has been measured with five-level Likert scale. Afterwards, open-ended questions were asked to obtain the innovative ideas and views of stakeholders regarding the institutional and sub-institutional activities of the THEQC. In the last section, open-ended questions about where the THEQC should be in the future are covered. For the related stakeholders, a stakeholder opinion survey with a preliminary information form attached was published on the Strategic Plan Studies tab of the official website of the THEQC between 10.11.2018 and 30.11.2018. In addition, via institutional e-mails sent, the quality officers and representatives and other relevant parties were asked to fill out the relevant surveys. At the end of the data collection process, 68 internal and 586 external (543 HEIs and 43 other external stakeholders) THEQC stakeholder responses were received. In the process of analysing the THEQC stakeholder surveys, evaluations were made by differentiating internal and external stakeholder views (a. Higher education institutions, b. Other external stakeholders). The data obtained from the THEQC stakeholders are presented in the THEQC Stakeholder Analysis Report with descriptive statistics and content analysis methods. In addition, qualitative data obtained from participants were evaluated via MAXQDA package program and relationship matrices were formed by introducing codes and main themes.

When all the findings of the stakeholder expectations and opinions obtained from this process are evaluated, it can be summarized as follows:



- ◆ Internal stakeholders and HEIs from external stakeholders find THEQC activity areas and activities (product / service) sufficient and important at a high level.
- ◆ Other institutions and organizations from external stakeholders stated that they were generally adequate and important at the middle level. It can be argued that this result is due to the fact that other external stakeholders generally do not have enough knowledge about the institutional structure, duties and responsibilities of the THEQC and its activities.
- ◆ It is seen that the external stakeholder opinions reported by content analysis meet on a number of common expectations. These expectations can be listed as follows:
 - ◆ Using media communication tools to increase the perception and awareness on quality in general and the quality of HEIs in particular, and to increase awareness within the institution and provide motivation, inside institutions; provide training for the members of the internal supervision unit, strategy department and the quality commission,
 - ◆ Providing guidance and information management systems to ensure the integration of strategic planning and performance management systems of institutions with the THEQC internal and external evaluation processes,
 - ◆ Guiding authorized accreditation agencies and providing HEIs with accreditation services within the body of the THEQC instead of high-cost accreditation agencies,
 - ◆ Establishment of a national higher education QA system within the body of the THEQC to contribute to the quality and institutional development of HEIs,
 - ◆ Providing guidance about the innovative sources of finance by the THEQC for HEIs' expenditures on quality processes and accreditation,
 - ◆ Ensuring the continuity of activities in Ankara, alternative other regions and individual institutions in order to establish quality perception and processes in institutions and individuals,
 - ◆ Establishing an evaluation and reporting system that will direct HEIs to innovative specialized areas where they can go beyond their conventional missions,
 - ◆ Contributing to national and international competitiveness through quality processes,
 - ◆ Mentioning length of the quality visit and evaluation process (5-year) to be too long and requesting to shorten it as much as possible,
 - ◆ Redesigning the pre-visit process by extending it,
 - ◆ Organizing projects, conferences, meetings and such activities on a regular / periodic basis,
 - ◆ Trainings related to internal and external evaluation processes to be given by practical and case studies, rather than to be theoretical,
 - ◆ Increasing the national and international recognition of the THEQC,
 - ◆ Developing publications related to the perception of higher education quality and its processes and sharing them with institutions and individuals,

- ◆ Developing new communication methods to attract attention to the reports issued by the Council,
- ◆ The need to develop an index such as the quality management index for HEIs.

In the second stage of the implementation, stakeholder expectations were questioned in three aspects: The future of the Council, the characteristics that the Council is expected to have, the expectations from the Council. Analysing the responses of the internal and external stakeholders to the question “where they want to see the THEQC in the future”; international recognition and being an internationally influential and reference agency are the most widely expressed and shared views. When the internal and external stakeholders’ responses about the “features the THEQC is expected have” are analysed, the most commonly shared expressed features are; being transparent, a pioneer and a leader, effective, autonomous and institutionalized. When the internal and external stakeholder responses about the “expectations from the THEQC” are analysed; to establish and disseminate the quality assurance, to establish settings that will enable universities to take place in international rankings, to cooperate with universities, to disseminate and strengthen the quality culture come to the fore.

All remarks and recommendations outlined above have been taken into account in determining the mission, vision, core values and policies of the THEQC and its strategic goals and objectives.

12. SWOT analysis

THEQC first implemented a SWOT analysis in order to prepare its 2019-2023 Strategic Plan. The analysis framework for the SWOT Analysis was developed based on the criteria used in the evaluation of international quality agencies (ESG, INQAAHE) and international management models (such as EFQM Models) (See: Annex 4) as a model peculiar to the THEQC, and the SWOT analysis study was carried out in line with the process of ENQA membership. In this model, the criteria of the ESG prevalent for the Quality Assurance Agencies and the criteria of the INQAAHE Good Practice Examples Guide were taken into consideration in the services and processes specific to the quality agencies.

In addition, the assessment of the THEQC’s institutional governance and administrative processes was based on the criteria set out by reference to the EFQM Excellence Model and all the dimensions mentioned in the Strategic Planning Guideline for Public Administrations were evaluated. The features of the model used for in-house analysis are presented below:

1. Institutional Governance
2. Quality Assurance Methodology
3. Internal Quality Assurance System
4. External Evaluation Services
5. Educational Services for Higher Education Institutions
6. External Evaluator Training Services
7. Accreditation and External Evaluation Agencies’ Authorization, Recognition, Registration and Monitoring
8. Guidance Services
9. Activities



10. Publishing Activities

11. Annual Situation Report

12. National and International Recognition and Cooperation

The results of the analysis of the expectations and opinions of the internal and external stakeholders about the services and products were used in the in-house analysis. In addition, the current situation was evaluated with all the observations made in the field by interviewing the process owners in the Council and the results were reflected in the analysis study. The strengths and weaknesses identified as a result of all these analyses are summarized in Table 10.

Table 10. Strengths and Weaknesses

	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The THEQC is reliable, developer and continuous; • Institutional autonomy, • Having a strong communication infrastructure with HEIs, • Having a broad stakeholder platform, • Having various specialties, • Reviewing itself on the basis of current changes over and over, • The THEQC has inter-ministerial structure, • Supporting HEIs with a corporate identity, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a low number of specialized personnel • Lack of need for support in institutions to gain and promote quality culture and awareness, • Due to being a new institution, the recognition of the council and awareness of its being the most competent authority in the field of quality in higher education is limited. • The THEQC has not undergone any external evaluation, • Collaboration at the THEQC is an intensively used approach, the management of cooperation is not implemented, • Lack of a specific change management approach used in the THEQC, • The practices of the THEQC for institutional learning are limited, • Not enough utilization of learning opportunities by means of benchmarking in the THEQC, • Not measuring the effectiveness of the leaders in the THEQC and lack of practices towards their development
METHODOLOGY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing a defined systematic QA system with regulations, directives and guidelines • Common criteria are used in internal and external QA, • The criteria used are in conformity with ESG, • The methodology is constantly being updated and stakeholder views are considered in these updates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The THEQC criteria are common to all institutions and do not include different criteria according to institutional diversity. For example; the absence of specific criteria and evaluations for different educational models such as the provision of higher education services beyond the borders (export and import), joint programs, • Although the non-traditional approaches of higher education have been taken into consideration within the current criteria, the future need is not guaranteed.



INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The QA system is placed on a legal basis in HEIs by law and regulations (Quality Assurance Regulations of Higher Education Institutions), • Encouraging, supporting and monitoring internal evaluation, • Monitoring processes are applied through the annual preparation of ISERs by all HEIs, • Internal quality assurance is related to the external evaluation process, • The THEQC have experience and knowledge in international norms, • Leading the institutions and raising awareness in institutions, • Utilization of information technologies, • Existing criteria and system to be applicable in all institutions, • Supporting the implementations and sustainability of the institutions by means of trainings, case studies, • The importance of qualification rather than quantity through internal QA systems, helping to develop institutional capacity, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need to base institutional internal evaluation reports on more concrete data, and to make the process of preparation of ISERs a process where the institutions benefit more, • Failure to ensure the sustainability of the institutions with units and cadres specific to internal QA systems, • The need for HEIs to develop internal QA systems integrated with their natural work processes, • Further training and information meetings are needed to support the internal QA system of the institution, • The need to build stronger relations with the managers responsible for the internal QA system of the institution (such as the relevant vice-rector in universities), • The need to increase the efficiency of quality commissions in institutions, • The need for the feedback of the institutions through the general opinion on ISER • Providing feedback on the status of institutions only through external evaluation and the period of this process is too long, • The need to simplify the system, • Insufficiency of internalization and cultural adoption by institutions, • The lack of support and incentive mechanisms for the development of internal QA systems in institutions (such as the consideration of this for appointment-academic promotion in institutions, etc.), • The lack of a system to monitor the developments achieved by the institutions over the years, • The relationship among the monitoring mechanisms of internal QA of the institution, ISER and external evaluation practices are not provided clearly
--	--	--

<p>EXTERNAL EVALUATION SERVICES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External evaluation criteria and process have been defined and published in guidance, • The external evaluation is made compulsory for the institutions by regulation, • Peer assessment is implemented through site visits within the scope of systematic external evaluation processes, • Supporting those who will work in external evaluations with Evaluator Training, • Use of information technologies in external evaluations and ensure accessibility, • Student evaluators taking part in external evaluations, • Ensuring diversity, different perspectives and objectivity by choosing external evaluation teams from different fields and from different institutions, • All stakeholders (evaluators, institutions evaluated) of the external evaluation process can provide feedback, • The number of people in the evaluator pool is high, • Continuous support to institutions through mentoring, • External evaluators are selected according to objective criteria, • Young and dynamic staff of the external evaluator pool, • Ensuring the prevention of potential conflicts of interest in external evaluation by means of trainings and written statements, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low number of experienced external evaluators, • Periods allocated to site visits do not change according to the size of the institution or the number of campuses, • The external evaluation period for institutions is fixed for five years, • The need for further information on external evaluation, • Evaluator trainings are restricted once a year and with a specific date, • The need to improve the consistency between the feedback reports and the evaluation teams despite the fact that the evaluators involved in external evaluations are making evaluations by the same approach and point of view (consistency, common language development, etc.) is sustained as possible, • The need to increase the competence of external evaluators, • Lack of incentive practices for being an evaluator, • The lack of institutional accreditation, • Lack of monitoring after external evaluation, • The need for continuity in external evaluation processes in order for universities to internalize internal QA system
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing feedback on aspects of HEIs that need to be developed and evaluated in an objective manner according to international approaches, • External motivation by being evaluated by an independent organization, 	



TRAINING SERVICES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information meetings and trainings for HEIs are being held, • Providing training services by experts in the field and keeping the information current, • Organizing special meetings to share the best practices in HEIs, • Satisfaction with the trainings and information meetings provided, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality related units, quality commissions, and quality improvement teams of HEIs are also in need of training, • Training is not carried out in a pre-determined schedule and it is not conducted often, • Need for more comprehensive training on how to prepare ISERs, • Practice-oriented workshops are not held • The training provided is in the form of a daily informative meeting, • Lack of training for leaders of HEIs, • Training is not organized in cooperation with institutions, • The training has not been diversified in accordance with the needs of the institution of higher education and tailored for them, • To increase participation and transportation opportunities by the use of online education in training activities • The results of the training services provided to HEIs (the effectiveness of the trainings, the dissemination in the institutions etc.) are not monitored,
EXTERNAL EVALUATOR TRAINING SERVICES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing external evaluator trainings that are structured and supported by different education models and case studies • Subject knowledge of Quality Council education team and the competence of trainers, • Providing a general framework to the people coming from different universities on the subject through external evaluation trainings and ensuring the integration of the practices, • Continuous improvement of the implementations for the development of evaluators by considering stakeholder feedback, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The participants of the trainings are not formed in a mixed way like field teams are created (not alphabetically), • No differentiated content and qualities of trainings for varying competencies of the evaluators (such as beginners and experienced evaluators), • The need to increase the practical components (such as external evaluation report writing) and (real) examples in the trainings, • Individual evaluation and feedback are not provided at the end of the training; • The training frequency is limited to once a year, • Failure to evaluate the effectiveness of the trainings,

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">ACCREDITATION AND EXTERNAL EVALUATION AGENCIES' AUTHORIZATION, RECOGNITION, REGISTRATION AND MONITORING</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a top-level national organization responsible for the authorization, recognition, registration and monitoring of accreditation agencies • Ensuring that the accreditation agencies serve the purpose, do not make implementation errors and ensure the integrity of the implementation, • Giving transparent information related to the registration of the accreditation agencies and etc. on the website, • Easy communication with accreditation and external evaluation bodies, • Reporting impartial and independent results, • Paving the way for international accreditation agencies, • Philosophy, structuring, actions, responsibilities and roles of accreditation agencies becoming clear, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making authorizations late • Lack of incentive mechanisms to increase the number and variety of external evaluation agencies, • Not evaluating the field studies of institutions (may be sampling), • The need to increase the recognition of accreditation agencies,
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">GUIDANCE SERVICES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accelerating the expansion and internalization of quality culture in the higher education system, • Providing support to the institutions that will be evaluated through mentoring system, • Conducting information meetings for guidance on quality assurance, internal and external evaluations, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mentoring system is only activated during the external evaluation process and is limited to once a year, • Low number of mentors and lack of practices to encourage mentoring, • The need for continuous support of institutions cannot be met, • Unable to meet university-based one-to-one mentoring needs in accreditation processes and quality processes,
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">EVENTS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information meetings are held, • Students are included in the events, • Events are very effective on the acceptance and spread of the quality assurance phenomenon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for more number and variety of events (workshops, social events, etc.) for the development and dissemination of quality culture, • Events are mostly organized in Ankara and partly in other provinces, • Events are not conducted for broad participation, • Not planning and declaring events and event dates in advance, • Events are conducted mostly in the form of hall-meetings,



<p style="text-align: center;">PUBLICATION ACTIVITIES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publications enabling the forming and strengthening of culture of quality, • Sharing the publications of the Council such as guidelines and reports through the web-page, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need to simplify the content of the publications and make them more comprehensible by visuals, • Presenting the technical documents in written or visual form in a more comprehensible and simple language on how to solve the needs of sub-units, • Lack of periodicals (such as journals, newsletters) on quality and accreditation issues, • Publication types are limited to guidelines and reports, • Lack of an e-library, etc. systems that consist of basic publications on quality • Good practice examples and experiences are not published.
<p style="text-align: center;">ANNUAL SITUATION REPORT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive preparation of the report and clarification of the situation, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition to the existing reporting system, the information is not presented in a simple and easy-to-understand way through the visualization of the data, • In the Annual Situation Reports, the program-level evaluation results of the external evaluation institutions are not shared.
<p style="text-align: center;">NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL RECOGNITION AND COOPERATION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council's legal recognition in the field of quality assurance in the national higher education system, • The English version of the website of THEQC is available, • Turkey is represented in international arena regarding the matters related to QA of higher education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council does not have international recognition and has not actively participated in important international networks / cooperations in this field, • No multinational meetings for the promotion of THEQC's activities, • Information sharing and briefings not supported as multilingual (German, French, Arabic, etc.), • Lack of cooperation in the international arena, • Not including evaluators into external evaluation teams from similar organizations abroad • Restrictive use of Council decisions by higher education decision-making organizations • The evaluation process of the Council is not recognized in the international platform, • Limited mechanisms to follow international developments in QA, to analyse the main trends in the field and to ensure learning from them,

13. Current challenges and areas for future development

Through the Environmental Analysis conducted within the scope of the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan of the Council, the threats and opportunities faced by the Council were identified and taken into account in the strategic planning. Environmental Analysis is applied in two parts as Sectoral Tendency and Sectoral Structure Analysis. In the analysis of sectoral trend, with PESTLE Analysis; the political, economic, socio-cultural, technological, legal and environmental factors surrounding the THEQC were evaluated and factors or problems were identified on this basis. The effects of these factors and problems on the higher education system and / or the THEQC have been identified in terms of opportunity or threat (Table 11). Finally, what the Council can do in the face of these opportunities and threats is written as a recommendation. On the other hand, within the scope of Sectoral Structure Analysis; competitors, stakeholders, suppliers and regulatory agencies in the sector have been identified and evaluated. Issues that could pose opportunities and threats were also identified (Table 12). In this part of the report, only the threats and opportunities identified within the scope of this analysis are presented and detailed information can be found in the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan of the THEQC (See: Annex 4).

Table 11. PESTLE Analysis

	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
POLITICAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since there are no elections in Turkey until 2023, institutions and individuals will focus their energy on achieving the goals of medium-term planning. • Since 2023 is the 100th Anniversary of the Republic of Turkey and because of its importance, all HEIs set important goals for this year and they want to contribute the 2023 goals. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality phenomenon is embraced and set as a goal at the level of Presidency and Ministries. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within the scope of Turkey 2023 Goals, there exist goals related to; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing accessibility to higher education (opening of new foundation and state universities) • Reducing the number of students per faculty member • Establishing the quality agency and meeting the social and industrial expectations in higher education 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the education section of the Annual Presidential Plan for 2019, it is underscored that endeavours on improving the quality of education will be conducted in relation to other developments in the field of education. Following targets and objectives stated in the document are particularly relevant to the THEQC: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure 21: Higher education system, will be transformed into a quality-oriented competitive structure within the framework of its principles of autonomy on the basis of accountability, performance orientation, specialization and diversity. • Measure 22: Higher Education Spaces Investment Decision Support System (Mek-Sis) Project will be completed. • Measure 23: The teaching staff deficit will be reduced by taking a balanced distribution across the country. 	



POLITICAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals include a number of goals in 17 different topics that are important for the whole world. • These objectives address the development of countries in terms of ethics, and environment. One of these objectives is the 4th item, which is a quality education target. Inside the quality education, it is stated that "In achieving inclusive and qualified education for all re-emphasizes the belief that education is one of the most powerful and tried-and-tested tools for sustainable development." • It is important for the whole world to prioritize quality-oriented education in the focus of development. Within this scope, increasing the quality of HEIs in our country can be evaluated within the programs and projects of United Nations. 	
ECONOMIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The HEI-business relationship needs to be strengthened, and medium and long-term training / skill requirements need to be met. By focusing on regional differences, the development of models and mechanisms for university-industry partnership can be encouraged. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing destabilization and political/economic competition in the world. • Education expenditures can also be significantly affected due to the instability around Turkey because of its effect on spending in the economic sense. • This situation may lead to advancing the savings plans dates. Therefore, THEQC budgets may shrink.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is aimed to increase the professional and basic skills of public employees through accredited programs and agencies. Increasing the number of accredited programs and fostering them within the THEQC can help to respond to sector-oriented expectations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease in the budgets transferred to the institutions due to economic fluctuations and instability may prevent the institutional development and quality increase aimed to be developed within the THEQC. It may lead to the suspension of activities that will provide institutional development in HEIs and improve quality processes due to the savings plans. It may be difficult to cover the expenses of site visits from the relevant institution budget. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In accordance with the socio-economic development index, 6-stage incentive system / map is used on the province base. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher unemployment rates in higher education graduates lead to questioning the adequacy of skill acquisition and the educational quality of HEIs. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The employment of researchers in the private sector will be encouraged. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need for lifelong learning and labour market expectations as well as labour force skills adaptation should be ensured. Lifelong learning will become increasingly important. 	

ECONOMIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allocating more funds from the development agencies for training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is known that HEIs are generally nurtured from a single source of income and that institutional needs and priorities are not considered in these central budgets. Therefore, education, R & D and social service activities can be affected by problems in economic contraction periods. Output-oriented HEIs will need to be encouraged so that they need to form their own source of income according to the 3rd generation university model.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouraging academics and students to develop R&D and entrepreneurship activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The need for accountability on the basis of strategic planning, performance management and activity-based budgeting continues. Generally, strategic planning and performance systems could not be integrated in institutional internal evaluation reports and external evaluation processes. Achieving the PDCA cycle depends on strategic planning and performance management practices.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reliable data, statistics and information production will be provided to strengthen institutional policy making and decision-making mechanisms.
SOCIO-CULTURAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expectations of social and industrial quality are increasing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As the THEQC grows institutionally, it will be difficult to avoid conflict of interest among its internal and external stakeholders, such as Council members, Council staff and evaluators.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the 10th Development Plan, according to the indicators related to R & D, patent and high technology sectors in terms of knowledge-based production opportunities, competitiveness in knowledge-based production is not at desired levels. In this respect, there is a great perception that higher education quality processes meet the industrial and social expectations. 	



TECHNOLOGY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information technologies offer many possibilities and opportunities to use and analyse data. The THEQC Internal and External Evaluator System is based on data-based system in order to take evidences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The density of the production activities in Turkey differ depending on the region and province.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the internal and external evaluator system of the THEQC, the same laws and regulations are repetitively uploaded as evidence and this creates a slowing down problem on the system.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are significant differences between the efficiencies of the small and large enterprises in the manufacturing industry. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An innovative and sustainable production process is needed to increase the qualifications of the people involved in the labour force through the improvement of the quality of education. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information and communication technologies can be used for publishing activities and for promoting quality in HEIs. 	
LEGAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating internal control systems in public institutions for strategic planning, performance management and budgeting is a legal aspect that contributes to the provision of THEQC's PDCA cycle. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Despite the goal of having autonomous and open to development university models, the emergence of a standard university model due to the administration of HEIs under the same laws and regulations. This situation can prevent innovation in institutions.
ENVIRONMENTAL		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The effects of the institutions and organizations on the environment and the nature have an important place in the process of monitoring the institutional and socio-economic developments. Despite its importance at the levels of social benefit and impact in the process of providing quality-oriented guidance to institutional developments in the processes of THEQC internal and external evaluations, this is not used as an evaluation criterion in quality processes

Table 12. Sectoral Structure Analysis

	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
COMPETITORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no competitor of THEQC since it is the only quality agency on a national scale. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Those accreditation agencies which started to conduct institutional accreditation may become competitors.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National institutions such as ISO, KALDER and international institutions such as EUA, EFQM
STAKEHOLDERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Problems in foreign language education, the practices on accreditation of foreign language education programs within the THEQC are of a nature that will contribute to the 10th Development Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decrease in demand for existing HEIs in recent years.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of an internationally recognized diploma and certification system in accordance with national occupational standards within the framework of National Qualifications Framework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The institutionalization problems of existing institutions and newly-established HEIs.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The emergence of national and international competitive environment in higher education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universities are not much aware of the importance of the quality and trends in the world, and institutional culture in HEIs do not have enough power to support quality practices. Internal QA system is not embraced by the top and other managers.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To have a large number of academic staff in HEIs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> QA system forces and encourages HEIs to establish a structure adapting to the requirements of an era beyond the usual conventional missions of the universities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inter-institutional cooperation can be used; Possibility to organize events throughout the Council in cooperation with HEIs Promoting the organization of such activities and introducing various support mechanisms, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As institutions are not accustomed to external evaluation, it is perceived by some HEIs as a bureaucratic chore or an exam to be passed, or as an inspection.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited time depending on the number of universities that need training.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although there is an increased awareness of accreditation processes and the number of institutions applying for national accreditation has increased, there are no national level agencies to accredit some programs.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In order to maintain the assets of the accreditation agencies, legal arrangements need to be made ensuring that the fees requested by the agencies for their evaluation are provided by the institutions.



SUPPLIERS		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because the evaluators are employees of different HEIs, the sense of institutional belonging can be reflected in their evaluations.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since the THEQC is a newly-established organization, it is not always guaranteed to receive same quality services as the services such as maintenance- repair, IT infrastructure and organizations are outsourced.
REGULATORY/SUPERVISORY ORGANIZATIONS		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structural problems of higher education • The centralized structure of the higher education system • Lack of diversity in service provision • Deficiencies in quality of research

Glossary of Terms

AAS: Accreditation Agencies System

AACSB: Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business

ABET: Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, Inc.

AQAS: Agency for Quality Assurance through Accreditation of Study Programs

CoHE: Council of Higher Education of Turkey

ECZAKDER: Evaluation and Accreditation Association for Programs in the Faculties of Pharmacy

EHEA: European Higher Education Area

ENQA: European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

EPDAD: Evaluation and Accreditation Association for Programs in the Faculties of Education

EPS: English Preparatory School

EQAR: European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education

EQF: European Qualifications Framework

ESG: Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

EUA-IEP: European University Association – Institutional Evaluation Programme

FEDEK: Science, Literature, Faculty of Science and Letters, Faculty of Languages, History and Geography Curriculum Programs Assessments and Accreditation Association

FIBAA: Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation

HCERES: The High Council for Evaluation of Research and Higher Education

HEI: Higher Education Institution

HEPDAK: Association for Evaluation and Accreditation of Nursing Programs

IIEC: Institutional External Evaluation Commission

IFR: Institutional Feedback Report

ILAD-ILEDK: Communication Research Association-Communication Education Evaluation and Accreditation Board

ISCED: International Standard Classification of Education

ISER: Institutional Self-Evaluation Report

MEB: Republic of Turkey Ministry of National Education



MİAK: Architectural Accrediting Board

MÜDEK: Association for Evaluation and Accreditation of Engineering Programs

MYK: Vocational Qualification Institution of Turkey

NQF-HETR: National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in Turkey

ÖSYM: Measuring, Selection and Placement Centre of Turkey

PDCA: Plan-Do-Check-Act

PESTLE: Political, Economic, Socio-Cultural, Technological, Legal and Environmental

QA: Quality Assurance

QAA: The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

QAMIS: Quality Assurance Management Information System

SABAK: Health Sciences Education Programs Evaluation and Accreditation Association

SWOT: Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats

TEPDAD: Association for Evaluation and Accreditation of Medical Education Programs

THEQC: Higher Education Quality Council of Turkey

TOBB: Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey

TPD: Turkish Psychological Association

TQF: Turkish Qualifications Framework

TUADER-TURAK: Association of Tourism Academics-Tourism Education Evaluation and Accreditation Board

TÜBİTAK: Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey

TÜRKAK: Turkish Accreditation Agency

TÜSEB: Health Institutes of Turkey

ÜAK: Inter-University Council

VEDEK: Association for Evaluation and Accreditation of Educational Institutions and Programs of Veterinary Medicine



ANNEXES

1. THEQC Establishment Law
2. Regulation on Higher Education Quality Assurance and the Higher Education Quality Council
3. Procedures and Principles for the Election of Student Member of the THEQC
4. THEQC 2019-2023 Strategic Plan
5. THEQC Code of Ethics
6. THEQC Institutional External Evaluation Criteria
7. THEQC Institutional External Evaluation Guide (Version 1.2)
8. THEQC Institutional Self-Evaluation Report Writing Guide (Version 1.4)
9. EPSs Areas and Minimum Standards
10. THEQC Guide for the Accreditation and Recognition of External Evaluation and Accreditation Agencies





**Higher Education Quality Council
Turkey**



Higher Education Quality Council
Universiteler Mah. 1600 Cad. No:10 06800
Bilkent, Ankara, Turkey



+90 (312) 298 78 83



yokak.gov.tr



[@ykalitekurulu](https://twitter.com/ykalitekurulu)