

**TURKISH HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY COUNCIL
INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION PROGRAM DIRECTIVE**

**SECTION ONE
Purpose, Scope, Basis and Definitions**

Purpose and Scope

ARTICLE 1- (1) This Directive regulates the procedures and principles regarding the International Institutional Accreditation Program activities to be carried out by the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council (THEQC) in higher education institutions operating outside the Republic of Türkiye.

Basis

ARTICLE 2- (1) This Directive is based on the Regulation on Higher Education Quality Assurance and the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council, which was promulgated in the Turkish Official Gazette numbered 30604 and dated 23 November 2018.

Definitions

ARTICLE 3- (1) In the scope of this Directive:

- a) THEQC refers to the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council,
- b) The Council refers to the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council,
- c) Commission refers to the Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation Commission,
- ç) Institution refers to a Higher Education Institution operating outside the Republic of Türkiye,
- d) Evaluator refers to a competent officer assigned by the Council to an international evaluation and follow-up team,
- e) Evaluator Training refers to the training given to provide evaluators with specific competencies,
- f) Evaluator Pool refers to the THEQC Evaluator Pool, in which evaluators to be assigned to International Institutional Accreditation evaluation and follow-up teams are included,
- g) Review Coordinator refers to the person who is assigned to make the preliminary review of applications, ensure coordination between the Institution and the Evaluation Team during the evaluation process, and observe the site visit process, without taking an active role in the evaluation and report writing activities of the team,
- ğ) Evaluator System refers to the internet-based application through which evaluation processes determined by the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council are carried out,
- h) Evaluation Team refers to the team assigned to carry out the international institutional accreditation evaluation process of an Institution,
- ı) Observer refers to the person assigned to observe the Site Visit process during the evaluation process,
- i) Contact Person refers to the person who will be assigned by the Institution and notified to THEQC to ensure communication and coordination throughout the process after signing a contract with the Institution,
- j) Improvement Report refers to the report in which the requested improvement works are documented with evidence by the Institution after an accreditation decision is postponed,
- k) Decision Letter refers to the letter sent by the Council to the Institution at the end of the evaluation process, containing the accreditation decision and suggestions for improvement in the field of quality assurance,
- l) Guide refers to the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council International Institutional Accreditation Program Guide,
- m) Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER) refers to a self-evaluation report written by the

- Institution, containing the Institution's self-evaluation on the THEQC evaluation criteria and the supporting evidence,
- n) Criteria refers to the THEQC International Institutional Accreditation Criteria,
 - o) Team Leader refers to the team member who is accountable to the THEQC President for the management of the Evaluation Team,
 - ö) Draft IIAR refers to the report written by the Evaluation Team and forwarded to the Institution for its feedback,
 - p) Consistency Work refers to the study in which the Commission checks whether IIAR is written in accordance with THEQC's evaluation methods and tools,
 - r) Consistency Report refers to the report written by the Commission at the end of the Consistency Work,
 - s) International Institutional Accreditation Program (IIAP) refers to the evaluation process, in which an accreditation decision is taken as a result of the external evaluation of higher education institutions, within the framework of the Criteria created by the Council,
 - ş) International Institutional Accreditation Report (IIAR) refers to the report written by the evaluation team for Institutions evaluated within the scope of IIAP,
 - t) Follow-up refers to the process in which Institutions, whose IIAP evaluations ended with the grant of accreditation, are included in the second year following the accreditation decision taken for them,
 - u) Follow-up Report refers to the evaluation report written by a Follow-up Team after an online site visit,
 - ü) Follow-up Team refers to the team assigned to carry out the follow-up process of an institution.

SECTION TWO

Duties and Responsibilities of the Commission, Evaluator Pool, Evaluation Teams, Review Coordinator and Evaluator Training

Duties and Responsibilities of the Commission

ARTICLE 4- (1) The duties and responsibilities of the Commission regarding the International Institutional Accreditation Program are as follows:

- a) To create the Evaluator Pool,
- b) To conduct works to identify evaluator candidates, give them evaluator training, and assign them to Evaluation Teams,
- c) To finalise the IIAR written by the Evaluation Teams through consistency work, and present it to the Council.

Evaluator Pool

ARTICLE 5- (1) Evaluator candidates who want to take part in the Evaluator Pool are expected to have the following competencies:

- a) Having at least ten (10) years of experience in learning and teaching and research activities carried out in higher education institutions or the administrative processes of institutions,
- b) Having worked actively for at least three (3) years in the field of higher education quality assurance,
- c) To meet the foreign language proficiency requirements specified in the evaluator application announcement,
- ç) Having the qualifications specified in the Directive on THEQC Council Student Member and Students Commission for student evaluators and meeting the conditions in clause (c) of this article.

- (2) The need for evaluators is determined by THEQC, taking into account the declarations of intent made by the institutions in each evaluation period and the evaluation application estimates for the next period.
- (3) The Evaluator Pool created by the Commission is submitted to the Council for approval.

Evaluation Team

ARTICLE 6- (1) Evaluation of Institutions within the scope of the International Institutional Accreditation Program is carried out by Evaluation Teams.

(2) Evaluation Teams are created through the Evaluator System with the approval of the Council. A team leader and some evaluators appropriate to the structure and size of the Institution are selected by taking into account sex, nationality, the field of education, and the results of the exams to be conducted after evaluator training, surveys and performance data collected about the evaluators in previous evaluation periods, if any, and the teams are updated when necessary.

(3) Each Evaluator must complete the evaluator training program before taking a role in teams.

(4) The duties and responsibilities of Evaluation Teams are as follows:

- a) To attend pre-visit and post-visit meetings regarding evaluation processes,
- b) To carry out an objective and evidence-based evaluation following the process specified in the Guide and within the scope of the Criteria,
- c) To write reports within the scope of the International Institutional Accreditation Program,
- ç) To act in accordance with the code of ethics that evaluators must follow.

Review Coordinator

ARTICLE 7-(1) THEQC assigns one of its staff, who is relevant to the evaluation works, as the Review Coordinator to carry out the preliminary reviews and, in case of acceptance, to ensure the coordination of all processes related to the Institution and the Evaluation Team.

(2) The duties and responsibilities of Review Coordinators are determined in accordance with the provisions of the Guide.

Observers

ARTICLE 8-(1) If deemed necessary, THEQC may assign its staff related to higher education evaluation processes and the third parties or legal entities outside THEQC as Observer to observe or monitor the process only upon receiving the consent of the Institution.

Evaluator Training

ARTICLE 9- (1) Evaluator Training is given to ensure that the members of the Evaluation Teams understand the evaluation criteria and gain the competencies to exhibit the attitudes and behaviours expected from them during the evaluation process.

(2) Evaluator candidates must attend the Evaluator Training program again if they have not been included in the IIAP within three calendar years after the last Evaluator Training they received, to be eligible for reassignment in evaluation teams.

SECTION THREE

International Institutional Accreditation Process

Application and Approval Process

ARTICLE 10-(1) Higher Education Institutions that will apply for the International Institutional Accreditation Program must meet the following conditions:

- a) Certifying that it is authorised to carry out higher education learning and teaching activities in the country where it is based,
- b) Proving that the Institution to be evaluated obtains a statement from the institution responsible

for higher education or quality assurance in higher education in the country it is based, stating that there is no objection against THEQC's site visit and evaluation work,

- c) Having study programs at the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) 6 level in its learning and teaching activities,
- ç) Being registered in at least one of the international higher education databases specified in the Guide,
- d) At least half of the Institution's active bachelor's degree programs have already graduated their first cohorts of students,
- e) Having a unit responsible for quality management (coordinator's office, commission, office, etc.).

(2) Application to the IIAP Program is made according to the provisions of the Guide.

(3) The language to be used in the application, ISER writing, site visits and reporting of the International Institutional Accreditation Program is Turkish or English. Language preference is made by the applicant Institution at the application stage.

(4) THEQC appoints a Review Coordinator to conduct the preliminary reviews and coordinate the evaluation process of the accepted Institutions.

(5) Institutions to be included in the International Institutional Accreditation Program are selected by the Council out of the applicants.

(6) The International Institutional Accreditation Program Agreement for the International Institutional Accreditation Program is signed between the Institution and THEQC.

(7) After signing the Agreement, the Institution notifies its Contact Person to THEQC to ensure communication and coordination throughout the process.

(8) The Higher Education Institution included in the International Institutional Accreditation Program pays the fee for the accreditation service determined by the Council, within thirty (30) days after signing the agreement with THEQC.

Writing the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report

ARTICLE 11- (1) The Institution submits the ISER to THEQC within four (4) months at the latest from the signing date of the International Institutional Accreditation Program Agreement.

(2) The content of the ISER and the compliance of the information and documents attached to it with the Guide are checked within fifteen (15) days and the correction requests, if any, are forwarded to the Institution to be completed within fifteen (15) days.

(3) The Institution publishes the final version of the ISER on its official website.

Determination of Evaluation Teams and Site Visit Dates

ARTICLE 12- (1) The Council creates the Evaluation Teams according to the procedure specified in Article 6 of this Directive after the ISER writing process is completed.

(2) It is checked through the Evaluator System whether there is any conflict of interest between the evaluation team leader, team members, review coordinator and the Institution to be evaluated.

(3) The Evaluation Team Leader, Contact Person and Review Coordinator determine the pre-visit and site visit dates.

Pre-Visit

ARTICLE 13- (1) The Evaluation Team carries out a pre-visit according to the procedure specified in the Guide.

Site Visit

ARTICLE 14 -(1) Site Visit is carried out with the following steps:

- a) The examination and evaluation activities of the Evaluation Team during the visit are planned in accordance with the Guide.

- b) Institution's matters related to general institutional functions, such as management, student services, library, computer and IT infrastructure, support of academic units such as departments, faculties and graduate schools, etc., are subject to evaluation only to the extent they relate to the Criteria.
- c) As the final activity of the site visit, the Evaluation Team presents the Exit Statement in a session, in which the team verbally delivers its evidence-based findings to a group invited by the Institution's governing body.
- c) Exit Statement must reflect the evaluation outcomes and findings detected by the team as a result of the site visit

Completing the Report

ARTICLE 15 -(1) Evaluation Team writes a draft IIAR considering its consistency with the content of ISER, the information and documents requested from the Institution, the site visit, and the Exit Statement, uploads the draft IIAR to the Evaluator System within twenty-one (21) days following the site visit and forwards it to the Review Coordinator.

(2) Review Coordinator checks the draft IIAR in terms of completeness, consistency of the text and maturity levels, clarity, and language within ten (10) days, forwards correction suggestions, if any, to the Evaluation Team and ensures that they are implemented within ten (10) days following the report's submission.

(3) The preliminary reviewed draft IIAR is forwarded to the Institution by the Review Coordinator to receive feedback including factual errors.

(4) The Institution submits its requests for corrections against the draft IIAR, submitted by the Evaluation Team, to THEQC within twenty-one (21) days by filling out the comparison chart, annex of the Guide. If the team does not receive any response within this period, it means that all evaluations in the report are accepted by the Institution and the right to ask for correction is waived. THEQC transmits the requests submitted by the Institution and the comparison chart to the Evaluation Team.

(5) The Evaluation Team uploads the final IIAR and, if any, the comparison chart containing the report text before and after the Institution's feedback to the Evaluator System within twenty-one (21) days following the Institution's response to the draft IIAR.

Consistency and Submission of the Report to the Council

ARTICLE 16-(1) The Commission submits the final IIAR, a Consistency Report containing its opinion about the maturity levels in the IIAR, and its work to ensure consistency between evaluations conducted in different institutions in the same evaluation period and between years to the Council.

Decision

ARTICLE 17-(1) The accreditation decision is taken by the Council, taking into account the IIAR and the Consistency Report written within the scope of the International Institutional Accreditation Program.

(2) The following accreditation decisions may be taken as a result of the IIAP carried out based on the Criteria:

- a) Grant of accreditation,
- b) Postponement of accreditation decision,
- c) Refusal of accreditation.

(3) If the accreditation-granting level is partially met to the extent determined in the Guide, the Council may postpone the accreditation decision once for a maximum of twelve (12) months.

(4) Should the accreditation decision be postponed, the Institution forwards an Improvement Report to THEQC until the end of the postponement period at the latest.

(5) The Council takes a decision regarding accreditation within sixty (60) days from the date of receipt of the Improvement Report, taking into account the Commission decision, including the opinion of

the Evaluation Team.

(6) The accreditation decision, IIAR and Decision Letter are shared with the Institution and stakeholders.

(7) IIAR is published after the appeal period or process against the decision to refuse accreditation or postpone accreditation is completed.

(8) An accreditation granted is valid for five (5) years from the date of the Council decision.

(9) Higher education institutions for which a refusal of accreditation decision is taken may reapply to IIAP at the end of the second year at the earliest following this decision.

(10) The accredited Institution must notify THEQC of any substantive changes affecting its legal entity, administrative structure, education system and methodology, and its compliance with the Criteria.

Follow-up

ARTICLE 18-(1) Institutions, whose IIAP evaluations ended with the grant of accreditation, are included in the follow-up process at the end of the second year following the accreditation decision taken for them.

(2) Institutions involved in the follow-up process write an ISER that includes the improvements regarding their areas for improvement and findings communicated to them in the Decision Letter, and the substantive changes in their institution that occurred after the accreditation decision.

(3) The follow-up team consists of at least three members, preferably at least two members selected among the evaluators who took part in the accreditation evaluation process of the relevant institution.

(4) The follow-up team writes a Follow-up Report after an online site visit within ten (10) days and submits it to the Council for approval.

Renewal of Accreditation

ARTICLE 19-(1) Institution that wants to renew its accreditation must reapply twelve (12) months before the end of its accreditation validity period by following the International Institutional Accreditation Process specified in this Directive.

(2) During the evaluation work for the Institution whose application for renewal of accreditation is accepted, the previous IIAR and Follow-up Report and, if any, the substantive changes made by the Institution during the accreditation process are also considered.

Complaints and Appeals

ARTICLE 20-(1) Complaints and appeals processes are carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council Directive on Appeals and Complaints.

PART FOUR

Miscellaneous and Final Provisions

Legal clauses

ARTICLE 21-(1) In cases where there is no provision in this Directive, the decisions of the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council are implemented.

Enforcement

ARTICLE 22-(1) This Directive enters into force as of the date it is approved by the Council.

Execution

ARTICLE 23 – (1) Provisions of this Directive are executed by the President of the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council.

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