Turkish Higher Education Quality Council

# IIAP ISER WRITING GUIDE

**Version 1.0a (2024)**

# GENERAL INFORMATION

## Introduction

The institutional self-evaluation report (ISER) is a self-assessment report written by higher education institutions (HEIs) included in the international institutional accreditation program (IIAP), following the THEQC IIAP Criteria. This guide includes the rules to be applied while writing an ISER, relevant explanations, suggestions, an ISER template (Annex 1), and the ISER writing guide (Annex 2).

This Guide came into force with the Council decision dated 15.05.2024.

## Aim

The aim of ISER writing is to help the institution recognise its strengths and areas for improvement while contributing to the institution's improvement processes. The ISER of the institution is the foremost output of the self-evaluation works of the institution. Attaining an ISER which has a high level of maturity is possible only by running the internal quality assurance system and internal evaluation works efficiently.

The drafting process of the report provides the institution with an opportunity to pre-eminently benefit from the IIAP process. The ISER should be employed for establishing contact and cooperation among stakeholders, within self-evaluation activities, and for the dissemination and internalisation of quality assurance culture. To enhance the contribution of the drafting process to the institution, inclusiveness and participation must be ensured in the activities, a process management approach must be adopted rather than bureaucratic data management, and transparency must be ensured in the works of the unit responsible for quality, as well as continuous training activities.

## Scope

The maturity level of the higher education institution's internal quality assurance system should be explained in the ISER. Within this scope, the questions below are to be addressed, based on evidence:

- How an institution plans and manages the resources and competencies at hand within the processes of governance and quality, learning and teaching, research and development, and service to society in accordance with its values, mission and objectives,
- How an institution carries out the practices of follow-up and improvement as to the processes throughout the institution,
- How an institution ensures stakeholder involvement and comprehensiveness in planning, doing, checking and acting phases,
- What an institution's strengths and areas for improvement in its internal quality assurance system are,
- What the reasons for failed improvements are, and
- How an institution ensures sustainability in its quality assurance system to maintain its competitive advantage within the scope of the rapidly changing agenda of higher education.

ISERs should be written on the quality assurance management information system (QAMIS) considering the THEQC IIAP Evaluation Criteria, the IIAP ISER Writing Guide, the THEQC IIAP Rubric, and the ISERs and external evaluation reports submitted in the previous years. The information given in the report should be supported by various documents and evidence.

### The Writing and Publication of the Report

The ISERs are required to be uploaded on QAMIS developed by THEQC. For the uploading process, the head of the HEI's unit responsible for quality or a person delegated by the institution will be authorised to log in to the web-based system as administrator. The person authorised to log in to the system as administrator can create user accounts and roles for the staff of the institution. After institutions upload their ISERs on the system, the ISERs will be published on THEQC's official website www.yokak.gov.tr. Besides, HEIs should also publish their ISERs on their websites. ISERs should be written within the framework of the THEQC IIAP Rubric, taking into account the template in Annex 1 and the writing guide in Annex 2.

### How Should You Use the THEQC IIAP Rubric?

- Institutional evaluation processes of THEQC are carried out with 14 criteria and 46 sub-criteria with a holistic perspective under the headings of Governance and Quality, Learning and Teaching, Research and Development, and Service to Society. The basic tool used in evaluation processes is the THEQC IIAP Rubric. It is an assessment tool used in the internal evaluation works of HEIs, ISER writing, and external evaluation processes. It has been developed to increase clarity, objectivity, comprehensibility, consistency and transparency in THEQC's external evaluation or decision-making processes.

- The quality assurance process or mechanisms for each sub-criterion in the THEQC IIAP Rubric have been defined considering the maturity levels of planning, doing, checking and acting (PDCA) steps and rated on a scale of 1 to 5. The sub-criteria, whose maturity level is determined with this rubric, reveal the level of fulfilment of the relevant criteria. An example of the organisation of main headings, criteria and sub-criteria in the ISER Writing is presented in Diagram 1. Rating of the maturity levels of sub-criteria via the THEQC IIAP Rubric is displayed in Diagram 2.

*Diagram 1. The Organisation of Main Headings, Criteria and Sub-Criteria in the ISER Writing*


| B. LEARNING AND TEACHING | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **B.1. Program Design, Evaluation and Update** | | | | | |
| | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| **B.1.2. Course distribution balance of the program (ESG 1.2)**<br><br>The principles, rules and methods about course distribution of the program are defined. Teaching staff's fields of expertise and workload are considered in the course distribution, and the course distribution between them is done in a participatory manner. The teaching program (curriculum) takes into account the balance between compulsory and elective courses, field-specific and non-field-specific courses, and allows for cultural competence and acquaintance with other disciplines. The number of courses and the weekly course load are organized in a manner that allows students to spend time in extracurricular activities. The alignment with the goals and the efficiency of the course information packages designed by these principles are monitored and relevant improvements are made. | Principles and methods related to course distribution are not defined. | There are defined processes for course distribution that include principles and methods about dimensions like the balance between courses about teaching staff's fields of expertise; the balance between the field of study/professional knowledge/general knowledge and compulsory and elective courses; gaining cultural competence, and familiarizing students with different disciplines. | There are practices throughout the institution in accordance with the defined processes regarding the course distribution balance. | The course distribution balance in the programs is monitored and improved. | There are internalised, systematic and sustainable practices that can be used as examples of best practices. |
| | ***Sample Evidence***<br>• *Principles and methods related to course distribution and related evidence*<br>• *Evidence showing that the balance of course distribution is taken into account in the announced course information packages*<br>• *Decisions of the education commission, senate decisions, etc.*<br>• *Evidence for follow-up and improvement of the course distribution balance*<br>• *Evidence for the specific approaches and practices developed by the institution in line with the institutional needs along with standard practices and legislation* | | | | |


**Best Practices**

5 There are internalized, systematic and sustainable practices that can be used as examples of best practices.

**Planning, Doing, Checking and Acting**

4 The results of the institution-wide practices are monitored and improved with the involvement of related stakeholders.

**Planning and Doing**

3 There are institution-wide practices, and some results have been obtained from practices; however, these results are not monitored or monitored partially.

**Planning**

2 There is planning (defined processes) in the institution; however, there is no practice, or there are partial practices.

**No Practice Available**

1 There is no planning, defined process or mechanism in the institution.

*Diagram 2. Rating of the Maturity Levels of Sub-criteria via the THEQC IIAP Rubric*

- While writing a report through QAMIS, remarks should be added for each sub-criterion and the maturity levels of sub-criteria should be considered while writing remarks.

- The THEQC IIAP Rubric used for the evaluation of maturity levels of sub-criteria consists of steps rated on a scale of 1 to 5. Prerequisite steps should be completed to be able to proceed to the next maturity level (Diagram 3).

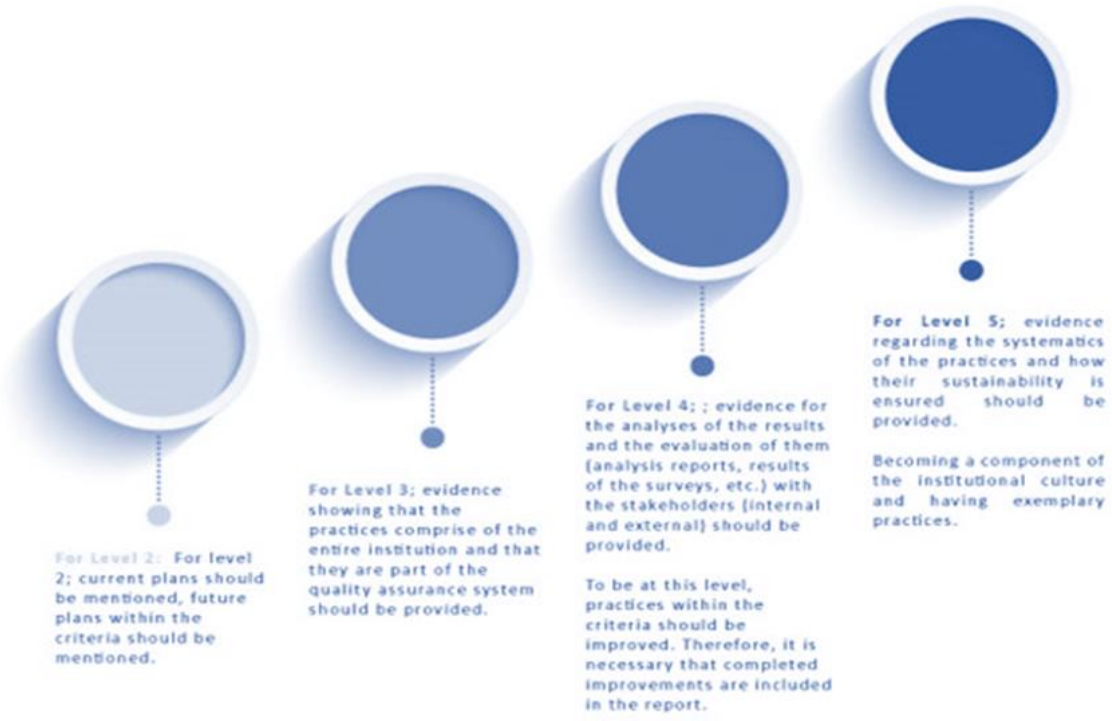


*Diagram 3. Rating Steps for Maturity Levels*

- Each maturity level must cover the previous maturity level.

- To decide on maturity level 4 for a sub-criterion:
  - Practices should be spread throughout the institution,
  - Results should have been attained from the practices,
  - These results should be monitored,
  - Practices should be improved by evaluating the results of the follow-up together with the relevant stakeholders,

  and all these need to be supported by evidence.

> **"That there are only follow-ups in a sub-criterion does not refer to the completion of maturity level 4. It should be documented that the institution's follow-ups in the sub-criterion have resulted in improvements."**

- To decide on maturity level 5 for a sub-criterion, in addition to the points above, the following should be evidenced:
  - Systematics and sustainability of the practices (PDCA cycle to be completed a couple of times),
  - Practices are internalised and contribute to the entire institution,
  - Evidence for having an exemplary model is present (This should be confirmed by an independent institution or organisation).

- In the THEQC IIAP Rubric, evidence that is expected regarding the level of meeting the criteria is included in the *"sample evidence"* section under each sub-criterion. Evidence presented should be consistent with the report content and selected maturity level; it should also be diversified to support the explanations made. In some cases, some information, records or documents may be evidence of multiple sub-criteria. In this case, only the relevant parts of the information, record or document should be referred (See Annex 2).

- Where necessary, reference may be given to the ISERs written in previous years. If an institution was included in the external evaluation program(s) conducted by THEQC or another agency before, its ISER must comprise the improvement activities carried out in line with the feedback provided in the reports, the concrete improvement outcomes in this scope, the points that could not be improved, and the underlying reasons impeding improvement.

- Instead of giving short answers, such as *"This aspect is present in our institution"*, *"Practice regarding this aspect is available"*, or *"The mentioned system is available in our institution,"* a methodology that thoroughly illustrates how the relevant process operates and is managed in the institution should be adopted when writing an ISER with consideration of the aspects stated in the guide. It should also be noted that any additional specific situation and/or data peculiar to the institution other than the ones stated in the guide can be included in the report.

# ANNEX 1. INSTITUTIONAL SELF-EVALUATION REPORT TEMPLATE

## Summary

In this section, brief information about the purpose, scope and drafting process of the report should be included. The key findings of the institution's self-evaluation work should be summarized.

## Information on the Institution

This section should include information on the institution's history, mission, vision, values, objectives, organisational structure and areas for further development and should be organised in a way to encompass the following aspects.

### 1. Contact Information

The contact information (name, address, telephone, e-mail, etc.) of the head of the unit responsible for quality and HEI's contact person, who will be contacted during the ISER examination and/or visit process, should be provided.

### 2. Institutional History

Brief information on the institution's history and current situation (total number of students, number of academic and administrative staff, infrastructural conditions, etc.) should be provided .

### 3. Mission, Vision, Values and Objectives

The institution's mission, vision, values and objectives should be summarised in this section to answer the question "What does the institution intend to achieve?".

The THEQC IIAP Rubric will be used to write explanations for the sub-criteria under the main headings below.

A. **GOVERNANCE AND QUALITY**
B. **LEARNING AND TEACHING**
C. **RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT**
D. **SERVICE TO SOCIETY**

## Evaluations and Conclusion

The strengths and areas of improvement in the institution are required to be summarised under the headings of **Governance and Quality, Learning and Teaching, Research and Development,** and **Service to Society**.

# ANNEX 2. INSTITUTIONAL SELF-EVALUATION REPORT WRITING GUIDE

This guide has been issued to create a common writing style for ISERs and to provide reader convenience. HEIs are expected to work within the framework of these rules when writing their ISERs. General expectations and ISER writing rules were prepared in line with the feedback from stakeholders. This guide first explains general expectations, provides guidance with a table for writing format, and includes points to consider when showing evidence.

## 1. General Expectations

General expectations in ISER writing are listed as follows:

- The number of pages of the ISER written by each higher education institution varies depending on the structure, size and complexity of the institution. In ISER writing, it is expected that the necessary information will be conveyed concisely with clear and understandable evidence, rather than filling up too many pages. For this reason, the ISER text should be planned to be **80 pages** at most.
- The language used in ISER writing should be concise and to the point. Academic and objective expressions should be used.
- Simple expressions should be used by checking the compliance of the data/explanations/evidence with the criterion/sub-criterion.
- The information included in the ISER writing should reflect the institution in terms of content and attention should be paid to its provability.
- To help readers quickly access information, sub-criterion explanations should emphasise relevant sections of the report or give reference to specific page numbers, if necessary.
- The texts in the evidence should not be repeated verbatim in the ISER text.
- The evidence provided in the ISER must support and be relevant to that sub-criterion.
- Webpage links added to the ISER or provided as evidence should be accessible at all times.
- If the institution has gone through the THEQC evaluation in previous years, the improvements made or planned based on the evaluation reports should be included in the ISER.

## 2. ISER Writing Format

The following writing rules apply in the ISER writing.

| Report Components | Format and Writing Rules |
|---|---|
| **Main Headings and Criteria as Titles** | **In Times New Roman, Font size: 14, Bold**<br>(This is done automatically by the system.) |
| **Sub-criteria as Titles** | **In Times New Roman, Font size: 12, Bold**<br>(Sub-criteria titles will be written by the institution with their reference number in the THEQC Rubric. For example, A.2.1. Mission, vision and policies) |
| ***Other Titles*** | For titles other than the sub-criteria titles used when needed in the text, use ***Italic, Font size: 12, Bold***. Do not use reference number for such titles. |
| Body Text | In Times New Roman, Font size: 12, single line spacing, justified |
| Spacing Between Title and Lines | Use 1.5 line spacing. |
| Page numbers | It is placed in the middle of the footer section.<br>(This is done automatically by the system.) |
| Margins | There should be 2.5 cm spacing from the right, left, bottom and top of the page.<br>(This is done automatically by the system.) |
| Naming the Evidence Documents | 1. Use no more than 65 characters for evidence document names.<br>2. Do not use spaces when writing the evidence file name. Instead, use underscores.<br>3. While naming evidence documents, start with the maturity level of the evidence.<br>**For example:**<br>(4)A.3.1.1.evidence_name.doc<br>→ Refers to maturity level 4.<br>(2)(3)A.3.1.1.evidence_name.doc<br>→ Refers to maturity levels 2 and 3.<br>4. While naming evidence documents, after writing the maturity level, continue with the reference number of the sub-criterion and the evidence number.<br>**For example:**<br>(3)A.3.1.1. evidence_name.doc<br>→ evidence number<br>→ sub-criterion reference number<br>→ maturity level |

## 3. Providing Evidence

The most important thing to consider when providing evidence is that, as mentioned above, the evidence should directly support the statements in the text written for the sub-criterion. For this purpose, the institution's legislation, documents, webpages, reports, etc. can be used as evidence. However, the following points should be taken into consideration when providing them:

- Evidence titles should be written as shown on the writing format page of this guide.
- Reference should be given to the related page(s) of the report/document attached as evidence of a sub-criterion.
- Avoid visual file types such as jpeg, png, etc. in the evidence and, if possible, give a link to the webpage where the visual is present.
- Instead of uploading Word/PDF files that contain only links as evidence, the links should be placed within the relevant text part.
- Evidence bearing personal information of students, staff, and so on should not be used.
- Sensitive data and documents that include trade secrets or business secrets of the institution should not be shared.
- Instead of the specimen of signature, evidence containing the decisions taken (decisions reflecting improvements) should be used in meeting minutes.
- While naming evidence documents, start with the maturity level assigned for the related sub-criterion.
  **For example:** "(3)A.1.1.4.evidence_name"
- While naming evidence documents, after writing the maturity level, you should continue with the reference number of the sub-criterion and the evidence number to make it easier in text to give reference to that evidence.

  **For example:** If you want to add an evidence of maturity level 2 (evidence of planning stage) for B.3.4. Disadvantaged groups sub-criterion and you want to add your second evidence for this sub-criterion, your evidence name should look as shown below.

  (2)B.3.4.2.evidence_name.pdf
- An evidence assigned to a sub-criterion may sometimes be used for other maturity levels too; you should name the evidence as follows in such situation.

  **For example:** (2)(3)A.3.1.1.evidence_name.doc
- While naming hyperlinks to be inserted in text, you should first write the maturity level of the evidence. The evidence provided through hyperlinks is not required to be added to the list of evidence.