

Institutional Evaluation Programme:

Guidelines for institutions

2017

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1 Introduction and Schedule

These guidelines provide institutions that have registered for an IEP evaluation with information and guidance on various aspects of the evaluation process.

1.1 IEP overview

The Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) is an independent membership service of the European University Association (EUA) that has been designed to ensure that higher education institutions gain maximum benefit from a comprehensive evaluation conducted by a team of experienced higher education leaders on a peer-review basis. The intention is that these evaluations support the participating institutions in the continuing development of their strategic leadership, capacity to manage change and internal quality culture, and that IEP provides recommendations in the context of their specific aims and objectives. An IEP evaluation is a voluntary process for the participating institutions; as such, they are invited to examine the IEP teams' recommendations and decide on their implementation.

IEP is based on the following core characteristics:

- comprehensive evaluations, which take into account the institution's specific goals, objectives and profile, with emphasis on an inclusive self-evaluation process and institutional self-knowledge;
- an improvement-oriented approach, which actively supports the institution in fulfilling its mission, independent from governments or other such bodies and is not geared towards an accreditation or rankings;
- a European focus, which takes into account the framework of current developments in higher education, with international evaluation teams representing diversity in the field.

The focus of IEP is the institution as a whole rather than individual study programmes or units. It focuses upon:

- Capacity of strategic leadership and effectiveness of internal governance and management processes that support it.
- Relevance of internal quality processes and the degree to which their outcomes are used in decision making and strategic management as well as perceived gaps in these internal mechanisms. As part of this larger framework the evaluations address the issues on internal quality assurance identified by the first part of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG – see **annex 5**).

IEP does not impose externally defined criteria, yet the evaluation is structured around four central questions:

- What is the institution trying to do?
- How is the institution trying to do it?
- How does the institution know it works?
- How does the institution change in order to improve?

In addition to regular institutional evaluations, IEP has been engaged in a number of system-wide evaluations (e.g. in Romania, Montenegro, Ireland, Slovakia and Portugal) usually commissioned by ministries, national rectors' conferences or NGOs).

IEP is a full-member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and is listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

The evaluation reports are public and available through the IEP website.

1.2 IEP evaluation teams

IEP evaluation teams consist of highly experienced and knowledgeable higher education leaders – rectors¹ or vice rectors (current or former), a senior higher education professional acting as the team coordinator, and a student. Each team member comes from a different country, and none come from the same country as the participating institution. The number of team members is determined by the size of the participating institution. Generally, teams consist of five members; institutions with fewer than 3 500 students will have a four-member team.

Team members are selected by the IEP Steering Committee with a view to providing each participating institution with an appropriate mix of knowledge, skills, objectivity and international perspective. IEP will take into account any concerns over conflicts of interest that may exist and will make an informed decision over the final composition of the team.

All team members attend a training seminar on an annual basis for training on conducting IEP evaluations.

1.3 Indicative time frame

The following time frame applies for institutions that register for an IEP evaluation during the regular registration period in the spring. However, the IEP secretariat is prepared to work with each participating institution to adapt this time frame to specific circumstances and requirements.

Stage 1: April-June 2017

- ✓ The institution registers for participation in the Institutional Evaluation Programme by the end of June

Stage 2: July-October 2017

- ✓ IEP and the institution sign a contract
- ✓ The institution is expected to pay the fee for the evaluation by the end of September unless otherwise agreed upon
- ✓ IEP establishes an evaluation team for each participating institution
- ✓ The institution is invited to attend a workshop or an individual videoconference organised by IEP to discuss the objectives of the evaluation and to receive guidance on planning the process

Stage 3: October 2017 - February 2018

- ✓ The institution undertakes a self-evaluation and provides IEP with a self-evaluation report on the basis of the framework outlined in the IEP guidelines. The institution must send the self-evaluation report to IEP at the latest four weeks prior to the first site visit.

Stage 4: March - June 2018

¹ In this document, Rector refers to the Executive Head of Institution, also called President, Vice-Chancellor or Principal, among others.

- ✓ The evaluation team conducts a first site visit to the institution and requests any additional information as appropriate
- ✓ The institution submits any additional information prior to the second visit
- ✓ The evaluation team makes a second site visit to the institution, at the end of which it presents an oral summary of its conclusions

Stage 5: July – September 2018

- ✓ IEP presents the draft written report to the institution for comments on factual errors
- ✓ IEP sends the finalised report to the institution
- ✓ IEP publishes the evaluation report on its web-site (www.iep-qaq.org)

Stage 6: October 2018 onwards

- ✓ The institution may use the “Evaluated by – Institutional Evaluation Programme” icon on its website and other informational products to signify the completion of an IEP evaluation. The icon may be used for up to five years after the receipt and publication of the final evaluation report. IEP will send the icon to the institution along with the guidelines for usage upon completion of the evaluation.
- ✓ The institution will address the IEP recommendations in accordance with its internal procedures.
- ✓ The institution will send IEP a progress report within one year of the receipt of the IEP evaluation report.

2 The roles of institutional actors

The role of the **institutional leadership** is crucial in ensuring the success of the evaluation. The institutional leadership will:

- Appoint an institutional liaison person for the evaluation process
- Set up a self-evaluation group as soon as IEP has confirmed the registration of the institution
- Clarify the responsibility of the self-evaluation group towards staff members who are not on the team, i.e., the self-evaluation group should not work in isolation but seek, through institution-wide discussions, to present as broad a view as possible of the institution.
- Support and encourage the whole evaluation process by explaining its purpose across the institution.
- Sign off on the final self-evaluation report. This does not mean that the rector or all actors in the institution necessarily agree with all statements in the self-evaluation report, however the rector must accept responsibility for both the self-evaluation process as well as the report.

The **self-evaluation group** (hereafter 'group') will steer the self-evaluation process and write the self-evaluation report based on the guiding questions for the IEP evaluation.

The self-evaluation group should have the following characteristics:

- The group is *small* (max. 10 members) to ensure that it is efficient.
- Its members are in a good position to judge the institution's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.
- It is representative of the main stakeholders in the institution (academic and administrative staff and students). While it is important that the major constituencies of the institution are represented, the group should not be an exhaustive gathering of all units and faculties within the institution.
- The rector should *not* be part of the group (see above for the role of the institutional leadership).
- It plans, coordinates and distributes the work. This might include tailoring the guiding questions (**annex 2**) to the national and institutional context, gathering and analysing the data, co-ordinating the work of any sub-group, compiling the final report.
- It provides opportunities for a broad discussion of the self-evaluation within the institution in order to promote shared understanding and ownership of the process and the report.

The **institutional liaison person** will liaise with the IEP secretariat and team coordinator on all aspects of the evaluation, including the arrangements of the site visits (arranging transportation for the evaluation team to and from the airport, between hotel and institution, hotel reservations, dinners, lunches and scheduling meetings).

Finally, it is essential for the success of the IEP evaluation that information about the procedures, goals and expected benefits of undertaking an IEP evaluation is circulated widely in the institution. **Annex 1** of these guidelines contains a sample handout that may be used by the institution to support this.

3 The self-evaluation phase

IEP emphasises self-evaluation as a crucial phase in the evaluation process. The self-evaluation phase has two aspects that are equally important: the self-evaluation *process* and the self-evaluation *report*:

- The self-evaluation *process* is a collective institutional reflection and an opportunity for the institution itself to identify key areas that require further attention, as well as understanding its strengths and how best to utilise them. Institutions are urged to involve all members of the institution in this process.
- The self-evaluation *report* is one outcome of the self-evaluation process; it provides information to the evaluation team, with emphasis on the institution's strategic and quality management activities.

The goal of both the *process* and the *report* is to enhance the institutional strategic leadership, capacity for improvement and change through self-reflection. This is a crucial phase in which careful consideration should be given to maximise the engagement of the whole institution. If an institution wants the evaluation process to address one or more of its particular strategic priorities in-depth, it should pay particular attention to the chosen priorities in its self-evaluation process and report.

3.1 The self-evaluation process

Conducting the self-evaluation process and writing the report is an ambitious task that requires a substantial time investment, usually over a period of approximately three months. It is of the utmost importance to the running of the evaluation and especially the site visits that deadlines are respected and the self-evaluation report is submitted at least 4 weeks before the first site visit. To ensure this, the self-evaluation group is advised to plan to **meet weekly for a couple of hours** to ensure progress.

Annex 2 presents a list of guiding questions that will steer the key discussions of the self-evaluation group and inform the data collection and support analysis of the information gathered in order to prepare the self-evaluation report. However, these questions do not have to be rigidly adhered to. Since each institution operates within its own specific context, the self-evaluation group may want to tailor these questions before starting its work. The guiding questions are structured into four major sections that reflect the four central questions upon which an IEP evaluation is based.

3.2 The self-evaluation report

After the self-evaluation group has collected and analysed the evidence, it will synthesise all the information gathered and present its findings in the self-evaluation report.

As the main vehicle for the institution to present itself, the self-evaluation report is also an opportunity for the institution to *reflect critically* upon the way it is managed and show how the various elements of strategic thinking and quality management are interconnected.

Therefore, the self-evaluation report should not be simply descriptive, but *analytical, evaluative and synthetic*.

As an important step in the evaluation exercise, the self-evaluation report has four major purposes:

- To present a succinct but analytical and comprehensive statement of the institution's view of quality and strategic management
- To analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the institution, identify the opportunities and threats it faces and propose specific actions to address them
- To provide quantitative and qualitative data supporting the analysis
- To provide a framework against which the institution will be evaluated by the IEP team

A proposed structure for this report is presented in **annex 3**, however this is for guidance only, and can be adapted according to the institutional context.

Some practical considerations to be taken into account when preparing the self-evaluation report:

- The maximum length of the self-evaluation report is 20-25 pages, excluding the appendices. The reason for this relatively short report is to maintain a focus on institutional management without probing too deeply into the specifics of all faculties and activities. Institutions are also encouraged to make use of any existing data and documents.
- A list of typical appendices to the self-evaluation report can be found in **annex 3**.
- Unless there has been a previous agreement on the language of the evaluation, the self-evaluation report and its appendices should be written in English.
- The self-evaluation report is written partly for an internal audience (the institution's staff members and students) and partly for the evaluation team. The evaluation team is knowledgeable about higher education in general but, as international peers, they may lack in-depth knowledge of specific national situations. The self-evaluation group should keep this in mind when writing its report.
- The self-evaluation report should be made available to all institutional members.
- IEP and the evaluation team will consider the self-evaluation report as confidential and will not provide the report of any information about it to third parties.
- The report should be sent in electronic format to the IEP secretariat at least **four weeks** prior to the first site visit. The IEP secretariat will distribute it to the members of the evaluation team. In addition, if specifically requested by an IEP team member, the institution may be asked to send paper copies to the evaluation team.

4 Site Visits

4.1 Preparing for the site visits

Each institution will be visited twice by the IEP evaluation team. The aim of the first visit is to allow the team to gain a general picture of the institution and the way in which it operates. The second visit then allows for a more in depth investigation of the priority areas of concern.

As with all aspects of the IEP evaluation, the following guidelines and the sample schedules for the site visits are typically adapted to the institutional context, so as to best achieve the goal of supporting the institution's strategic leadership and capacity to change.

In order to ensure fruitful discussion during the site visits, the following basic principles should be taken into account for each meeting:

- The number of participants in each meeting **should not exceed eight** (except when meeting the self-evaluation group). This is to ensure that all participants in a meeting have an opportunity to answer questions and contribute to the discussion.
- The team should meet separately with individual groups, e.g., only students should attend the students' meeting, with no members of the staff present. Similarly, different levels of institutional hierarchy should not be mixed within meetings. This is to ensure participants do not feel inhibited from expressing their views.
- All meetings will be treated confidentially by the evaluation team. It will not quote individuals or report on statements that could be traced back to a specific participant.
- In order to maintain the confidentiality of discussions and to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings, special attention should be paid to the quality of interpretation, if this is necessary for any meetings. Ideally the interpreter should come from outside the institution.
- All meetings are interactive and participants should not prepare any presentations. The evaluation team will come prepared with questions in order to start a dialogue.

Furthermore, taking into account the following considerations regarding the programme and logistics will help to ensure a smooth visit:

- The final schedules for site visits are subject to agreement by the institution and evaluation team. The schedule of the second visit particularly will be highly dependent on the themes on which that the evaluation team wishes to concentrate.
- Enough time should be left for the team's internal debriefing sessions. Furthermore, apart from the initial dinner with the rector, dinners are also debriefing time for the team and should therefore not be attended by members of the institution.
- A ten-minute gap should be left between each meeting to allow groups to go in and out, to give the evaluation team a few minutes to reflect together on previous meetings or to make changes to plans for the next meeting. Such brief breaks, in addition to coffee breaks, can also be useful to catch up on time if some meetings take longer than expected.
- If the evaluation team needs to move from one location to another (e.g., to another faculty), the time required for this should be taken into account. If the institution is spread across several sites, careful consideration should be given as to whether visits to several sites are necessary. Unnecessary visits should be avoided in order to keep travelling time at a minimum.
- If interpretation is required at any of the meetings, consideration should be given to the impact this will have on the length of the meeting.

- All practical arrangements for the site visits, including transportation, accommodation and meals should be arranged in advanced and paid for by the institution.
- Participants in the meetings should receive in advance information about the evaluation team and the objectives of the evaluation in general and the particular meeting in which they are involved.
- It would be helpful for the team to receive the names and positions of the people to be interviewed in each meeting beforehand (at the latest the day before) and name plates should be provided for all meetings.

4.2 First visit

For the institution, the first visit serves the following purposes:

- To contribute to greater awareness in the institution at large of the evaluation process and its purpose
- To identify the topics for the second site visit and to set an open and self-critical tone for the meetings.

For the evaluation team, the first visit will contribute to develop their understanding of:

- the national higher education context
- the institution's mission and goals
- the structures and processes of strategic decision making (planning, teaching and research, financial flows and HR policy)
- the local context influencing strategic leadership and management
- the existing procedures for quality assurance

The first visit should result in a validation of the self-evaluation report, and the evaluation team should get a broad impression of how the institution operates.

Therefore, the choice of persons the evaluation team meets is highly important. For the benefit of both the institution and the team, a diverse but representative sample of the institutional community should take part in the first visit. This includes academic and non-academic staff, as well as different types of students and representatives of external stakeholders. It is important that the evaluation team meets also "average" students and "average" academic staff, i.e., not only those who are members of official bodies (senate or council) or unions.

The first visit lasts **2 days**. The institution is responsible for proposing the schedule, which is then validated by the evaluation team. Persons and bodies that the evaluation team should meet at a minimum includes:

- The rector and members of the rector's team
- The self-evaluation group
- Representatives of the central staff: quality office, international relations office, financial services, student services, HR office, planning unit, coordinating unit of research activities, public relations office, etc.
- Representatives of external stakeholders and partners (public authorities, private industry, other actors from society that are relevant for the institution)
- Representatives of the senate/council/board

- Deans
- Staff members from one or two faculties and one or two special centres (if any)
- Students (bachelor, master and doctoral level)

The sample schedule in **annex 4** includes visits to faculties or other units, which may (but need not) be organised as parallel sessions. It should also be kept in mind that the team will have the opportunity to visit other units during the second visit. Please note that:

- Faculty is used here in a generic sense to mean a “structural unit”, i.e., some institutions have only faculties while others have different types of faculties, research institutes and other structures. The evaluation team (split in pairs if necessary) may be interested in visiting a mixture of these units.
- The number and types of units to be visited should be adjusted based on the institutional structure and size: some institutions have small numbers of large units; others have large numbers of small units.

At the end of the first visit, the evaluation team will:

- Ask for additional information if necessary. These additional documents should be sent to all members of the team and to the IEP secretariat at least four weeks before the date of the second site visit.
- Decide the dates of the second visit in co-operation with the institution, if they have not already been confirmed. Usually the second visit should take place six to eight weeks after the first visit.
- Identify the persons, bodies or units to meet during the second visit.

The first visit contributes to the team’s understanding of the specific characteristics of the institution. As such, it is not intended to lead to any conclusions. The evaluation team will not produce any evaluation report at this point.

4.3 Second visit and the oral report

After gaining an understanding of the specificities of the institution during the first visit, the focus during the second visit is for the team to find out whether, how, and with what results, the institutional strategy and internal quality policies and procedures are implemented coherently in the institution.

The practical aspects for organising the first visit apply to the second visit as well, with one important difference. The evaluation team will be responsible for proposing the programme of the second visit, which will then be discussed with the institution. An example of a schedule for the second visit is given in **annex 4**, but the exact programme will depend very much on the findings of the first visit. The schedule of the visit may include parallel sessions, with the team splitting in two, in order to cover more ground and collect more evidence. The team will advise the institution in good time of its plans in this respect.

The standard length of the second visit is **three days**. However, in case the institution is small (3 500 students or less), the second visit may be shortened to **two days**. Similarly, for very large institutions, the evaluation team and the institution may decide together, where appropriate, to extend it to a maximum of **four days**. Any change in the length of the second visit should be discussed with the IEP secretariat and decided as early as possible in the evaluation process, and at the latest during the first visit.

At the end of the second visit, the evaluation team delivers the **oral report**, presenting their preliminary findings, firstly to the rector alone and then in a meeting with members of the institutional community. The institution is responsible for deciding who to invite to this presentation, but it should usually include at least the self-evaluation group and those who were interviewed by the team during the two visits.

Videotaping or recording the oral report session or including members of the media during this session is not recommended. However, if the institution intends to do this, it must be agreed with the team chair in advance of this session.

5 Evaluation report

After the site visits, the evaluation team will draft a written report based on the contents of the oral report presented at the end of the second visit. The report will present the key findings of the evaluation and recommendations for how the institution can improve.

The draft report will be sent to the rector and the liaison person by the IEP secretariat, giving the institution the opportunity to bring attention to any factual errors in the report.

Any corrections should be sent to the IEP secretariat within two weeks. The report will then be finalised and sent officially to the rector, again via the IEP secretariat.²

The institution is encouraged to disseminate the final report widely amongst its stakeholders. IEP also publishes all final evaluation reports on its website (www.iep-qaq.org).

The table below summarises the timing and division of tasks during the report-writing stage.

Time frame and division of responsibilities		
Task	Main responsibility	Time frame
Preparing draft report	Team coordinator and the evaluation team. IEP secretariat is in charge of reviewing the report and language editing.	Within 9 weeks after the second visit
Sending report to institution	IEP secretariat	Within 2 weeks
Commenting on factual errors	Rector	Within 2 weeks of receipt of the draft report
Any changes due to factual errors + sending final report to institution + publishing it on IEP website (www.iep-qaq.org)	IEP secretariat	Within 1 week of receiving comments on factual errors (or confirmation that there are none)

After receiving the final report, evaluated institutions may also use the “Evaluated by – Institutional Evaluation Programme” icon on their websites and other informational products for up to five years to signify their completion of an IEP evaluation. The icon will be sent along with guidelines for usage upon completion of the evaluation.

² On receipt of the evaluation report, the institution has the right to lodge a complaint on procedural grounds within one month, if it considers that an evaluation has not been carried out with due consideration to the IEP Guidelines. Institutions that wish to lodge a complaint are requested to contact the IEP secretariat for information regarding further steps.

6 Follow-up activities

For the ultimate success of the evaluation, it is important that the process does not end with the final evaluation report, but that this is followed up. The crucial form of follow-up is what happens within the evaluated institution after they have received the report. In this regard, following the voluntary nature of IEP and the principle of institutional autonomy, institutions are free to implement (or not) the recommendations. It is, however, expected that each institution will analyse the experiences and results of the evaluation process (both in terms of self-evaluation phase and IEP team's contribution) and address the recommendations made in the final evaluation report.

Beyond this, there are two further stages of follow-up with IEP, which are outlined below.

6.1 Progress report

Within one year of receipt of the final evaluation report, the institution should submit to the IEP secretariat a brief progress report. The aim of the progress report is to shed light on how the institution has addressed the recommendations made by the evaluation team. This does not mean that the team will expect the institution to have taken up all their recommendations, instead feedback is expected on whether the institution is implementing specific recommendations or not, in what way and why.

In addition to continuing the institutional self-reflection process, the progress report also provides valuable feedback to the evaluation team on the usability and practicability of their recommendations to the institution.

The report will be shared with the IEP team, who will provide a brief feedback on it. IEP and the evaluation team will consider the progress report as confidential and will not communicate the contents or any information regarding this report to third parties.

6.2 Follow-up evaluation

Evaluated institutions have the option of registering for a follow-up evaluation carried out by IEP one to three years after the initial evaluation. At the request of the institution, IEP will form a team of four evaluators (usually including two of the team that carried out the original evaluation) to conduct a follow-up evaluation to identify the impact that the initial evaluation has had on the institution's development, investigate the experiences gained from changes implemented after the initial evaluation and give further impetus for change. Any institution interested in having a follow-up evaluation should contact the IEP secretariat (info@iep-qaq.org).

Annex 1

The EUA's Institutional Evaluation Programme

Participating institutions can distribute this sheet to all participants in the self-evaluation process or in the site visits.

The Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) is an independent membership service of the European University Association (EUA) that has been designed to ensure that higher education institutions gain maximum benefit from a comprehensive evaluation conducted by a team of experienced European higher education leaders.

Consistent with institutional autonomy, the mission of IEP is to support higher education institutions and systems in developing their strategic leadership and capacity to manage change through a process of voluntary institutional evaluations.

IEP evaluates higher education institutions in the context of their specific goals and objectives with the aim of improving quality. The Programme applies a context-driven approach to its evaluations, emphasises an inclusive self-evaluation process and institutional self-knowledge as a contribution to improved strategic leadership accompanied by efficient internal governance and management, as well as for external accountability purposes.

Therefore, IEP evaluations focus on the effectiveness of quality culture and the degree to which the outcomes of the internal quality processes are used in decision-making and strategic management, as well as on identifying any gaps in these internal mechanisms. The IEP evaluations have a formative orientation, i.e., they are aimed at contributing to the development and enhancement of the institutions. IEP is not geared towards passing judgements, accrediting, ranking or comparing institutions.

The IEP evaluation team consists of rectors or vice-rectors (active or former), a student and a senior higher education professional acting as team coordinator. Team members provide an international and European perspective; they all come from different countries, and none of them comes from the country of the institution being evaluated. Team members (other than the team coordinator) are not paid for their IEP work; they are motivated to serve by a commitment to the Programme's nature and purposes and by a desire to contribute to the development of the institution being evaluated.

During the first visit, the evaluation team becomes acquainted with the institution and its environment. In the second visit, generally two months later, the focus is on finding out whether, how, and how effectively, the institution's strategic policies and quality procedures are implemented.

It should be emphasised that the main preoccupation of the team is to be helpful and constructive. Team members will come prepared to lead discussions with carefully prepared questions. Sessions are intended to be interactive. No formal presentations should be made.

The evaluation team's conclusions and recommendations are collected in a report that will be presented to the institution and subsequently published on the IEP website.

Since 1994, nearly 400 evaluations and follow-up evaluations in 45 countries (mostly in Europe but also in Latin America, Asia and Africa) have been conducted by IEP. These have included all types and sizes of higher education institutions: public and private universities and polytechnics, comprehensive and specialised institutions, including art and music schools.

Annex 2

Guiding questions for self-evaluation process

I. Norms and values, mission and goals: *What is the institution trying to do?*

This section discusses institutional norms and values. It analyses the mission and goals of the institution. The IEP evaluation team will be particularly interested in the strategic choices the institution has made with regard to its scope and profile. For each of the following issues, consider not just the current situation, but also reflect on the rationale behind the choices made and the extent to which the scope and profile are fit for purpose.

- Profile
 - ✓ What is the vision, mission and profile of the institution; what makes it unique?
 - ✓ What balance is the institution aiming to achieve between its teaching and learning, research and service to society?
 - ✓ What are the institution's academic priorities, i.e. which study programmes and areas of research are emphasised?
 - ✓ What are the institution's goals for its relationship to society (external partners, local and regional government) and its involvement in public debate?
- What is the degree of centralisation/decentralisation of institutional governance and management that the institution aims for?
- How does the institution see its relationship with its funding agencies (public and others, such as research contractors)?
- What are the institution's goals and priorities in terms of its local, national, European and international positioning?

II. Governance and activities: *How is the institution trying to do it?*

The issues addressed in Section I should be re-visited, but rather than stating objectives, Section II will reflect how the strategies discussed above in Section I are operationalised and objectives are achieved. Of interest in this section is the level of institutional autonomy and the extent to which the institution takes full advantage of this.

On each topic in this section the self-evaluation should not only focus on describing the current state of affairs, but reflect on the fitness-for-purpose of the policies and processes in place with respect to the stated objectives and also give concrete proposals on how identified weaknesses could be remedied and strengths could be further enhanced.

Institutional governance and decision-making

- What are the roles and responsibilities of the institution's decision-making bodies?
- What are the links between central bodies/offices/staff and those at department/faculty level; how is the cooperation coordinated?
- What kind of policies does the institution have in place (central or at faculty level) for quality assurance, internationalisation, research and innovation management etc.? How are these policies linked to the overall strategic direction of the institution?

- Who has decision-making power over academic and research activities, funding issues, selection and promotion of staff, admission etc.?
- How is it ensured that activities are aligned with the desired institutional profile and missions? Who is responsible for this?
- How are internal (including students) and external stakeholders involved in institutional governance and decision-making?
- Funding:
 - ✓ Analyse the total budget (breakdown of income and expenditure) of the institution
 - ✓ How are decisions made about budget allocation, including to faculties/departments and for new initiatives at institutional level?
- Human resources:
 - ✓ What are the key features of the institution's human resource policy? What is the profile of the staff (academic vs support staff, per faculty, demographics)?
 - ✓ How does the institution ensure the competences of its staff? What kind of staff development structures and processes are in place? (cf. ESG 1.5)

Quality culture

Note that processes related to teaching and learning are enshrined in part 1 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG – see **annex 5**). However, the institution should not limit this section merely to teaching and learning, but examine also monitoring and enhancement processes of other activities, such as research activities, administrative processes and service to society.

- What does the institutional quality assurance policy consist of? (cf. ESG 1.1)
- What is the scope of the institution's internal quality assurance system?
- What is the relationship between strategic management and the quality assurance system?
- Does the institution have an internal quality assurance handbook or equivalent?
- How does the institution support the development of an institutional quality culture?
-

Teaching and learning

- How do the study programmes reflect the institutional mission and goals?
- How and to what extent does the institution implement a student-centred approach implemented to teaching and learning? (cf. ESG 1.3)
- What are the institutional policies and activities related to the use of different mode of delivery and flexible study paths?
- How does study programme design and approval function in the institution? Who does what? (cf. ESG 1.2)
- What are the policies and processes covering the various phases of the student life-cycle? (cf. ESG 1.4)
- Student support services (cf. ESG 1.6):

- ✓ Is the organisation and content of student support services adequate to meet the goals set?
- ✓ How effective are student support services in enhancing the achievement of students?

Research

- How do the research activities reflect the institution's overall mission and goals?
- How is the management of research organised?
- How is research linked to teaching activities in the institution?

Service to society

- How does the institution define its service to society role? What kind of specific activities are included? E.g. research and technology transfer, continuing education and service to community, etc.

Internationalisation

- Is there an internationalisation policy in place?
- What are the main internationalisation activities undertaken by the institution?
- How do the internationalisation activities reflect the institution's overall mission and goals?
- How is the management of internationalisation activities organised?

III. Institutional self-knowledge: *How does the institution know it works?*

The question "How does the institution know it works?" refers to the internal monitoring processes and practices (sometimes also referred to as institutional research activities) in place in the institution and the information collected feeds into the strategic management of the institution (cf. ESG 1.7).

- What are the tools used to monitor and evaluate the institution's different activities?
 - ✓ Specifically related to teaching and learning mission: how are programmes monitored and reviewed? (cf. ESG 1.9)
- Do these tools provide sufficient evidence to inform decision-making at various level? How could they be improved to ensure it is fit-for-purpose?
- How is the link between the evidence and institutional planning and development processes ensured?
- How are internal and external stakeholders involved in these processes?

IV. Strategic management and capacity for change: *How does the institution change in order to improve?*

Using the information gathered for the all the above sections, the self-evaluation group should conduct a SWOT analysis in relation to the goals and mission of the institution. On the basis of that analysis the following questions should be considered, to assess the institution's capacity to change in order to improve.

- How does the institution act upon the results of monitoring and evaluation activities?
- How responsive is the institution to the demands, threats and opportunities present in its internal and external environments? How could the institution become more responsive?

- To what extent does the institution take full advantage of its autonomy?
- Are there areas in which a better match could be attained between the mission and goals of the institution and the activities taking place to meet these? (study programmes, research, service to society)? Why does this happen, how can it be changed? How are internal and external stakeholders involved in the development of the institution?
- How are internal and external stakeholders involved in the development of the institution?

Annex 3

Proposed structure and content for the self-evaluation report

Introduction

Brief analysis of the self-evaluation process:

- Who are the self-evaluation group members?
- To what extent was the report discussed across the institution?
- What were the positive aspects, as well as the difficulties, encountered in the self-evaluation process?

Institutional context

Brief presentation of the institution and the context in which it operates:

- Brief historical overview
- Legal status of the institution (public, private non-profit, private for-profit. If private who are the owners and what is the legal form)
- Level of autonomy of the institution
- Geographical position of the institution (e.g., in a capital city, major regional centre, concentrated on one campus, dispersed across a city)
- Number of faculties, research institutes/laboratories, academic and administrative staff and students
- Status of the institution with respect to the external quality assurance requirements
- A brief analysis of the current regional and national labour-market situation

Body of the report

The body of the self-evaluation report should be structured according to the guiding questions for the self-evaluation process (**annex 2**).

As mentioned in section 3.2, the body of the self-evaluation report should not be simply descriptive, but *analytical, evaluative and synthetic* as well. It should assess strengths and weaknesses, identify threats and opportunities and show how the various elements of strategic and quality management are interconnected. In addition, the analysis should take into account changes that have taken place in the recent past as well as those that are anticipated in the future.

Conclusion

The conclusion summarises the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and **offers a specific action plan to remedy weaknesses and to develop strengths further.**

A useful conclusion has the following characteristics:

- Since the goal of the evaluation is to promote ongoing quality and strategic development, the report should be honest, self-reflective, and refer back to the institution's mission and goals. Therefore, strengths and weaknesses need to be stated explicitly; specifically, it is best to avoid playing down or hiding weaknesses.
- Strengths and weaknesses that are discussed in the main body of the report are summarised again in the conclusion.

- Strengths and weaknesses that are not discussed in the body of the report should not appear in the conclusion since they would be unsubstantiated.
- Plans to remedy weaknesses should be offered in the conclusion in the form of a specific action plan.

Appendices

Appendices will typically include the following:

- The current Institutional Strategic Plan (if one exists) or preferably, an Executive Summary of it
- An organisational chart(s) of the
 - ✓ management structure (rector, council/senate, faculty deans and councils, major committees, etc.)
 - ✓ institution's faculties (or any other relevant units of teaching/research)
 - ✓ central administration and support services (rector's office staff, libraries etc.)
- Student numbers for the whole institution, with a breakdown by faculty, over the last three to five years; student/staff ratio (lowest, highest and mean ratios); time-to-graduation; drop-out rates; gender distribution by faculty; demographic trends in the wider target population
- Academic staff numbers (by academic rank and faculty) for the whole institution, over the last three to five years, with a breakdown by level, discipline, gender and age
- Key data on funding: i.e. government funding (amount and percentage of total budget), other funding sources (type and percentage of total budget) and research funding (percentage within total budget); breakdown of institutional funding for teaching and research per faculty over the last three to five years
- Infrastructure in relation to the number of students and staff: number and size of buildings, facilities, laboratories, and libraries; their location (e.g., dispersed over a large geographical area or concentrated on a single campus); condition of the facilities
- Handbook for prospective international students (if one exists).

Beyond these appendices, the institution is free to add other information, but the number and length of appendices should be limited to what is strictly necessary in order to understand the statements and argumentation in the self-evaluation report.

Annex 4

Sample schedules for the site visits

Sample schedule for the first visit

<i>Time</i>	<i>What & who?</i>	<i>Why?</i>
DAY 0		
Late afternoon	Arrival of evaluation team	
90 minutes	Briefing meeting IEP team alone	Division of tasks; discussion of the self-evaluation; inventory of issues for the first visit
Evening	Dinner IEP team with rector and liaison person	Welcome, make acquaintance; go over preliminary programme; discuss key issues for evaluation from the institution's perspective (arising from self-evaluation and/or from rector's experience)
DAY 1		
9.00 – 10.00	Meeting with rector IEP team with Rector	Discuss <i>privately</i> issues that need to be stressed in evaluation team's visit and report
10.15 – 11.30	Introduction meeting and meeting with self-evaluation group IEP team with self-evaluation group and liaison person	Introduction to the institution: structures, quality management and strategic management; national higher education and research policies; student issues. Understand self-evaluation process and extent of institutional involvement; how useful was the self-evaluation for the institution (emerging issues, function in strategic planning processes)? Are self-evaluation data still up to date? Will they be updated for the second site visit?
11.30 – 12.30	Tour of the campus	To get to know the campus and paying special attention to student facilities.

12.30 – 14.00	Lunch IEP team with liaison person	Reflect upon impressions of first meetings and complete information as necessary
14.10 – 15.00 parallel Evaluation team may split into pairs to visit two faculties	Visit to faculties A & B Dean and possibly vice-dean	Introduction to the faculty: structures, quality management and strategic management; discuss relationships of faculties with the central level; input in self-evaluation; role of quality control activities in faculty
15.10 – 15.50 parallel Evaluation team may split into pairs to visit two faculties	Visit to faculties A & B IEP team with academic staff representatives	Discuss relationships of faculties with the central level; input in self-evaluation; role of quality control activities in faculty; recruitment of new staff; staff development; motivation policies. Please note that deans or vice deans should not be present at this meeting: it is reserved for “regular” academic staff only.
16.00 – 16.40 parallel Evaluation team may split into pairs to visit two faculties	Visit to faculties A & B IEP team with students	Students’ views on experience (e.g., teaching and learning, student input in quality control and (strategic) decision making)
17.00 – 18.00	Meeting with external partners IEP team with representatives of industry, society and/or local authority	Discuss relations of the institution with external partners of the private and public sectors
18.30 – 19.30	Debriefing meeting IEP team alone	Reflect on impressions; prepare second day of visit
Evening	Dinner IEP team alone	Reflect on impressions gained thus far

DAY 2

9.00 – 9.50 parallel Evaluation team may split into pairs	Visit to faculties C & D IEP team with dean and possibly vice-dean	As in faculties A and B (adapt as appropriate)
10.00 – 10.40 parallel Evaluation team may split into pairs	Visit to faculties C & D IEP team with academic staff representatives	As in faculties A and B (adapt as appropriate)
10.50 – 11.30 parallel Evaluation team may split into pairs	Visit to faculties C & D IEP team with students	As in faculties A and B (adapt as appropriate)
11.40 – 12.30	Debriefing meeting IEP team alone	Reflect on impressions; list issues for additions to self-evaluation report and second visit
12.30 – 13.00	Planning meeting IEP team with liaison person	Plan the second visit schedule (select faculties or units, special or additional persons to speak with); logistical support for or during visit; arranging team's meeting and working rooms (where team can work on its oral report)
13.00	Lunch IEP team with rector and liaison person	Concluding session to agree topics of additional documentation
Afternoon	Departure of IEP team	

Sample schedule for the second visit

<i>Time</i>	<i>What & who?</i>	<i>Why?</i>
DAY 0		
Late afternoon	Arrival of evaluation team	
60 minutes	Briefing meeting IEP team alone	Division of tasks, preliminary discussion of evaluation report structure and issues
Evening	Dinner IEP team with rector and liaison person	Welcome, renew acquaintance; go over site visit programme

DAY 1		
9.00 – 10.00	Meeting with rector IEP team with rector	Discuss <i>privately</i> issues that need to be stressed in team's visit and report
10.10 – 11.00	Meeting with self-evaluation group IEP team with self-evaluation group, liaison person	Discuss any changes in context or internal situation since the first visit, analyse impact of first visit, review additional information sent to the team, clarify any open questions
11.10 – 12.30	Meeting with the deans IEP team with deans' Council or deans from several faculties	Discuss relationship of faculties with central level with respect to strategic development and quality management; input in self-evaluation; special issues arising from self-evaluation and/or from talk with rector
12.40 – 14.00	Lunch IEP team with liaison person	Reflect upon impressions of first meetings and complete information as necessary
14.00 – 15.00	Meeting with central office IEP team with staff members from central office	Discuss role of institutional strategic documents (development plans, etc.) in development of institution; special issues arising from self-evaluation and/or from talk with rector
15.10 – 16.00	Meeting with senate IEP team with senate representatives	Discuss relationship of senate/democratic representation body with rectoral team regarding strategic and quality management

16.00 – 16.45	Meeting with student delegation IEP team with student representatives	Students' views on the institution, on relations with rector's office, on student input in quality management and in (strategic) decision making
17.00 – 18.00	Meeting with outside partners IEP team with representatives of Industry, society and/or local authorities	Discuss relationships of institution with external stakeholders of private and public sector
18.00 – 19.00	Debriefing meeting IEP team alone	Exchange impressions, review the day
Evening	Dinner IEP team alone	Reflect on impressions and start preparing oral report

DAY 2		
9.00 – 9.50 parallel Evaluation team may split into pairs	Visit to faculties E and F IEP team with dean and possibly vice-dean	Introduction to the faculty: structures, quality and strategic management; discuss relationships of faculties with the central level; input in self-evaluation; role of quality control activities in faculty
10.00 – 10.40 parallel Evaluation team may split into pairs	Visit to faculties E and F IEP team with academic staff	Discuss relationships of faculties with the central level; input in self-evaluation; role of quality control activities in faculty; recruitment of new staff; staff development; motivation policies. Please note that deans or vice deans should not be present at this meeting: it is reserved for "regular" academic staff only.
10.50 – 11.30 parallel Evaluation team may split into pairs	Visit to faculties E and F IEP team with students	Students' views on their experience (e.g., teaching and learning, student input in quality control and (strategic) decision making)
12.30 – 14.00	Lunch IEP team alone	Evaluation team, alone, to exchange impressions
14.00 – 15.00	Meeting with international researchers and international graduate students	To discuss their experience of the institution
15.30 – 20.00	Debriefing meeting IEP team alone	Exchange impressions, review day and begin drafting the oral report [evaluation team needs a working

		room in the hotel for this task]
20.00	Dinner IEP team alone	Continuation of debriefing meeting
21.00 – 23.00	Drafting oral report IEP team alone	[evaluation team needs a working room in the hotel for this task]
DAY 3		
9.00 – 10.00	Concluding meeting IEP team with rector	Discuss draft oral report <i>with the rector alone</i> , to ensure it reflects the findings of the team as well as the needs of the rector for the institution's further development
10.00 – 10.30	Adapting oral report IEP team alone	Adapt oral report according to discussion with rector
10.30 – 12.00	Presentation of oral report IEP team with rector and members of the institution (invitations to be decided by the rector, e.g. rectoral team, liaison person, self-evaluation group, senate etc).	
Afternoon	Lunch and departure of evaluation team	

Annex 5

Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)

Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). Approved by the Ministerial Conference in May 2015. http://www.eua.be/Libraries/quality-assurance/esg_2015.pdf?sfvrsn=0, pp.11-16

Part 1. Standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

STANDARD:

Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.

GUIDELINES:

Policies and processes are the main pillars of a coherent institutional quality assurance system that forms a cycle for continuous improvement and contributes to the accountability of the institution. It supports the development of quality culture in which all internal stakeholders assume responsibility for quality and engage in quality assurance at all levels of the institution. In order to facilitate this, the policy has a formal status and is publicly available. Quality assurance policies are most effective when they reflect the relationship between research and learning & teaching and take account of both the national context in which the institution operates, the institutional context and its strategic approach. Such a policy supports

- the organisation of the quality assurance system;
- departments, schools, faculties and other organisational units as well as those of institutional leadership, individual staff members and students to take on their responsibilities in quality assurance;
- academic integrity and freedom and is vigilant against academic fraud;
- guarding against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against the students or staff;
- the involvement of external stakeholders in quality assurance.

The policy translates into practice through a variety of internal quality assurance processes that allow participation across the institution. How the policy is implemented, monitored and revised is the institution's decision. The quality assurance policy also covers any elements of an institution's activities that are subcontracted to or carried out by other parties.

1.2 Design and approval of programmes

STANDARD:

Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

GUIDELINES:

Study programmes are at the core of the higher education institutions' teaching mission. They provide students with both academic knowledge and skills including those that are transferable, which may influence their personal development and may be applied in their future careers.

Programmes

- are designed with overall programme objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes;
- are designed by involving students and other stakeholders in the work;
- benefit from external expertise and reference points;
- reflect the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe (cf. Scope and Concepts);
- are designed so that they enable smooth student progression;
- define the expected student workload, e.g. in ECTS;
- include well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate;
- are subject to a formal institutional approval process.

1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

STANDARD:

Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.

GUIDELINES:

Student-centred learning and teaching plays an important role in stimulating students' motivation, self-reflection and engagement in the learning process. This means careful consideration of the design and delivery of study programmes and the assessment of outcomes.

The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching

- respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths;
- considers and uses different modes of delivery, where appropriate;
- flexibly uses a variety of pedagogical methods;
- regularly evaluates and adjusts the modes of delivery and pedagogical methods;
- encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher;
- promotes mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship;
- has appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints.

Considering the importance of assessment for the students' progression and their future careers, quality assurance processes for assessment take into account the following:

- Assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field;
- The criteria for and method of assessment as well as criteria for marking are published in advance;
- The assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the learning process;
- Where possible, assessment is carried out by more than one examiner;
- The regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances;
- Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures;
- A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.

1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

STANDARD:

Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student “life cycle”, e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.

GUIDELINES:

Providing conditions and support that are necessary for students to make progress in their academic career is in the best interest of the individual students, programmes, institutions and systems. It is vital to have fit-for-purpose admission, recognition and completion procedures, particularly when students are mobile within and across higher education systems. It is important that access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner. Induction to the institution and the programme is provided. Institutions need to put in place both processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression.

Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components for ensuring the students’ progress in their studies, while promoting mobility. Appropriate recognition procedures rely on

- institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention;
- cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country.

Graduation represents the culmination of the students’ period of study. Students need to receive documentation explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed.

1.5 Teaching staff

STANDARD:

Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.

GUIDELINES:

The teacher’s role is essential in creating a high quality student experience and enabling the acquisition of knowledge, competences and skills. The diversifying student population and stronger focus on learning outcomes require student-centred learning and teaching and the role of the teacher is, therefore, also changing (cf. Standard 1.3). Higher education institutions have primary

responsibility for the quality of their staff and for providing them with a supportive environment that allows them to carry out their work effectively.

Such an environment

- sets up and follows clear, transparent and fair processes for staff recruitment and conditions of employment that recognise the importance of teaching;
- offers opportunities for and promotes the professional development of teaching staff;
- encourages scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research;
- encourages innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies.

1.6 Learning resources and student support

STANDARD:

Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.

GUIDELINES:

For a good higher education experience, institutions provide a range of resources to assist student learning. These vary from physical resources such as libraries, study facilities and IT infrastructure to human support in the form of tutors, counsellors and other advisers. The role of support services is of particular importance in facilitating the mobility of students within and across higher education systems.

The needs of a diverse student population (such as mature, part-time, employed and international students as well as students with disabilities), and the shift towards student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources and student support.

Support activities and facilities may be organised in a variety of ways depending on the institutional context. However, the internal quality assurance ensures that all resources are fit for purpose, accessible, and that students are informed about the services available to them.

In delivering support services the role of support and administrative staff is crucial and therefore they need to be qualified and have opportunities to develop their competences

1.7 Information management

STANDARD:

Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.

GUIDELINES:

Reliable data is crucial for informed decision-making and for knowing what is working well and what needs attention. Effective processes to collect and analyse information about study programmes and other activities feed into the internal quality assurance system.

The information gathered depends, to some extent, on the type and mission of the institution. The following are of interest:

- Key performance indicators;
- Profile of the student population;
- Student progression, success and drop-out rates;
- Students' satisfaction with their programmes;
- Learning resources and student support available;
- Career paths of graduates.

Various methods of collecting information may be used. It is important that students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.

1.8 Public information

STANDARD:

Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.

GUIDELINES:

Information on institutions' activities is useful for prospective and current students as well as for graduates, other stakeholders and the public. Therefore, institutions provide information about their activities, including the programmes they offer and the selection criteria for them, the intended learning outcomes of these programmes, the qualifications they award, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to their students as well as graduate employment information.

1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes

STANDARD:

Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.

GUIDELINES:

Regular monitoring, review and revision of study programmes aim to ensure that the provision remains appropriate and to create a supportive and effective learning environment for students.

They include the evaluation of:

- The content of the programme in the light of the latest research in the given discipline thus ensuring that the programme is up to date;
- The changing needs of society;
- The students' workload, progression and completion;
- The effectiveness of procedures for assessment of students;
- The student expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme;
- The learning environment and support services and their fitness for purpose for the programme.

Programmes are reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders. The information collected is analysed and the programme is adapted to ensure that it is up-to-date. Revised programme specifications are published.

1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance

STANDARD:

Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.

GUIDELINES:

External quality assurance in its various forms can verify the effectiveness of institutions' internal quality assurance, act as a catalyst for improvement and offer the institution new perspectives. It will also provide information to assure the institution and the public of the quality of the institution's activities.

Institutions participate in cyclical external quality assurance that takes account, where relevant, of the requirements of the legislative framework in which they operate. Therefore, depending on the framework, this external quality assurance may take different forms and focus at different organisational levels (such as programme, faculty or institution).

Quality assurance is a continuous process that does not end with the external feedback or report or its follow-up process within the institution. Therefore, institutions ensure that the progress made since the last external quality assurance activity is taken into consideration when preparing for the next one.