Turkish Higher Education Quality Council

INSTITUTIONAL EXTERNAL EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION GUIDE

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Contents

FOREWORD

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

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

Within the Institutional External Evaluation Program, evaluation teams are expected to qualitatively and quantitatively evaluate institutions' quality assurance systems; learning and teaching, research-development and social contribution activities; and governance systems. THEQC's Institutional External Evaluation Directive and Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation Criteria, and the Institutional Self-Evaluation Reports (ISER) annually submitted to THEQC by the institution are the documents that will be referred in conducting external evaluation.

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

Turkish Higher Education Quality Council

INTRODUCTION

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

A. INSTITUTIONAL EXTERNAL EVALUATION PROGRAM AND INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION PROGRAM

The Institutional External Evaluation Program and the Institutional Accreditation Program are two individual external evaluation practices coordinated by THEQC. Although the two programs have several overlapping features such as the evaluation criteria, appointment of evaluation teams, pre-review based on ISERs, pre-visit and site visit activities, they ultimately differ in terms of their outcomes. At the end of the Institutional External Evaluation Program, an Institutional Feedback Report (IFR) is written by each team, which is made publicly available. At the final step of the Institutional Accreditation Program; however, the evaluation team prepares an Institutional Accreditation Report (IAR) and THEQC grants full or provisional accreditation to the institution based on the IAR and announces the decision to the public. As for the institutions that are unable to meet the conditions for accreditation, THEQC provides support to their institutional development in the context of quality assurance practices.

The main features of the Institutional External Evaluation Program and the Institutional Accreditation Program are listed below:

- The Programs are national evaluation processes with internationally recognized perspectives.
- The Programs are based on the institution's self-evaluation.
- The Programs aim to measure to what extent the institution realizes its defined mission, vision, and strategic objectives with a focus on continuous improvement.
- The Programs constitute a peer review process since the internal and external stakeholder opinions of the institution are received.

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

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

The Institutional External Evaluation Program and the Institutional Accreditation Program may be conducted by THEQC in spring and/or fall semesters. Below is the yearly calendar for the evaluation processes:

Spring Semester

Date	Activity
January - February	The HEIs that will be subject to evaluation are announced.
January - March	HEIs prepare their ISERs.
March	Evaluator training is organized.
April - May	Site visits are conducted.
June - July	- IFRs are published within the Institutional External Evaluation Program. - IARs are published and accreditation decisions are announced within the Institutional Accreditation Program.

Fall Semester

Date	Activity
January - February	The HEIs that will be subject to evaluation are announced.
January - March	HEIs prepare their ISERs.
September	Evaluator training is organized.
October - November	Site visits are conducted.
December - January	- IFRs are published within the Institutional External Evaluation Program. - IARs are published and accreditation decisions are announced within the Institutional Accreditation Program.

A.1. Duties and Responsibilities of the Institutional External Evaluation Commission

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

- Forming an evaluator pool,
- Determining evaluator candidates and evaluation teams assigned to institutions,
- Planning and organizing training/information-sharing meetings,
- Providing feedback on the ISERs prepared by higher education institutions,
- Checking the consistency and style of the IFR and the IAR drafts written by evaluation teams,
- Presenting an opinion to THEQC regarding the decision to be issued as part of the Institutional Accreditation Program,
- Preparing the Higher Education Evaluation and Quality Assurance Annual Situation Report and submitting it to THEQC.

A.2. Duties and Responsibilities of Evaluation Teams

Evaluation team refers to the team assigned by THEQC to conduct the external evaluation program or the accreditation program of higher education institutions. Academic staff, administrative staff, students and relevant employers/professionals are included in evaluation teams. The duties and responsibilities of the evaluation team leader and members are listed below:

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

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

All the Council and Commission members and external evaluators assigned in the evaluation processes are required to sign the Statement of Confidentiality and Commitment to the THEQC Code of Ethics, which is available on the last page of the THEQC Code of Ethics (Annex 1). The Statement can also be signed through the Quality Assurance Management Information System (QAMIS).

A.3. Qualities of the Evaluation Team

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

The qualities expected from evaluators are as follows:

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

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

A.4. Methods for the Evaluation Team

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

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

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

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

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

A.5. Launch of the Program

The steps of launching the Institutional External Evaluation Program and the Institutional Accreditation Program are listed below:

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

2) As per the Article 5 and Article 6 of the THEQC Institutional External Evaluation Directive, the IEEC appoints an evaluation team to each institution included in the external evaluation program. The structure and size of the institution are considered while determining the number of members in each team.

3) Team members and institutions submit a statement via QAMIS informing whether there is any conflict of interest between the evaluation team and the evaluated institution. New evaluators are appointed in place of the team members having a possible conflict of interest.

4) The IEEC pairs teams and institutions by considering the feedback of evaluators and institutions and avoiding any possible conflict of interest.

B. EVALUATION PROCESS

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

B.1. Pre-Review Based on ISERs

The pre-review based on ISERs has two objectives:
1) Having adequate information on the institution prior to the visits and preparing the evaluation team for the site visit,

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

B.1.1. Launch of the Pre-Review Based on ISERs

1) The evaluation team can get access to the evaluated institution's ISERs and evidence through QAMIS.

2) The information and documents presented in the ISER and its annexes are reviewed by the team members in terms of compliance with the Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation Criteria. Additional information and/or documents might be requested from the institution about the aspects that remain unclear after the review.

B.1.2. Determination of the Site Visit Schedule

1) The team leader conducts meetings with other team members and the rector/director of the institution to be visited as part of the external evaluation process and determines a site visit date (April-May for the spring semester and October-November for the fall semester) agreed by all the parties. The evaluation team pays a pre-visit to the institution before the site visit. Within the scope of the pre-visit, team members organize meetings among themselves and with the institution's administrators, interview with the quality commission members of the institution and visit several spaces in the institution. During the one-day pre-visit, the schedule of the site visit is also finalized by the team leader and the rector/director. The evaluation team's expenses for the pre-visit are covered by the institution.

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

3) The team leader coordinates with the rector/director in the preparation of the draft schedule

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

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

5) Team leader and evaluators contact with each other and exchange opinions for the pre-review of the additional information and documents and the details of the visit.

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

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

8) The team leader forms the final schedule of the visit in consultation with the rector/director and conveys the visit dates to THEQC via QAMIS. The schedule is announced on the official websites of the Council and the relevant higher education institution.

B.2. Site Visit to the Institution

B.2.1. Pre-Visit

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

1) Organization of a meeting among the team members,

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

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

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

5) Formation of the site visit schedule by the team leader and the institution's rector.

B.2.2. Site Visit

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

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

1) Evaluating the factors that are not explained to the full extent in the ISER (factors that are not easy to describe or document in a written statement, such as the overall academic environment, the motivation of students and employees, the teaching staff's and students' commitment to the institution, the quality of staff and students etc.).

2) Helping the determination of the institution's strengths and areas for further development.

3) Examining the physical facilities on-site in consideration of the information and documents prepared and presented by the institution as part of the evaluation process.

4) Contributing to the continuous improvement and quality culture of the institution with the exit statement made at the end of the visit.

The visiting process should be planned and executed with a group of activities integrated to each other. In order to explicate the process, a site visit plan sample is provided in Annex 3/b with a chronological list of the activities required in this scope. The program presented in Annex 3/b should be considered a template and site visit plans should be reorganized specifically for each team and institution in a way to enable an effective evaluation.

While choosing the academic (faculties, institutes, schools of higher education, vocational schools of higher education, research and application centers etc.) and administrative units to be visited as part of the evaluation process, the size of the institution in terms of the number of students and employees and the strategic importance of the units for the institution are taken into account. Fundamental disciplines (Positive Sciences, Social Sciences, Medicine, Health Sciences, Engineering, Education, Arts) should be homogenously included in the sample, which can vary according to the institution's structure. As part of the program, the first day of the visit is generally spent on faculties whereas the second day is spent on visiting institutes, schools of higher education and vocational schools of higher education.

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

B.2.2.1. Evaluation Team's Day of Arrival (Generally Sunday)

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

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

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

c) Reviewing possible questions to be raised by the team members regarding the site visit plan.

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

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

B.2.2.2. First Day (Generally Monday)

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

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

3) The evaluation team organizes a meeting with the institution's quality commission members. During the meeting, the commission makes a presentation that provides up-to-date information on the institution's quality assurance system formed in line with the Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation Criteria, the role of the quality commission in the system and decision-making processes, the institution's strategic objectives and the role of these objectives in regional/national development goals, the institution's managerial approach in the processes related to teaching and

learning, research, social contribution and administrative practices, the institution's outlook on continuous improvement and the outcomes obtained in this scope, and other common aspects of all institutional units. Following the presentation, a Q&A session is held among the evaluation team and commission members (An average of 1 hour is recommended for the meeting.).

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

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

6) Faculties of the institution are visited in the afternoon. When necessary, the team can split into groups comprising at least two persons and pay simultaneous visits to different faculties depending on the size of the institution. During the visits, the administrators of relevant units (deans, associate deans, faculty secretaries etc.) are met to discuss a number of subjects including the dissemination of quality processes in units, the objectives of units, the role of these objectives in the institution's strategic objectives, stakeholder participation in related processes, learning outcomes of the programs within units, R&D activities and continuous improvement endeavors. The team members request the explanation of the aspects on the operation of the units that are not clarified (An average of 45 minutes is recommended for the meeting.).

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

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

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

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

B.2.2.3. Second Day (Generally Tuesday)

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

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

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

4) The evaluation team meets at the lunch break.

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

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

7) The team meets the heads of research units (Application and Research Centers, Technoparks, Transfer Offices etc.) in order to review the institution's research and development activities.

During the meeting, opinions are exchanged on a number of subjects including the objectives of relevant units, the role of these objectives in the institution's strategic objectives, stakeholder participation in related processes, quality processes and continuous improvement endeavors. The team requests the explanation of the aspects on the operation of the units that are not clarified (An average of 1.5 hours is recommended for the meeting.).

8) Following the second-day meetings, the team members meet at dinner and holds a final meeting in its aftermath. During this meeting, the team members make the necessary preparations for the exit interview, which is the final activity of the program's site visit. With the contributions of the evaluators, the team leader prepares the exit statement (Annex 4) that is to be orally presented during the exit interview. The exit statement comprises the institution's strengths and areas for further development along with additional remarks on these aspects. Each area for further development should be explained by providing brief yet adequate description. Observations and recommendations for improvement can also be added in the statement. The aspects to be stated in the exit statement should seek to contribute to the development and enhancement of the institution (The meeting may continue until the late hours of the evening with the aim of completing the exit statement.).

B.2.2.4. Third Day (Generally Wednesday)

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

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

3) The evaluation team fills out via QAMIS the “Team Member Evaluation Form (to be filled out by team members)”, which has been developed in order to enable the team leaders and members to evaluate each other, within 5 work days after the completion of the visit.

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

B.3. Post-Visit Activities

The post-visit activities start with the completion of the site visit and end with THEQC’s approval and publication of IFRs for the Institutional External Evaluation Program and the publication of THEQC’s accreditation decision following the approval of IARs for the Institutional Accreditation Program.

The post-visit activities have three purposes:

1) Enabling the inclusion of the institution’s review on the findings obtained during the visit in the IFR/IAR,

2) Providing the institution an opportunity to express their opinions,

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

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

Following the visit:

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

2) The institution conveys the "21-day response" to the team leader via QAMIS. In this response, the institution can only express views regarding the revision of the areas for further development and the correction of the errors of fact in the draft report.

3) The team leader meets the evaluators in the team and updates the report by using the data in the institution's "21-day response" and submits the final version of the report to THEQC via QAMIS (within 21 days after the institution's response).

4) The IEEC performs the consistency checks of draft reports to ensure the consistency among the reports submitted in different years or by different evaluators in the same year.

5) After consistency checks, the IEEC forms the final version of the IFR/IAR and submits it for THEQC's approval.

6) THEQC sends the final version of the IFR/IAR to the institutions in the attachment of an official letter. The IFR/IAR is announced to public via the official websites of THEQC and relevant institution. Also, THEQC's decision within the Institutional Accreditation Program is conveyed to the institution and published on THEQC's official website.

B.4. Decision

As part of the Institutional Accreditation Program, THEQC issues accreditation decision for the institutions subject to evaluation in view of the IARs prepared by the evaluation team. In the Institutional Accreditation Program to be conducted in accordance with the Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation Criteria, the institutions are evaluated and graded over 1000 points, which are split into:

- 200 points for the title of Quality Assurance System,
- 400 points for the title of Learning and Teaching,
- 150 points for the title of Research and Development,
- 100 points for the title of Social Contribution,
- and 150 points for the title of Governance System.

As part of the Program, the evaluation team calculates the maturity level of each sub-criterion. The general approach to the maturity levels of the sub-criteria is illustrated below. According to this grading system, maturity level of 5 corresponds to the highest level whereas 1 is the lowest level.

As a result of the sub-criteria’s evaluation in terms of their maturity levels within the program, THEQC grants:

- “Full accreditation” to the institution scoring 650 and above,
- “Provisional accreditation” to the institution scoring between 500 and 649.

Full accreditation is granted for 5 years while provisional accreditation is valid for 2 years. For the institutions that remain below 500 points, THEQC provides support for their institutional development in terms of quality assurance implementations. The institutions receiving less than 500 points cannot apply to the Institutional Accreditation Program for two years.

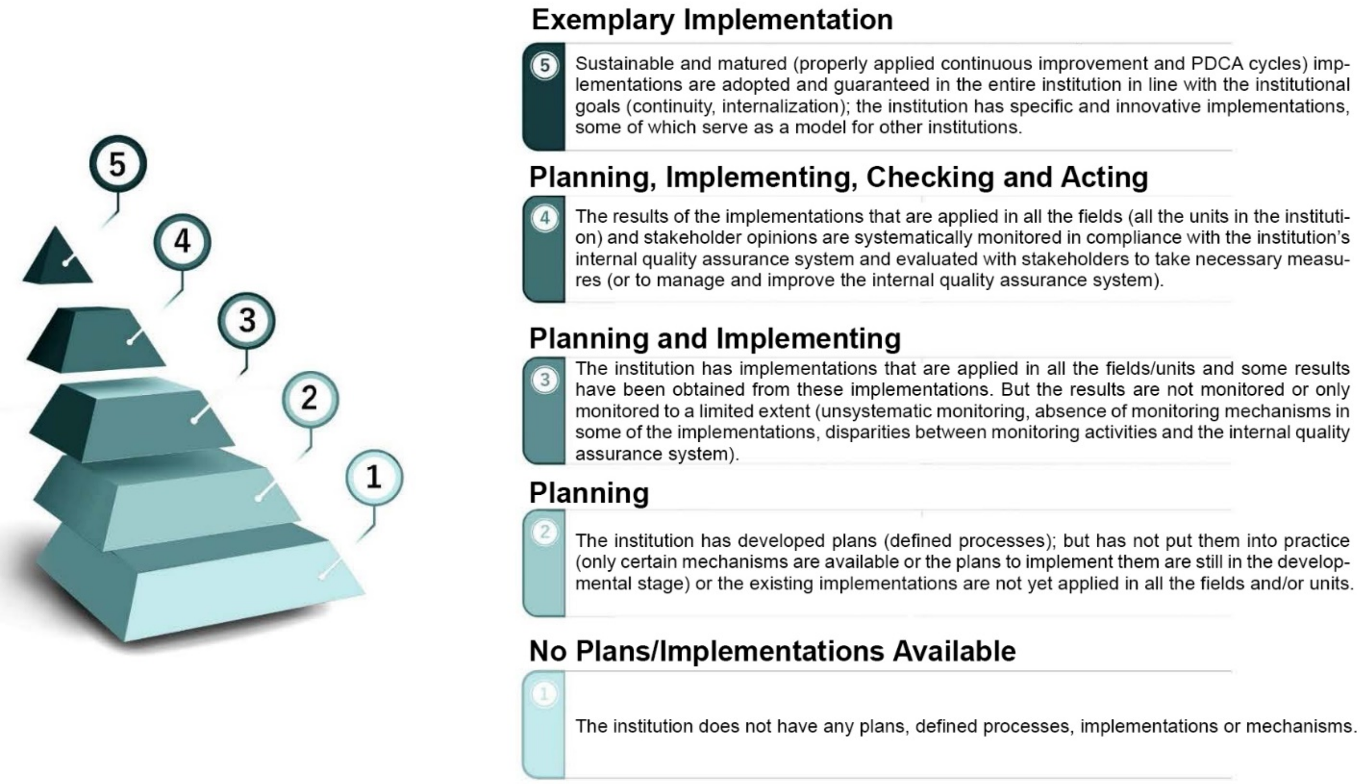

Figure 1. General Approach on the Maturity Levels of Sub-Criteria

B.5. Objections

Higher education institutions are entitled to object to the Institutional External Evaluation Program and the Institutional Accreditation Program processes conducted by THEQC. Objections may be filed for the IFRs published as part of the Institutional External Evaluation Program and the IARs and accreditation decisions published within the Institutional Accreditation Program within 60 days after their publication.

Objections are examined by the Objection Assessment Committee. The objections deemed appropriate by the Committee are conveyed to THEQC for review. The final decision is issued by THEQC. The objecting party has the right to resort to administrative jurisdiction.

B.6. Review and Improvement of the Process

As part of the evaluation processes, a 360-degree feedback method is employed to enable the evaluation of the team members by one another and the evaluated institutions' administrators. The evaluators and relevant institution fill out the online forms on QAMIS and convey them to THEQC within 5 work days following the evaluation.

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

Each year, the completion of the evaluation process is followed by two separate review meetings held with the team leaders and the administrators of the evaluated institutions. Also, a meeting aiming to inform all the HEI representatives on all the feedback and reviews made within the relevant year is organized.

As per the related article of the Regulation on Higher Education Quality Assurance and the Higher Education Quality Council, the IEEC prepares the Higher Education Evaluation and Quality Assurance Annual Situation Report and presents it to all stakeholders.

B.7. Expenses of the Evaluation Process

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

B.8. Writing Principles of IFR and IAR

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

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

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

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

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

Style: Constructive criticisms and expressions that would contribute to the institution's development should be provided in the report.

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

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

C. MONITORING PROCESS

C.1. Purpose and Scope

THEQC periodically executes the external evaluation processes of HEIs in Turkey. In this scope, a site visit is paid to each HEI and an IFR is written for the HEI based on the visit. HEIs are expected to navigate their activities according to this report at the end of the process.

The HEIs whose evaluations are completed within the Institutional External Evaluation Program coordinated by THEQC are included in the monitoring process in the second year (at earliest) following the year of evaluation. The system that sets out the details of this process is named the Institutional External Evaluation Program Monitoring System.

The purpose of the Institutional External Evaluation Program Monitoring System is to evaluate the improvement process in relevant HEI in the aftermath of the external evaluation process. “The areas for further development” part of the IFRs that are submitted as a result of the institution’s external evaluation constitutes the scope of the evaluations within the monitoring system.

C.2. Methodology

The Institutional External Evaluation Program Monitoring System is performed by the monitoring teams formed by THEQC. A monitoring team consists of at least two persons. One of them is selected among the former team leaders while the other(s) is selected from the evaluator pool. The persons in the monitoring team should not have any conflict of interest with the HEI subject to monitoring. If necessary, THEQC may provide training to the persons included in monitoring teams.

C.3. Process

The activities and operations within the Institutional External Evaluation Program Monitoring System are carried out in following order:

1) Announcement of the HEIs subject to the monitoring process,
2) Assignment of monitoring teams (training may be provided to team members if necessary),
3) Submission of the statements from monitoring team members assuring that they do not have any conflict of interest with relevant HEIs,
4) Document review by the monitoring team (based on ISERs and IFRs) and requesting information or documents from relevant HEIs,
5) 1-day site visit conducted by the monitoring team to the HEI subject to monitoring,
6) Submission of the monitoring report written by the monitoring team to THEQC,
7) Publication of the monitoring report by THEQC.

Figure 2. Stages of the Institutional External Evaluation Program Monitoring System

C.3.1. Preliminary Works

At this stage, the monitoring team examines the ISERs submitted by relevant HEI and the IFRs written on the institution as part of the Institutional External Evaluation Program. The monitoring team may demand additional information or documents from the HEI in order to clarify some points.

C.3.2. Site Visit

During the site visit stage, the monitoring team conducts a 1-day site visit to the HEI. The team interviews with the HEI's senate or administrative committee as part of the site visit. The site visit plan sample for the monitoring process is presented in Annex 6.

C.3.3. Submission of the Monitoring Report

The team prepares a monitoring report at this stage. The team writes the report and submits it to THEQC within 15 days after the completion of the site visit. The monitoring report should comprise the improvements and changes made by the institution with regard to the areas for further development underlined within the HEI's external evaluation. The monitoring report template is provided in Annex 7.

C.3.4. Approval and Publication of the Monitoring Report

The IEEC checks the consistency and writing of the monitoring report and presents it to the Council. Following the Council's approval, the report is published on the official website of THEQC and conveyed to relevant HEI.

ANNEXES

1. THEQC Code of Ethics

2. Rubric Evaluation Form

3. A- Evaluation Team Pre-Visit Plan Sample

B- Evaluation Team Site Visit Plan Sample

4. Exit Statement Template

5. Monitoring Team Site Visit Plan Sample

6. Monitoring Report Template

Turkish Higher Education
Quality Council

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