

Annex

Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

**METHODOLOGY FOR EXTERNAL EVALUATION,
STANDARDS, STANDARDS OF REFERENCE, AND LIST OF
PERFORMANCE INDICATORS OF THE ROMANIAN AGENCY FOR
QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

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Preamble

The Methodology for quality assurance, provisional authorisation to operate and accreditation of study programmes and higher education institutions, being hereinafter referred to as “**The Methodology**”, concretizes the provisions of the **Government’s Emergency Ordinance (GEO) no. 75/2005 on Quality Assurance in Education**, as approved with modifications through **Law no. 87/2006, with further modifications**.

The Methodology applies, beginning with academic year 2006-2007, to:

- a) the provisional authorisation to operate of new Licence Degree¹ study programmes initiated and proposed by accredited higher education institutions;
- b) the provisional authorisation to operate for higher education providers which plan to initiate Licence Degree study programmes and of previously initiated Licence Degree study programmes;
- c) the accreditation of Master’s Degree awarding institutions (MDAI) and Doctoral Degree awarding institutions (DDAI) based on self-evaluation and external evaluation of a given field of specialization and of each Master or Doctorate within, proposed to start functioning in the academic year 2006-2007. The Master and Doctoral study programmes already existing in 2006-2007 will continue to operate until they are completed and will gradually be replaced by accredited ones.
- d) those study programmes and higher education institutions which have already been accredited based on the implementation of the provisions of the republished *Law no. 88/1993 on the Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Recognition of Diplomas*,

Alongside these activities of authorisation and accreditation, in order to improve the quality and consolidate the relationships and the cooperation between RAQAHE and higher education institutions, the **Methodology** will be trialled in the academic year 2006-2007 in all accredited universities which volunteer to participate in the pilot initiative. The results of

¹ Licence Degree (in Romanian “Licenta”) corresponds to Bachelor’s Degree

the application of the **Methodology** in the academic year 2006-2007 will be synthesized in a RAQAHE report on the status of quality in higher education.

The Methodology is intended for:

- a) representatives of Romanian universities – rectors and vice-rectors, deans and vice-deans, heads of chairs and departments, members of academic communities composed of students, academics, scientific researchers and administrative staff - namely all those whose activities shape and develop the academic quality in universities and faculties;
- b) commissions and other structures directly responsible for quality management in universities or with the external evaluation of quality;
- c) higher education stakeholders, namely students, employers and, in a broader sense, society as a whole.

The Methodology uses the terminology and the concepts established through the **GEO no. 75/2005 on Quality Assurance in Education** and will be further developed by RAQAHE, in compliance with the legal provisions, in order to consolidate its practical character and better serve the stakeholders in connection with the activities carried out in universities and their concrete requirements. In this respect, RAQAHE closely cooperates with all interested universities, the Ministry of Education and Research as well as with representatives of students, trade unions, and corporations. The transparency of information and decisions will be ensured so that the public can follow the development of the system of quality assurance in Romanian higher education as part of the European Higher Education Area.

Part I: Principles of Quality Assurance in Higher Education

The changes that have taken place in Romanian higher education, as well as all over Europe and in other parts of the world, have been equally numerous, radical and continuous. Since the beginning of the 1990s, Romania has seen the creation of a number of private universities and an increase in the number of public universities, faculties or new study programmes and their respective specializations. As a consequence of these diversifications and multiplications, **Law no. 88/1993 on Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Recognition of Diplomas** was adopted. Based on this Law, the National Council for Academic Evaluation and Accreditation (NCAEA) was created. Between 1993 and 2006, NCAEA was responsible for the evaluation and accreditation of institutions and study programmes.

Since the beginning of the implementation of Law no. 88/1993 up to the present, the national higher education system has also undergone other significant transformations, and following the signing of the Bologna Declaration, in 1999, Romania became a member of the Bologna Process which aims to create the European Higher Education Area by 2010, through a series of change and transformation initiatives.

1.1. Transformations in higher education

The Methodology takes into consideration, to differing degrees, the following aspects of the transformations which have already been made or are still in progress:

- The diversity of higher education institutions, which mainly results from:
 - changes of the traditional university profile, especially through the diversification of study programmes;
 - the co-existence of comprehensive, pluri-disciplinary universities and those concentrated in a narrower disciplinary field;
 - the existence of certain organizations which are running study programmes offered, in different forms, by foreign transnational or borderless universities;

- The multiplication of programme formulas which ensure a “distributed learning”, based more on study programmes and teaching staff mobility and less or not at all on student mobility, in the following forms:
 - establishment of territorial branches;
 - distance learning programmes, part time programmes or other study forms approved by Law.
- The growth of higher education institutions’ complexity and size, in terms of number of study programmes and students, accompanied by certain difficulties, such as:
 - the transformation of elitist universities into mass higher education institutions;
 - the maintenance and even strengthening of research performance requirements, as well as teaching requirements;
 - problems in recruiting young researchers and teaching staff because of uncompetitive salaries;
 - profound disparities, in terms of attractivity, between different study programmes and, implicitly, between sources and levels of financing from public and extra-budgetary funds.
- The disparity between institutional requirements, particularly at public institutions, with regard to successful academic management and certain inadequate management practices, has different sources:
 - the harmonization of central management with the management of faculties or departments has resulted in certain difficulties in allocating resources and fulfilling objectives, which has had a negative influence on an institutional quality framework;
 - the lack of institutional homogeneity has consequences for institutional quality profile.
- The promotion of good practice in academic performance in Romanian and foreign universities;

- The participation in the European Higher Education Area and the globalization effects are increasing the pressure of competitive forces on a growing higher education market.

1.2 Fundamental principles of addressing the quality of higher education

Since such changes and characteristics have a relevant influence on quality assurance in higher education, the connection between the dynamics of the higher education system and/or institutions and the way of addressing quality is essential.

According to the legislation in force, the achievement and evaluation of quality have both an external and internal dimension.

The External dimension was instituted by the Bologna Process which is based on a programmatic document (the “Bologna Declaration”, 1999) adopted by all Ministers responsible for higher education in the member countries and the Communiqués signed by the Ministers of Education at the meetings held in Prague (2001), Berlin (2003), and Bergen (2005). The rigorous implementation of the set of provisions established at a European level is required for the registration of national agencies for quality assurance, including RAQAHE, in the European Register set up by the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). At the same time, the positioning of Romania in the European Higher Education Area will lead to a confidence of quality and as well as to a higher level of recognition of the Romanian academic and/or professional diplomas.

The internal dimension of academic quality builds upon the legislation in force, the specificity of each higher education institution, and the tradition and cultural patrimony of our higher education system. It falls entirely under the responsibility of each higher education institution or provider of higher education programmes. From this perspective, quality assurance becomes a process adapted to the existing institutional specificity and a mechanism for permanently improving academic performance or results. For this reason, the principles of reference of the **Methodology** are specified hereunder:

- ***European dimension:*** the Romanian higher education system and its institutions belong to the European Higher Education Area and ensure quality levels

corresponding to the requirements of this space and remain competitive at European and international levels.

- ***Institutional responsibility:*** the quality assurance management and responsibility fall under the competence of each accredited higher education institution, in conformity with academic autonomy.
- ***Institutional diversity:*** the diversity of the institutions, of their missions and objectives is respected and encouraged by means of the external evaluation of quality.
- ***Cooperation with all components of the educational system:*** the approach, the implemented practices and the forms of technical assistance offered by RAQAHE are based on cooperation and mutual trust in its relationships with higher education institutions and other partners.
- ***Focus on results:*** the results of learning and university research performance – seen as a component of the education process – hold the central reference position in quality assurance and evaluation
- ***Institutional identity:*** learning and research results and performance can be achieved through a variety of practices, methods or structures, autonomously designed and implemented by each institution, according to its own options. In this respect, the most important weight, in the evaluations made by RAQAHE, is given to results and performance, without neglecting the influence of good practices and successful structures in the field of academic quality.
- ***Internal institutional self-evaluation of quality:*** each self-evaluation document must present the specificity of the quality culture in the higher education institution and ensure continuous performance improvement;

- **External evaluation:** external evaluation is based on the higher education institution proving its learning and research results and performance and the verification of their relationship with stated institutional reality, including the verification of student activity, against the stated standards.
- **Improvement of quality:** the permanent improvement of quality and its institutional management represents the main objective of the external evaluation.

These principles constitute the reference framework for RAQAHE activity and this **Methodology**. Their aim is to promote that quality culture which will consistently contribute to achieving a quality higher education, defined as a public good, worthy of public trust, and contributing to a student's personal development and achievement, as well as to the continuous improvement of the quality of life, culture and national economy within a European framework. The principles are formulated so as to ensure not only the continuity of the activities and results of the National Council for Academic Evaluation and Accreditation (NCAEA) for the period 1993-2006, but also the development of a quality education in the new European and international contexts.

1.3. Relationships between RAQAHE and other institutions

The new way of addressing quality assurance in higher education is based on the autonomy of the universities in formulating and achieving their own options with regard the quality level and its implementation management. At the same time, RAQAHE and the higher education institutions together with other authorities responsible for organizing and carrying out the educational process are actively cooperating to:

- permanently improve quality through:
 - evaluating, revising and improving the quality criteria, standards and performance indicators, while correlating them with the qualification requirements provided by the National Qualification Framework

- raising the level of the standards of reference and corresponding performance indicators in each institution, according to its mission;
- assuming, as completely as possible, the capacity of public accountability by:
 - achieving quality levels which correspond to the stakeholders' expectations, especially those of students and employers;
 - affirming higher education as a public good;
 - ensuring a clear, consistent and coherent communication with the stakeholders;
 - correctly informing the public with regard to achieved results and intended improvements.
- promoting methods for encouraging self-evaluation and, where necessary, planning change and improvement strategies, by:
 - honestly and rigorously identifying achievements and deficiencies;
 - promoting achievements and rapidly correcting deficiencies;
 - taking results as a reference for evaluation.

1.4 Quality assurance and accreditation

The main objective of RAQAHE activities is to assure and improve quality. Accreditation is that process of assuring and improving academic quality through which an education provider is first provisionally authorized to operate as a higher education institution and organize admission sessions, and is then accredited and recognised as a part of the national higher education system, with the right to deliver diplomas, certificates and other documents recognized at national level, to organize graduation, Licence, Master and Doctoral examinations. **The standards, standards of reference and performance indicators for both assuring quality in already accredited institutions and accrediting newly established institutions are the same.** The difference is determined by their level of achievement. In granting the authorisation and accreditation of an institution, the minimum level of performance indicator achievement is taken into consideration. In terms of quality assurance, the standards of reference may be set at optimal institutional levels, exceeding the minimum requirement level. **Through accreditation, RAQAHE aims:**

- to assure the academic community, the stakeholders and the public at large that the accredited institution satisfies the minimum quality standards of a higher education institution;
- to promote the engagement of the institution in the continual development of academic quality proved by learning and research outcomes;
- to consecrate institutional standards for a quality management and a quality culture and demonstrate their status through relevant evidence and documents;
- to support and encourage the institution to evaluate itself and cooperate in its external evaluation in order to assure and develop quality;
- to cooperate with other higher education institutions and the National Authority for Higher Education Qualifications in achieving, monitoring and comparing academic quality;
- not to accept study programmes offered by education providers which do not satisfy the minimum standards of academic quality.

1.5 Quality assurance areas

Three fundamental **areas** of quality assurance in education must be taken into consideration for the organization and functioning of an organization which aims to become or already operates as a higher education institution. The criteria, the standards and the performance indicators are formulated so as to stress not only the institution's compliance with a predetermined or predefined set of quantitative and qualitative conditions, but also the deliberate, voluntary and proactive engagement of the institution in achieving certain performances, which can be demonstrated through effective outcomes. The role of the

external evaluator, namely RAQAHE, is to acknowledge and evaluate the managerial and educational capacity of the education provider, in order to be able, on this basis, to state, then validate or invalidate its functioning publicly and with documentary evidence.

1. ***Institutional Capacity***: the institution is coherently organized, has an adequate management and administration and the material basis and financial resources necessary for a stable functioning, in the short and medium term, as well as the necessary human resources for achieving its stated mission and objectives.
2. ***Educational effectiveness*** refers to the organization of teaching, learning and research processes in terms of content, methods and techniques, resources, selection of students and teaching and research staff, which would enable the institution to achieve the learning and research outcomes stated through its mission, which must be clearly formulated. The evaluation criteria for educational effectiveness refer to:
 - a) the design of objectives and outcomes, which should be:
 - clearly formulated and easy to understand;
 - adequate for the aimed academic qualifications (Licence or specialization in a certain field, Master's or Doctorate) and differentiated by discipline and/or study programme;
 - b) the organization of the learning framework, through:
 - plans, study programmes, teaching methods, student evaluation criteria and techniques;
 - the adequate recruitment and development of academic staff;
 - the resources and learning facilities made available, related to the financial activity of the organization;
 - organization of the teaching, learning and student examination flows;
 - student support services, including extracurricular activities.
3. ***Quality Management*** concentrates on those strategies, structures, techniques and operations through which the institution demonstrates that it evaluates its own performance related to education quality assurance and improvement, and has

information systems in place which demonstrate its learning and research outcomes. The importance of this area consists, both on the emphasis put on the quality assurance approach of the institution towards all its activities, and on the presentation of information and data to the public, proving a certain quality level.

The three areas are complementary, and, according to the legal provisions, their use is compulsory. Therefore, any higher education institution is encouraged to reach the stage at which it has the means and can provide the information in these three areas, taking into consideration its specific profile, mission and objectives. The Head of the higher education institution, through a Commission for evaluation and quality assurance at the institution, is responsible for the elaboration and implementation of the quality strategies, structured around the three areas.

1.6 Terminology

In this section, the meanings associated with the main terms used in the implementation of this **Methodology** are specified.

Higher education providing organization is an education institution or other legal person, which, according to its statute, carries out higher education activities based on legally approved study programmes. According to the Law, an education providing organization submits itself to the evaluation procedure, for the external evaluation of quality or, as the case may be, for obtaining the provisional authorisation to operate or the accreditation of the study programmes and/or its own accreditation as an education providing organization. Only the provisionally authorised or accredited higher education institutions may carry out higher education activities and use the name “university” or other similar names (Art. 29, par. (4), letter a) and b) and Art. 35, par. (1) from GEO 75/2005); the accreditation of higher education institutions is made by Law, promoted by the Government, at the initiative of the Ministry of Education and Research, based on RAQAHE approval (Art.31, letter g) from GEO 75/2005).

Study programme: a study/specialization programme consists of all the activities (design, organization, management, and the process of teaching, learning and research)

carried out in a certain field, which lead to an academic qualification. Study programmes are differentiated by: (a) the level of academic qualification: Licence, Master, Doctorate; (b) the mode of study: full-time, evening, part-time, distance learning etc. (c) the field of knowledge specialization, in accordance with the division of academic knowledge and the professional division of labour. A study programme is achieved through: (a) a *curriculum*, which includes all disciplines that lead to an academic qualification, distributed by year of study, their weight being expressed in European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) type of study credits; (b) course programmes or *syllabuses* in which are formulated: the teaching and learning themes and practices associated with teaching, learning and evaluation; (c) *the organization chart of students and teaching staff* for the study programme implementation period; (d) the system of academic *quality assurance* for all activities required for carrying out the study programme.

Provisional authorisation to operate for study programmes and/or institutions is the first stage of the accreditation procedure and represents the result of an external evaluation made by RAQAHE, based on a self-evaluation report submitted by the applicant. The provisional authorisation to operate is the document which confers the higher education institution or the education providing organization the right to carry out educational activities and organize, if necessary, entrance examinations for a study programme. The provisional authorisation to operate for a study programme is granted, based on the approval of RAQAHE and of the Ministry of Education and Research, through a Government Decision initiated by the Ministry of Education and Research, within 90 calendar days from communication of the approval. The provisional authorisation to operate for an institution may be granted, by Government Decision, a minimum of 6 months before the beginning of a new academic year, if the education providing organization initiated at least three study programmes which have been proposed and provisionally authorized to operate by the Ministry of Education and Research.

Accreditation is the quality assurance modality by which the standards for an education providing organization and study programme functioning are certified. Accreditation is proposed and granted, based on the results of an external evaluation process

carried out by RAQAHE, in recognition of the academic quality of a higher education institution or other education providing organization, which is provisionally authorized to operate and complies with the minimum standard requirements and performance indicators concerning the quality of education. The accreditation of a study programme is made by Government Decision initiated by the Ministry of Education and Research, based on RAQAHE approval, within 90 calendar days from the communication of the approval. The accreditation of a higher education institution, regardless of its status (university, academy of study, institute, school or higher education providing organization), is made by Law, issued by the Government, at the initiative of the Ministry of Education and Research, based on RAQAHE approval. A draft Law concerning the accreditation of a higher education institution may be initiated by the Ministry of Education and Research only if the institution has at least three accredited study programmes. Accredited higher education institutions are integrated into the national higher education system and have the right to deliver diplomas, certificates and other study documents recognized by the Ministry of Education and Research, and to organize graduation examinations, leading to the awards of Licence, Master's and/or Doctorate degrees.

Standards, Standards of Reference, and Performance Indicators describe the quality requirements for the activities of an education providing organization which applies for a provisional authorisation to operate, an accredited higher education institution which applies for a provisional authorisation to operate or accreditation of a new study programme, or an accredited higher education institution which applies for an external evaluation of the education it offers. The standards address, on a differentiated basis, the areas and criteria of quality assurance in education, and the performance indicators measure the degree of accomplishment of a certain activity against the concerned standards.

Standards are formulated in terms of rules and outcomes and define the minimum compulsory level of achievement of an activity. All standards are formulated in general terms, in a statement form, and are expressed in sets of performance indicators. Standards are differentiated by areas and criteria.

The Standards of Reference are those standards which define the optimal level of achievement of an activity by an education providing organization, based on existing national, European or international good practice. The Standards of Reference are specific to each study programme or institution, they are optional, and are set above the minimal level. The Standards of Reference can vary from one institution to another, and it is possible that, over time, institutions formulate their own Standards of Reference at higher and more competitive national and international levels. The level of a Standard of Reference is made by comparison with a Standard, and, within the latter, by comparison with the optional levels of the performance indicators.

A *Performance Indicator* represents an instrument for measuring the level of accomplishment of a certain activity carried out by an education providing organization against a standard. The performance indicators identify those outcomes which vary from a *minimum acceptable level* to a *maximum identifiable level*. The minimum levels of performance indicators correspond to the requirements of a Standard. The maximum levels correspond to Standards of Reference, are optional, and differentiate the quality of an institution both hierarchically and progressively.

The provisional authorisation to operate and the accreditation of a study programme or institution are not only made comprehensively, but also based on the minimum level of all standards and performance indicators. The failure to meet of the minimum level of a performance indicator results in the postponement of the authorisation or accreditation. At the same time, the level of the standards of reference varies from one licence field to another and from one higher education institution to another. The formulation of Standards of Reference falls under the responsibility of the institution, based on the information offered by RAQAHE with regard to the European variation of standards and performance indicators. These must be understood as institution's own Standards of Reference, which the institution proposes and commits to in accordance with its own quality assurance strategy.

Periodic academic evaluation is made simultaneously for all higher education structures, which have been accredited or provisionally authorized to operate.

Branches of higher education institutions, faculties, and specializations, regardless of the form of study they offer (full time, part time, distance learning) or their geographical location, must observe the same quality standards. Such entities are considered distinct units

and must therefore submit to evaluation procedures separately.

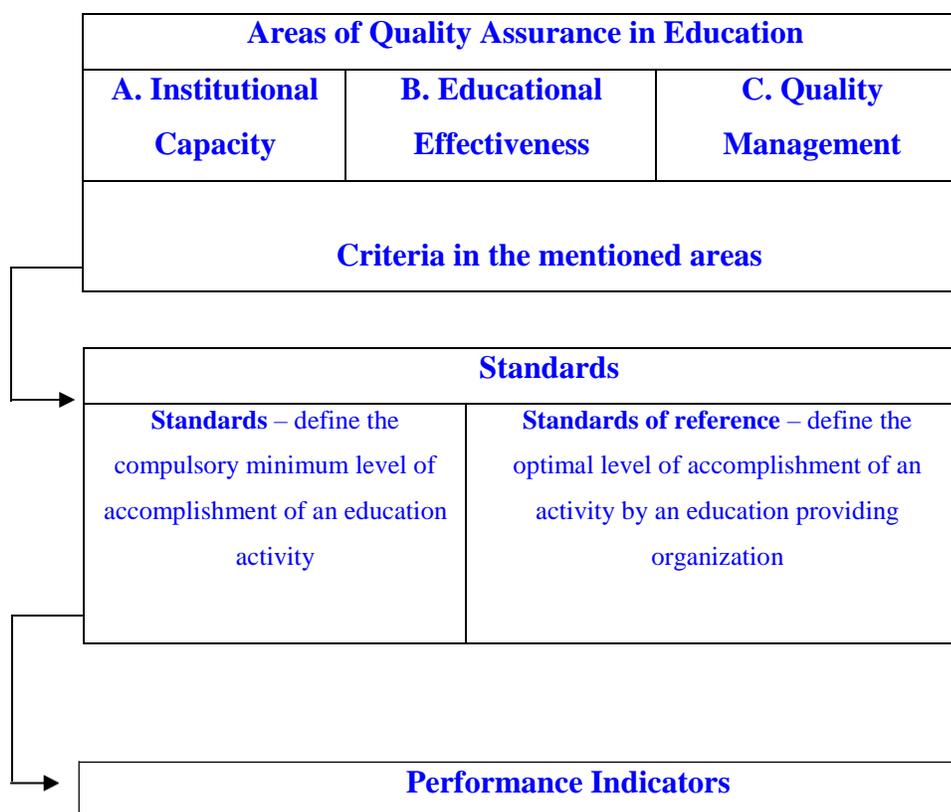
Part II. Criteria, Standards, and Performance Indicators for Quality Assurance and Accreditation

Criteria, standards, and performance indicators apply to quality assurance and accreditation. These are used by higher education institutions and by RAQAHE as follows: they (a) represent the reference point for quality management in higher education institutions; (b) offer the framework for collecting information and maintaining databases which institutions can use for internal monitoring and external demonstration of academic quality assurance; (c) are used by RAQAHE in the process of external evaluation and assurance of quality, for the purpose of accreditation and development of a quality culture.

2.1 Correlations and relationships between areas, criteria, standards and performance indicators

The set of correlations between the structure and the activities of an organization, which intends to become or already is a higher education institution, and the main requirements that correspond to standards, standards of reference and performance indicators is determined by the relationships between criteria, standards and performance indicators. The correlations and the hierarchical relationships between areas, criteria, standards and performance indicators are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Hierarchical Relationships between Areas, Criteria, Standards and Indicators



Criteria address each of the three areas stipulated by Law and represent the fundamental aspects of the organization and functioning of an education providing organization. Each criterion is linked to a set of standards. The role of the standards is:

- to guide institutions in their self-evaluation of quality in order to independently assess their own results and performances, and to identify the areas in which they should correct or improve their performance;
- to provide a framework for the elaboration of institutional self-evaluation reports;
- to provide the basis for external evaluation;
- to establish a common framework of reference for quality assurance and accreditation.

Performance indicators vary from the minimum acceptable level, based on which is granted or maintained authorisation or accreditation status, to a certain level of reference that each institution adopts independently, based on comparing itself with similar institutions from Romania or abroad. The Standard is so defined that it corresponds, through its Performance Indicators, to the minimum acceptable level.

The levels of the Performance Indicators for Standards of Reference vary by institution. In addition to the **Methodology**, RAQAHE will provide information regarding the national, European and global variation of the Standards and levels of their Performance Indicators, in order to guide institutions in defining their own Standards of Reference. The **Methodology** specifies that the Standards and the minimum levels of the associated Performance Indicators are compulsory and comprehensive. The Standards of Reference and/or their levels in the **Methodology** are recommendations only. Institutions will elaborate and adopt their own Standards of Reference, taking also into consideration the information and consultancy offered by RAQAHE, on a contractual basis.

A set of Performance Indicators is associated to the Standard, in order for the latter to be implemented. An indicator identifies those outcomes which vary from a minimum acceptable level (Min) to a maximum identifiable level (Ref 1, Ref 2, etc.) The variation from minimum to maximum is specified, based on experiences in the field of many other institutions from Romania and from the European Higher Education Area. All higher education institutions will establish their own position, within the corresponding parameters of an indicator for a determined period (for instance the mandate cycle of the elected management, i.e. 4 years; the period of the institutional strategic plan; or another period). The minimum level of an indicator is the minimum required for granting the provisional authorisation to operate or the accreditation status. By establishing higher expectations for this indicator, higher education institutions can differentiate themselves from the point of view of quality.

The evaluation of quality in an institution is made within the three areas stipulated by Law, based on the information corresponding to standards and performance indicators.

2.2 Areas, Criteria, Standards, Performance Indicators

The Areas, Criteria, Standards, and Performance Indicators applied in quality assurance and accreditation are presented hereafter. Each of the three quality assurance areas are associated with a set of Standards, and to each Standard, the corresponding Performance Indicators. The requirements or levels of a Performance Indicator vary from a compulsory minimum level (Min) to a recommended level of reference (Ref.), for which the institution can opt or which can be raised according to the institution's own Standards of Reference.

Area A: Institutional Capacity

Criterion A.1 - Institutional, Administrative and Managerial Structures

The higher education institution formulates its mission and objectives in accordance with a set of values and target reference points to reflect its individual identity within the higher education system, and to affirm it as an autonomous institution which produces and disseminate knowledge in accordance with the values of academic freedom and ethical integrity. The higher education institution supports the activities aimed to accomplish the stated objectives through an adequate institutional, administrative and managerial structure.

Standards (S) and Performance Indicators (PI)

S.A.1.1 Mission, objectives and academic integrity

The higher education institution formulates its own mission and establishes the objectives to be achieved in accordance with a set of levels of reference. The institution proves that it respects and defends the staff and students' academic freedom and functions in terms of university autonomy and public responsibility and accountability for the education it offers and the resources it uses to meet these objectives.

Performance Indicators

PI.A.1.1.1. Mission and objectives

Min: The higher education institution is created and functions according to the Law. The institution has a University Charta, the provisions of which are in accordance with national legislation and the principles of

the European Higher Education Area, and are recognized by the members of the academic community. The stated mission and objectives reflect the individual identity of the institution within the national higher education system through clarity, distinction and specificity.

Ref 1: The manner in which the mission and objectives are formulated and accomplished reflect the individual identity of the institution within the European Higher Education Area.

PIA.1.1.2. Academic integrity

Min: The institution has a code of ethics and academic integrity through which it defends the values of academic freedom, university autonomy and ethical integrity and has clear practices and mechanisms for implementing the code.

Ref.1: The institution not only has this kind of code and associated practices, but it is equally in control and able to provide evidence of their use in its management, research, teaching and learning processes. Such control mechanisms and results are made public.

PIA.1.1.3. Responsibility and public accountability

Min: The institution has internal auditing practices concerning the main fields of academic activity in order to ensure that its stated commitments are rigorously observed while at the same time ensuring public transparency.

Ref. 1: Internal auditing is taking place effectively at institutional and departmental level, and on a periodic basis, observing internal regulations, financial and accounting procedures, academic integrity, teaching and learning methodology, examination, and research fields. An academic auditing report is discussed annually in the Senate and published, and an improvement plan is elaborated.

S.A.1.2 Management and administration

The institution has a coherent, integrated and transparent system of university management, based on an effective and efficient administration, adapted to the stated mission and objectives.

Performance Indicators

PI.A.1.2.1. The Management System

Min: The institution has a management system and internal operating regulations in conformity with current legal provisions. The mechanism for electing student representatives for Councils, Senate and other structures is clearly explained in the University Charta and in internal regulations. There is a democratic, transparent and non-discriminatory mechanism, which does not limit a student's right to represent and to be represented.

Ref. 1: The management system and the internal operating regulations use information and communication systems, such as the Internet and Intranet, which involve the members of the academic community, including students, and which meet public interests.

PI.A.1.2.2. Strategic Management

Min: The institution has a strategic plan for at least a four-year period together with annual operational plans, which are known to the members of the academic community and implemented in conformity with rigorous control practices and mechanisms

Ref.1: The strategic plan is elaborated for long, medium and short terms, is updated annually or when required by higher education evolution and context, and is consistently followed in its implementation and in the evaluation of the management's and administration's performance.

PI.A.1.2.3. Effective Administration

Min: The higher education institution has an administration which observes the legislation in force, is effective in terms of organization, staffing

levels and qualifications, and functions rigorously in the services offered to the academic community.

Ref.1: The higher education institution has an effective and rigorous administration as well as the necessary mechanisms of control and continuing development of the administration's performance.

Ref.2: The level of informatization of the administration is compatible with that of the European area.

Criterion A.2 –Material Resources

S.A.2.1. Property, equipment, and allocated financial resources

The higher education institution has its own property which effectively supports the implementation of its stated mission and objectives.

Performance indicators

PI.A.2.1.1. Facilities for teaching, research and other activities

Min: Whilst observing the differences between study forms (full-time, evening courses, part-time and distance learning) as well as the objectives of research activities, the higher education institution ensures adequate teaching and research facilities which correspond to its mission (teaching rooms, laboratories and research centres in conformity with current technical, safety, and sanitary norms). The quality of these facilities is evaluated by area, volume, technical condition, maximum number of students, number of teaching and research staff (differentiated by study field and study programmes) as well as institutionally, compared to national norms. The indicator also refers to the housing area and other facilities offered to students for social, cultural and sports activities.

Ref.1: In addition to the existing facilities, the higher education institution has realistic development and investment plans, within foreseen income levels.

PI.A.2.1.2. Equipment

Min: The teaching/seminar rooms are furnished with learning, teaching, and technical communication equipment which facilitate the teacher's

instruction and the student's understanding; research laboratories are provided with equipment and means corresponding to the minimum requirements.

Ref. 1: The equipment provided for teaching/seminar rooms and teaching and research laboratories corresponds to current norms in the development of scientific knowledge, and is comparable to that of developed European universities and to international good practices.

PI.A.2.1.3. Financial resources

Min: The institution can prove that it has sufficient financial resources in the short term (one year) and in the medium term (a minimum of three/four successive years), to adequately fulfil its stated mission and objectives. The institution has a realistic annual budget and a three/four-year budget, as well as financial policies for both the short and medium term which address its financial sustainability.

Ref. 1: In addition to the current requirements, the higher education institution has consistent financial provisions and diversified financing sources, necessary for the planning and defining of its investment policies and financial management.

PI.A.2.1.4. System of scholarships allocation and other forms of financial aid for students

Min: The institution has Regulations concerning the allocation of scholarships and other forms of financial aid for students, which it applies consistently. Scholarships are granted based on allocations coming from the state budget and from the institution's own resources.

Ref. 1: A minimum of 10% of the scholarship fund is provided by the institution's own resources.

Ref. 2: A minimum of 20% of the scholarship fund is provided by the institution's own resources

Area B: Education effectiveness

The higher education institution organises its teaching activities in terms of learning outcomes, and its research activities, by taking as a reference point its performance in developing and transferring knowledge and technology. This academic quality evaluation area addresses the teaching, learning, and research processes and their outcomes, in order to establish the level of education effectiveness.

Standards (S) and performance indicators (PI)

Criterion B.1 – Content of Study Programmes

S.B.1.1. Student admissions

The institution formulates its own student recruitment and admission policy and applies it transparently and rigorously, observing the principle of equal opportunities for all candidates, without discrimination.

PI.B.1.1.1. Principles of recruitment and admission's policy

Min: The institution is practicing a transparent policy for student recruitment and admission, which is publicly announced at least 6 months prior to implementation. University marketing promotes real and correct information, and indicates related means to verify and confirm the information. Admission is exclusively based on candidate's academic competences and does not use any discriminatory criteria.

PI.B.1.1.2. Admission practices

Min: The admission to an academic study cycle is only made upon previous diploma, taking into consideration the hierarchical order of merit at graduation.

Ref. 1: The admission to studies is based on a set of combined criteria in which the results of the entrance examination hold a greater weight.

S.B.1.2. Structure and formalisation of study programmes

Study programmes are thoroughly formulated, according to expected learning outcomes which correspond to an academic qualification.

Performance indicators

PI.B.1.2.1. Structure of study programmes

Min: Each study/specialization programme of the higher education institution is based on correlations between learning outcomes and research outcomes in the case of Master's and Doctoral programmes. A study programme is presented in the form of a series of documents which includes: general and specific objectives of the programme; the curriculum, with the subjects' weight expressed in ECTS study credits and disciplines distributed over the study period; thematic programmes and syllabuses expressing learning outcomes in the form of cognitive, technical or professional and affective-value competences achieved by a discipline; the examination and evaluation methods for each discipline, taking into consideration the planned learning outcomes; the method and content of the graduation examination as a comprehensive examination which certifies the assimilation of cognitive and professional competences corresponding to the academic qualification.

Ref. 1: Each study programme is presented according to the stated standard, but a study programme is implemented at the higher education institution level through cooperation between faculties and facilitating students' mobility within the higher education institution, through transfers and the accumulation of study credits. The number of ECTS credits is allocated to each discipline according to the "ECTS Users' Guide". The structure of the study programmes is flexible and allows each student to chose his/her own learning direction corresponding to his/her interests and skills. At least 30% of the total number of credits accumulated by a student at the end of a study programme comes from optional disciplines.

PI.B.1.2.2. Differentiation in the implementation of study programmes

Min: The study programmes have a unitary structure, regardless of the form of study (full-time, evening, part-time, distance learning) but their implementation is differentiated by the means used in the study form. For full time and distance learning forms, the indicator differentiates correspondingly.

Ref. 1: The implementation of the study programmes according to the form of study is monitored and substantiated through specialized internal structures (such as “Centre for Analysis and Pedagogical Development”) in which efficient and innovating pedagogic technologies are developed.

Ref. 2: The content of the study programmes is permanently updated by introducing new knowledge, resulting from scientific research, including their own research results

PI.B.1.2.3. Relevance of study programmes

Min: The cognitive and professional relevance of the study programmes are defined in relation to the development of knowledge and technology in the field and the labour market and qualification requirements. The institution has its own mechanism for annual peer review of the knowledge transmitted and assimilated by students and also for analyzing the changes produced in the qualification profiles and their impact on the organization of the study programme.

Ref. 1: The study programmes are revised periodically, based on peer reviews, together with students, graduates, and employer representatives.

Criterion B.2 – Learning outcomes

S.B.2.1 – Validation of academic qualifications

The knowledge, competences and skills acquired by graduates are sufficient for them to integrate into the labour market, to develop their own business, to access to the next study cycle and to continually learn and develop.

Performance indicators

PI.B.2.1.1 Validation by employability within the field of the academic qualification

Min: At least 50% of graduates are employed within two years of the graduation date at the level of their academic qualification.

Ref. 1: More than 70% of graduates are employed within two years of the graduation date at the level of their academic qualification.

PI.B.2.1.2. Validation by access to the next level of academic studies

Min: At least 20% of the last two series of Licence graduates are admitted to Master's programmes, regardless of the field of study*

Ref. 1: At least 50% of the last two series of graduates are admitted to master programmes, regardless of the field of study.**

*This percentage will grow, by field of study, including from the point of view of the financial support for the second cycle – Master's Degree - when *Law no. 288/2004 on the organization of the academic studies* is put into force.

**For the regulated professions in the fields of Medicine, Dental Medicine and Pharmacy there are special indicators, which take into consideration residential training period.

PI B.2.1.3 Level of students' satisfaction with regard to their professional and personal development ensured by the higher education institution

Min: More than 50% of students appreciate the learning/ personal development environment offered by the higher education institution and its compatibility with students' learning paths.

Ref.1: More than 70% of students appreciate the learning/ personal development environment offered by the higher education institution and its compatibility with students' learning paths.

PI B.2.1.4 Focus on student-centred learning methods

Min: The main responsibility of the teacher is to focus the learning methods and environments on the student, and to de-emphasize the traditional role of purely information transmitter. The student-teacher relationship is a partnership in which each assumes the responsibility of reaching the learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are explained and discussed with students from the perspective of their relevance to the students' development. Teachers use new IT resources (e-mail, personal web page, topics, bibliographies and other resources in electronic format and communication with students) and auxiliary materials, such as whiteboard, flipchart and video-projector.

Ref. 1: Teachers are specially trained for teaching at university level and/or convene debate groups for discussing the teaching methodology. They not only have training/teaching competences, but also counselling, monitoring, and learning facilitation competences. A continuous process of identifying, developing, testing, implementing, and evaluating new effective learning techniques, including new IT and computer applications, takes place at the higher education institution. The study programmes are integrated with traineeships, placements and internships and student involvement in research projects. Teachers involve students in teaching (through questions asked in the classroom, short presentations, and demonstrative experiments) and the teaching process follows the students' learning pace. The teaching

strategy also takes into considerations the needs of students with disabilities.

Ref. 2: More than a simple transfer of knowledge from teacher to student, the institution creates learning environments and experiences which lead students to discover and create knowledge themselves. The teacher guides a student's intellectual development while giving it a strategic dimension.

PI B2.1.5 Student career guidance

Min: Teachers have tutorial hours available for students and personalize guidance at a student's request. There are counsellors or tutors by year of study and/or other forms of interaction between a teacher and a group of students.

Ref.1: At each faculty there is a structure for guiding students in choosing their courses and career. Peer tutorage between senior students and other students is in place. Teachers keep in touch with students via e-mail and through at least two counselling hours per week.

Criterion B.3 – Scientific Research Activities

S.B.3.1 Research Programmes

The institution has a long term strategy and medium and short term programmes which address the research objective, projects and expected outcomes, as well as the resources. There is a research ethos and culture, and mechanisms for the validating research outcomes.

Performance indicators

PI.B.3.1.1. Planning of research

Min: The long term strategy and medium and short term research programmes are adopted by the Senate and the Councils of faculties, which also specify the practices for obtaining and allocating resources and the means for validating the research outcomes .The research interests are predominantly institutional.

Ref. 1: With regard to competitiveness and validation, research planning takes into consideration, and is made within, the national framework. Research is predominantly relevant at national level.

Ref. 2: Research planning and achievement are made in relation to the European and global framework

PI B.3.1.2. Undertaking research

Min: Sufficient financial, logistic and human resources are available for achieving the proposed research objectives.

Ref. 1: There is an academic climate and culture strongly centred on research, evidenced by the number of research grants, publications, and the cognitive and technological transfer through consultancy, scientific parks etc. There are Doctoral schools for training young researchers.

Ref. 2: There is evidence that scientific research corresponds to standards of quality or excellence, from the point of view of the organization; there is monitoring of research project development; internal approval of outcomes; elimination of unethical practices such as: reproduction, without permission, of research results obtained by other researchers, plagiarism, neglect of bioethical norms etc.

PI B.3.1.3 Validation of research

Min: Research is validated through: educational publications, scientific publications, technological transfer through consultancy centres, scientific parks and other structures for validation and the realization of new products etc. Each academic staff member and researcher produces at least one publication or didactical or scientific achievement per year. The institution participates, through mass media, in the dissemination of its research outcomes.*

Ref. 1: The research outcomes are appreciated at national level through awards, citations, quotations etc. The publications, patents, and other important outcomes are mentioned in international databases.*

* In certain fields such as Medical, Agricultural, and Technical Sciences, Architecture, Urbanism etc., in which research outcomes are also

validated through projects based on which new products are developed, and certain works for infrastructure development or environment protection are executed, these outcomes will be also taken into consideration.

Criterion B.4 – Financial Management of the Organization

S.B.4.1 Budgeting and accounting

The institution has its own income and expense budget and an adequate accounting system, organized at institutional level, for the financial management of the higher education and its research activities. It has a fiscal code and bank account, other than those of the foundation or association within which it operates.

PI B.4.1.1. The income and expense budget

Min: The institution has an annual income and expense budget approved by the Senate and which is rigorously respected. Annual expenses for salaries in a higher education institution must not exceed the percentage from the total income which ensures its sustainable functioning. In order to obtain its accreditation, the higher education institution must prove that, during its temporary functioning, at least 30% of income earned from student tuition fees has been used for investments in its own material resources. Student tuition fees are calculated in accordance with average schooling costs per academic year within the public education system financed from the budget, for similar Licence, Master's or Doctoral studies, and are communicated to students through various means. Students are informed with regard to the possibilities of financial aid offered by the institution and the way in which tuition fees are used. After three study cycles, subsequent to its legal establishment, a higher education institution must prove that it owns 70% of its education premises and equipment.

PI B.4.1.2 Accounting

Min: In order to obtain and preserve its accreditation status, the institution should provide evidence of its accounting system, at institutional level, through an inventory record, balance sheet, budgeting account and budgetary control statement. It can demonstrate that expenses are made according to current legislation provisions, the value of incomes and their initial destination, as well as the non-profit character of the institution.

Ref. 1: The accounting activity is based on information technology and is always transparent.

PI B.4.1.3 Auditing and public accountability

Min: In order to obtain and preserve its accreditation status, the institution provides evidence of the internal and external auditing of its financial affairs. The balance sheet, the budgeting account and the outcomes of the external auditing of the financial standings are made public following an analysis made by the Senate.

AREA C – Quality Management

The institution has structures, policies, strategies and concrete procedures for managing and assuring the quality of the teaching, learning, and research activities, and for developing its own quality culture. Structures address the organization and functioning of the Commission for Quality Evaluation and Assurance and its relationships with the Senate, the Councils of the faculties and the Chairs/Departments. Policies address the quality assurance purposes and objectives and the means of accomplishing them. Strategies are focused on objectives and address the way that resources are mobilized in order to achieve in due time the objectives stated at institutional level and by study programmes. A quality culture deals with values, norms and activities practiced in the institution in order to initiate, approve, evaluate and monitor the quality of the teaching and research activities.

Standards (S) and Performance Indicators (PI)

Criterion C.1 – Quality Assurance Strategies and Procedures

S.C.1.1. Quality Assurance Structures and Policies

Structures, policies, and strategies create the institutional framework for developing and concretely monitoring quality, for establishing a quality culture and continually enhancing quality standards.

Performance Indicators

PI C.1.1.1. Organization of the Quality Assurance System

Min: The institution has a central commission and commissions on study programmes which work together

Ref. 1: The commission promotes a quality culture in the institution.

Ref. 2: The commission develops activities to establish qualitative and quantitative benchmarks for evaluating and monitoring quality, by comparing other universities from Romania and abroad.

PI C.1.1.2 Quality Assurance Policies and Strategies

Min: There is a policy programme of the higher education institution, focused on quality, and the means of implementation are specified.

Ref. 1: Implementation strategies, with concrete provisions and deadlines correspond to each policy.

Ref.2: The policies and strategies are put in place in each compartment and stimulate the participation of every member of the teaching and research staff, and also students.

Criterion C.2 – Procedures for the initiation, monitoring and periodic revision of the implemented programmes and activities

S.C.2.1 Approval, monitoring and periodic evaluation of study programmes and their corresponding qualifications

Within the higher education institution, there are regulations regarding the initiation, approval, monitoring and periodic evaluation of each study programme and delivered diploma, which are rigorously and consistently applied.

Performance Indicators

PI C.2.1.1 Existence and implementation of regulations regarding the initiation, approval, monitoring and periodic evaluation of study programmes

Min: The regulations exist and are implemented.

Ref. 1: The regulations are associated with a system of monitoring study programmes, based on data and information.

Ref. 2: The regulations and the monitoring are associated with periodic - at least annual - evaluations of the quality of each programme and of the institution.

PI C.2.1.2 Correspondences between diplomas and qualifications

Min: The study programmes and diplomas are elaborated and delivered in accordance with the requirements of the academic qualification.

Ref. 1: The study programmes are periodically revised in order for them to correspond to the dynamics of the university and professional qualifications market.

Ref. 2: The study programmes and diplomas are revised by means of European and international comparison, based on professional benchmarks.

Criterion C.3 – Objective and Transparent Procedures for Evaluating Learning Outcomes

S.C.3.1 Student Evaluation

Student evaluation and grading are based on criteria, regulations and techniques which are rigorously and consistently applied.

Performance Indicators

PI C.3.1.1 The higher education institution has regulations for examinations and grading which are rigorously and consistently applied.

Min: The Regulations exist, and are accompanied by specific procedures of acknowledgement and are consistently applied by tenured professors and students. An examination is attended, in addition to the tenured professor, by at least one other specialized member of the teaching staff.

Ref.1: The regulations include detailed procedures/ techniques/methods of implementation, in the form of a set of techniques/methods for examining students which are constantly communicated to all interested parties.

Ref. 2: The regulations and the set of examination techniques/methods are complemented by a system which allows an external evaluator (from outside the institution) to participate in the examination process.

PI C.3.1.2 Integration of evaluation in the teaching and learning plan, by courses and study programmes

Min: Each course is designed so that it combines teaching, learning and evaluation. The procedures for student examination and evaluation are focused on learning outcomes and communicated to students in due time and in detail.

Ref. 1: Diagnostic, formative and summative evaluation assures learning continuity and consistency.

Ref. 2: Evaluation stimulates students towards creative learning, manifested through works elaborated independently, and based on rigorously acquired knowledge.

Criterion C.4 – Procedures for the periodic evaluation of the teaching staff

S.C.4.1 The quality of the teaching and research staff

The teaching staff of the universities must be adequate, from the point of view of its number and functioning basis, to the total number of students, in a field of study, and their qualifications must correspond to specific study programmes and to the quality objectives stated by the higher education institution.

Performance indicators

PI C.4.1.1. Ratio of teaching staff to students

Min: In respect to specific study programme, the higher education institution establishes the ratio that it considers to be optimal for its objectives and its own level of academic quality, between the number of tenured staff based at the higher education institution and the total number of enrolled students. When evaluating quality, a member of the teaching staff is considered to be one that has its main teaching workload at only one higher education institution.

Ref. 1: The optimal ratio between the number of teaching staff and the number of students is established in relation to teaching and learning quality, and also in relation to research quality.

Ref. 2: When establishing the ratio, the high levels of teaching, learning and research quality, are compared with successful universities in Romania and abroad. Procedures for setting professional benchmarks are consistently applied and comparisons are made continually.

PI C.4.1.2 Peer review

Min: A peer review is organized periodically, based on general criteria and collegial preferences.

Ref. 1: A peer review is compulsory and takes place regularly. For each chair and department there is a Commission for annual evaluation of the teaching and research performance of each member of the teaching/research staff and an annual report on the quality of the teaching and research staff.

PI C.4.1.3 Student evaluation of the teaching staff

Min: There is a form for student evaluation of all teaching staff, which is approved by the Senate and is applied optionally, after each academic semester, the results of which are confidential, and are made available only to the Dean, the Rector and the evaluated person.

Ref. 1: Student evaluation of the teaching staff is compulsory. The results of the student evaluation of the teaching staff are discussed individually, processed statistically, by chairs, faculties and higher education institution, and analyzed at faculty and institution level, in order to ensure transparency and to formulate policies regarding the quality of teaching.

PI C.4.1.4 University management's evaluation of the teaching staff

Min: Each teaching staff member evaluates himself/herself and is also evaluated by the Chair-holder, on annual basis.

Ref. 1: The higher education institution has a specific form for the annual, multi-criteria evaluation of each member of the teaching staff and a system of classification of the teaching and research performances and of the services made to the institution and to the community. The promotion of teaching staff depends on the evaluation results, which

also include the results of the peer review and of the evaluation made by students.

Criterion C.5 – Access to adequate learning resources

S.C.5.1 Learning resources and student services

The resources and services offered to students are sufficient, adequate and relevant for facilitating learning and ensuring a quality student life.

Performance indicators

PI C.5.1.1 Availability of learning resources

Min: The higher education institution ensures learning resources (textbooks, treatises, bibliographic references, readers, anthologies etc.) for each study programme in the libraries, resource centres etc., in classic or electronic format, and free of charge. The higher education institution library must have, besides electronic access, an adequate number of volumes from Romania and abroad, and subscriptions to the main specialized journals from Romania and abroad for each discipline which defines a study programme. Each library has a programme and resources for acquiring books and journals.

Ref. 1: The ratio between the available learning resources and students is so established that each student has free access to any resource, according to the objectives and requirements of the study programmes.

PI C.5.1.2 Teaching as a learning resource

Min: Each teaching staff member has updated teaching strategies for each course, corresponding to the study programme, students' characteristics, form of study, and predefined criteria

Ref. 1: The higher education institution has a laboratory for analysis, research and formulation of innovative teaching/learning strategies, which involves both teaching staff and students.

PI.C.5.1.3: Incentive and remediation programmes

Min: The higher education institution has incentive programmes for stimulating students with high learning performances, as well as remedial programmes aimed to assist and support students with learning difficulties.

Ref. 1: Within the higher education institution there are supplementary tutoring programmes, offered by the teaching staff, which students can join.

PI.C.5.1.4 Student services

Min: The higher education institution offers a minimum number of social, cultural and sports services for students such as: housing for at least 10% of students, sports facilities, different counselling services, which are effectively administered.

Ref. 1: The higher education institution offers various student services and special programmes aimed to ensure a quality student life, which it monitors and evaluates regularly.

Criterion C.6 – Regularly updated database on internal quality assurance

S.C.6.1 Information systems

Universities collect, process, and analyze data and information regarding the quality of education and of student life within the higher education institution.

Performance indicators

PI.C.6.1.1 Databases

Min: The institution has an information system which facilitates the collection, processing, and analysis of data and information relevant for institutional quality evaluation and assurance.

Ref. 1: In addition to information regarding institutional quality, the higher education institution also gathers information about quality in other universities from Romania and abroad, to which it compares itself, and based on which, it formulates differentiated benchmarks.

C.7 – Transparent information of public interest with regards to study programmes, certificates, diplomas, and qualifications

S.C.7.1 – Public Information

The public transparency of data and information, in printed and electronic format, on all qualifications and study programmes, as well as the up-to-date, accuracy and validity of this information, must be constantly demonstrated.

Performance Indicators

PI.C.7.1.1 The provision of public information

Min: The higher education institution and all its faculties must offer quantitative and/or qualitative, current and correct information and data on qualifications, study programmes, diplomas, teaching and research staff, facilities offered to students and information on any other aspect of public interest in general, and of student interest, in particular.

Ref. 1: The information provided to the public by the higher education institution is quantitatively and qualitatively comparable to that provided by other universities in the European Higher Education Area.

C.8 – Operational quality assurance structures, according to the Law

S.C.8.1 The institutional structure for education quality assurance corresponds to the legal provisions and acts on a permanent basis

A Commission for Quality Evaluation and Assurance has been established, and is structured and acts according to the legislation in force.

Performance indicators

PI.C.8.1.1 A Commission coordinates the implementation of procedures and activities for quality evaluation and assurance

Min: The evaluation procedures and activities regarding the quality of education have been elaborated and approved by the Senate of the higher education institution. The Commission elaborates the annual

internal evaluation report and makes it public by posting or publishing it, including in electronic format, and formulates proposals for improving the quality of education.

Ref.1: The institution continually implements measures for improving the quality of education proposed by the Commission and collaborates with other universities from Romania or abroad in order to identify and adopt good practices in the quality areas.

Table 1. Synthesis of areas, criteria, standards and performance indicators for quality assurance and accreditation

Areas	Criteria	Standards	Performance Indicators
A. Institutional Capacity	A.1 – Institutional, administrative and managerial structures	S.A.1.1 Mission, objectives and academic integrity	PI.A.1.1.1. Mission and objectives PI.A.1.1.2. Academic integrity PI.A.1.1.3. Responsibility and public accountability
		S.A.1.2 Management and administration	PI.A.1.2.1 Management system PI.A.1.2.2. Strategic management PI.A.1.2.3 Effective administration
	A.2 –Material resources	S.A.2.1 Property, equipment, and allocated financial resources	PI.A.2.1.1Facilities for teaching, research and other activities PI.A.2.1.2 Equipment PI.A.2.1.3 Financial resources PI.A.2.1.4 System of scholarships allocation and other forms of financial aid for students
B. Educational Effectiveness	B.1 – Content of study programmes	S.B.1.1. Student admissions	PI.B.1.1.1 Principles of recruitment and admission's policy PI.B.1.1.2 Admission practices
		S.B.1.2 Structure and range of study programmes	PI.B.1.2.1. Structure of study programmes PI.B.1.2.2. Differentiation in the implementation of study programmes PI.B.1.2.3. Relevance of study programmes
	B.2 – Learning outcomes	S.B.2.1 Validation of academic qualifications	PI.B.2.1.1 Validation by employability within the field of the academic qualification PI.B.2.1.2 Validation by access to the next level of academic studies PI B2.1.3 Level of students' satisfaction with regard to the professional and personal development ensured by the higher education institution PI B2.1.4 Focus on student-centred learning methods PI B2.1.5 Student career guidance
	B.3 –Scientific research activities	S.B.3.1 Research programmes	PI.B.3.1.1 Planning of research PI.B.3.1.2 Undertaking research PI.B.3.1.3 Validation of research

Areas	Criteria	Standards	Performance Indicators
	B.4 –Financial management of the organization	S.B.4.1 Budgeting and accounting	PI.B.4.1.1 Income and expense budget PI.B.4.1.2 Accounting PI.B.4.1.3 Auditing and public accountability
C. Quality Management	C.1 – Quality assurance strategies and procedures	S.C.1.1 Quality assurance structures and policies	PI.C.1.1.1 Organization of the quality assurance system PI.C.1.1.2. Quality assurance policies and strategies
	C.2 – Procedures for initiation, monitoring and periodic revision of the implemented programmes and activities	S.C.2.1 Approval, monitoring and periodic evaluation of the study programmes and diplomas corresponding to the level of qualifications	PI.C.2.1.1 Existence and implementation of regulations regarding the initiation, approval, monitoring and periodic evaluation of study programmes IP.C.2.1.2 Correlations between diplomas and qualifications
	C.3 – Objective and transparent procedures for learning outcomes evaluation	S.C.3.1. Student evaluation	PI.C.3.1.1. The higher education institution has regulations for students’ examination and grading which are rigorously and consistently applied PI.C.3.1.2. Integration of examinations in the teaching and learning plan, by courses and study programmes
	C.4 – Procedures for the periodic evaluation of the teaching staff	S.C.4.1 The quality of the teaching and research staff	PI.C.4.1.1 Ratio of teaching staff to students PI.C.4.1.2 Peer review PI.C.4.1.3 Student evaluation of the teaching staff PI.C.4.1.4 University management’s evaluation of the teaching staff
	C.5 – Access to adequate learning resources	S.C.5.1 Learning resources and student services	PI.C.5.1.1 Availability of learning resources PI.C.5.1.2 Teaching as a learning resource PI.C.5.1.3 Incentive and remediation programmes PI.C.5.1.4 Student services
	C.6 – Regularly updated database on internal quality assurance	S.C.6.1 Information systems	PI.3.6.1. Databases
	C.7 – Transparent information of public interest with regards study programmes, certificates, diplomas, and qualifications	S.C.7.1 Public information	PI.3.7.1. The provision of public information
	C.8 – Operational quality assurance structures, according to the Law	S.C.8.1 The institutional structure for quality education assurance corresponds to the legal provisions and acts on a permanent basis	PI.C.8.1.1 A Commission coordinates the implementation of the procedures and activities for quality evaluation and assurance

Part III: External Quality Evaluation of Higher Education Institutions

The quality of study and research programmes is achieved and further developed by each higher education institution. The areas, criteria, standards and performance indicators only offer a basis for measuring and evaluating quality in order to facilitate the most efficient possible management of the processes which lead to obtaining the best learning and research outcomes. The internal component of academic quality assurance, namely the institutional one, is essential to quality management. The external component of peer review of quality is complementary to the internal component and addresses the same purposes of continuous quality improvement.

An external evaluation of academic quality is made in the following cases:

- a) for the provisional authorisation to operate for a study programme (programme authorisation), or a higher education services provider (institutional authorisation);
- b) for the accreditation of a study programme (programme accreditation), or of a higher education institution (institutional accreditation);
- c) for the periodic certification, at five-year intervals, of the academic quality of the education and research services in an already accredited higher education institution.

The areas, criteria, standards and performance indicators are mostly the same for the provisional authorisation to operate, accreditation and quality assurance. The only difference consists in their proportion and refers to the difference between the authorisation or accreditation of a programme, and the institutional authorisation or accreditation. A study programme only represents a part of an institution or university and from here results the difference of proportion.

3.1. Stages of academic quality evaluation

There are three successive stages of academic quality evaluation:

- a) the elaboration, by the provider or institution, of a **quality self-evaluation report**;
- b) the **external evaluation** of quality;
- c) the implementation of **recommendations** resulting from self-evaluation and external evaluation.

The **self-evaluation report** is an official document elaborated by the provider, institution or university which applies for the provisional authorisation to operate (for a programme or an institution), the accreditation of a programme of an institution, or the external evaluation of quality assurance.

The self-evaluation report has two parts:

- a) the **analytical part** is of a narrative type, has 20-40 pages, which varies by the size of the object being evaluated (study programme or institution), and represents the conclusions reached by the management of the institution/study programme and by the academic community, including students, with regard to strengths and weaknesses, successes, threats, uncertainties or failures of quality assurance and to the future actions for improvement, in relation to the areas, criteria, standards and performance indicators mentioned in Part II of the **Methodology**. The report is presented in written and electronic format.
- b) the **justification part** includes documents, charts, tables, illustrations, etc., meant to support the analysis presented in the first part. These are complementary and based on data and information which exist in the institutions' databases.

In a self-evaluation report for provisional authorisation to operate or accreditation, there is also an Introduction which mentions the achievement of each normative requirement formulated in Part IV of the **Methodology**.

The self-evaluation report takes as compulsory references the areas, criteria, standards and performance indicators mentioned in this **Methodology**, so that its main chapters coincide with the three areas (institutional capacity, educational effectiveness, and

quality management). In addition to the performance indicators mentioned in the **Methodology**, the self-evaluation report may also refer to other indicators. The justifying documents and the self-evaluation statements must mention the accomplishment, at least, of the minimum levels. In the case of exceeding the minimum level for an indicator or standard, the respective level is demonstrated through justifying documents in the form of Standard of Reference specific to the programme or institution. Within an institution or university with study programmes already accredited, descriptions and references are not made for every single programme. One or another programme is mentioned only for illustrative purposes. However, for the external evaluation of quality, complete data and information on each study programme organized by the higher education institution will be made available.

The *external evaluation* includes three successive activities:

- a) the analysis of the self-evaluation report in relation to the areas, criteria, standards and performance indicators mentioned in the **Methodology**;
- b) a study visit to the programme or institution by a team of three evaluators for a 3-4-day period, in order to verify the correlation of data, information and self-evaluation statements, on one hand, and the concrete institutional reality, on the other hand; the results of the visits are presented in an external evaluation report which also includes conclusions and recommendations;
- c) the finalization of the recommendations with regard to quality improvement, after being discussed with representatives of the institution and/or study programme, approved by the RAQAHE Council, and the external evaluation report has been made public.

The main conclusion, in the case of provisional authorisation to operate and of the accreditation, consists of the granting or not granting of the respective status. In the case of an external evaluation of quality assurance at accredited universities, the conclusion of the report consists either in the approval of the quality status and formulation of minor recommendations for improvement, the achievement of which falls under the higher education institution's responsibility, or an acknowledgment that the minimum quality standards have not been accomplished. In the latter case the provisions of Art. 34 of GEO are applied.

3.2. External evaluation standards

An external evaluation of quality assurance or authorisation and accreditation, applies the European standards mentioned in the “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area”, adopted by the Ministers responsible for higher education in Bergen, in May 2005. These standards are the following:

a) Use of internal quality assurance procedures

An external evaluation of quality is preceded by a self-evaluation report and is based on the institutional accomplishment of the criteria, standards, and performance indicators specific to the internal quality assurance, as presented in the **Methodology**.

b) Implementation of external quality assurance processes

External quality evaluation processes must be clearly defined, discussed with all interested parties, published, and disseminated. Prior to the organization of an external evaluation process, the RAQAHE Council and the management of the institution must analyze the implications and the applications of the procedure.

c) Decision-making criteria

Any recommendation and formal decision which results from the application of the external evaluation of quality assurance must be based on explicit and transparent criteria which are consistently and coherently applied.

d) Correlation of the procedures and processes applied in the external quality evaluation with the purposes and objectives of quality assurance

Quality assurance and external evaluation of quality are components of the larger processes and procedures for quality assurance and improvement in higher education and must be applied as such. In order to accomplish its purposes and objectives, the procedures and process of the external evaluation of quality assurance must be elaborated and applied so that the following conditions are observed: the external evaluators must have the capacities, competencies and experience necessary for external evaluation; the RAQAHE Council must select and include in the Register of Experts those academics from Romania and abroad

which are known for their professional competence, moral integrity and expertise in the field of quality assurance; the RAQAHE Council must offer the experts the possibility of training in the field of external quality evaluation; students must be involved in an external evaluation; whenever is possible, international experts must be involved; evaluative statements must always be based on justifying documents and concrete and convincing examples; the recognition of the importance of quality improvement, and of enhancing quality performance are fundamental for the process of quality assurance.

e) The Evaluation Report

The evaluation report must be edited in a clear style, accessible to all those interested. The recommendations and conclusions are adequately emphasized in the text. The evaluation report is published and disseminated. Readers must have the possibility to express their points of view.

f) Implementation of the recommendations

When the nature of the conclusions and recommendations requires time and special forms of implementation, an implementation plan must be elaborated which includes provisions and special deadlines.

g) The periodicity of the external evaluation

Any accredited higher education institution is externally evaluated on a periodic basis, at intervals not exceeding five years.

h) System analysis

Each year the RAQAHE Council elaborates a synthetic report on the quality assurance in Romanian higher education. The report also includes comparative data or information from other countries from the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and from outside this area. The report is submitted to the Minister of Education and Research, and then published.

i) Information for establishing institutional benchmarking for quality

The RAQAHE Council provides universities, on a public basis, with the information and data allowing them to elaborate standards of reference through benchmarking techniques.

j) Permanent improvement of the RAQAHE Council's performance

The RAQAHE Council must permanently improve its own procedures, techniques and standards, with the cooperation of the stakeholders. The RAQAHE Council presents annually a report on the results of its own activities and submits this report to accredited higher education institutions for analysis and consultation in order to establish quality assurance priorities.

3.3. Auditing of an external quality evaluation

In order to audit an external quality evaluation, the RAQAHE Council establishes the Consultative and Auditing Commission which has the following competencies:

- a) proposes and finalizes, on a contractual basis, after receiving the RAQAHE Council approval, the elaboration of certain studies, textbooks, guides etc. for the improvement of the techniques of quality assurance and accreditation;
- b) audits the activities of external evaluation of quality assurance or of authorisation and accreditation, at RAQAHE Council's request, based on a specific methodology approved by the RAQAHE Council.

3.4. Relevance of external evaluation, standards, criteria and performance indicators

The areas, criteria, standards, and performance indicators mentioned in the **Methodology** correspond to the provisions of GEO No. 75/2005 on Quality Assurance in Education.

The areas, criteria, standards, and performance indicators mentioned in the **Methodology** are implemented by all higher education institutions for both obtaining a provisional authorisation to operate or the accreditation and the evaluation of the quality of the educational activities. The method of implementation of the elements specified in the **Methodology** leads to the following implications compulsory for the spirit and practice of quality assurance in higher education:

- a) in order to develop a quality culture and to build databases justifying the internal quality management, each higher education institution must address **at least** the areas, criteria, standards and performance indicators presented in the **Methodology**;
- b) an external evaluation of the academic quality must address each area and criterion so that the minimum level is reached for all performance indicators linked to associated standards;
- c) non-fulfilment of the minimum level of the established performance indicators, meaning that the quality standards have not been met, leads to the application of the provisions of Art. 34 of GEO;
- d) the higher education institution may opt for higher levels for each performance indicator in order to establish its own Standards of Reference; the identification of these higher levels consists of benchmarking and is based on comparisons with successful universities from the EHEA or worldwide. Upon consolidation of its operating, the RAQAHE Council will offer supplementary and optional information on national and European variations of standards and performance indicators.
- e) quality is a fundamental criterion for financing education from public sources. Within the higher education framework the comparative inter-institutional evaluation of the academic study programmes requires differentiated funding according to the quality of the offered study programme. The RAQAHE Council collaborates with the National Higher Education Funding Council (NHEFC) in order to establish the quality indicators used for financing, compatible with the performance indicators presented in the **Methodology**.

Part IV. Applications Differentiated by Study Cycles

The **Methodology** offers the general framework of quality assurance in higher education. The areas, criteria, standards, and performance indicators mentioned in the **Methodology** are formulated so that they preserve their applicability in the areas of quality assurance and accreditation for any type of institution or higher education provider, and for any study programme. However, certain differentiations are necessary. This part offers the differentiating details which regard:

- a) the provisional authorisation to operate and the accreditation of higher education institutions awarding Licence Degrees;
- b) the accreditation of Master's Degree awarding institutions (MAI);
- c) the accreditation of Doctorate Degree awarding institutions (DAI).

4.1. Provisional authorisation to operate and accreditation

The provisional authorisation to operate for a higher education institution or a study programme, or their accreditation, is part of the quality assurance in higher education. The provisional authorisation to operate once obtained, gives the right to organize and carry out the educational process and organize, if necessary, entrance examinations. Accreditation is subsequent to authorisation and after being finalized gives the right to deliver diplomas, certificates and other study documents recognized at national and international level and to organize graduation or Licence Degree examinations as well as Master's Degree and Doctoral studies which have already been accredited.

4.1.1. Provisional authorisation to operate and accreditation procedures

The procedures for provisional authorisation and for accreditation consist of the following the stages of internal evaluation (self-evaluation) and external evaluation based on documents, records, and official papers proving that criteria, standards and performance indicators mentioned in the **Methodology** have been met.

In higher education authorisation must be granted for each study programme of the first study cycle which leads to distinct academic qualification. The programmes specific to

the Master's and Doctoral study cycles must also be submitted, individually, to external evaluation in order for them to be accredited. The procedure applied for the provisional authorisation to operate includes the following steps:

- a) an organization interested in providing higher education services elaborates a self-evaluation report for each study programme taking into consideration the areas, criteria, standards and performance indicators;
- b) the self-evaluation report is submitted to the accreditation department of the RAQAHE Council together with the request for the initiation of the procedure for external evaluation and provisional authorisation to operate;
- c) the accreditation department appoints a commission of experts in external evaluation including at least one member from a national minority when evaluating a programme or a provider in the language of a national minority, which analyzes the self-evaluation report, verifies through visits to the applicant institution, the meeting of the Standards and elaborates its own evaluation report;
- d) the RAQAHE Council validates the experts' report by verifying the observance of the methodology for external evaluation and proposes to the Ministry of Education and Research the granting or not granting of the provisional authorisation to operate, accordingly;
- e) provisional authorisation to operate is granted to organizations interested in carrying out higher education activities by government decision at the initiative of the Ministry of Education and Research based on the RAQAHE Council's approval.

The accreditation procedure includes the following steps:

- a) an organization provisionally authorized to operate elaborates a self-evaluation report using as terms of reference the areas, criteria, standards, and performance indicators;
- b) the self-evaluation report is submitted to the accreditation department of the RAQAHE Council together with the request for the initiation of the accreditation procedure;

- c) the deadline for submitting the application for accreditation cannot exceed three years from the date of the first cohort of students, which may lead to the cancellation of the provisional authorisation to operate;
- d) the accreditation department of the RAQAHE Council appoints a commission of evaluation and accreditation experts from which at least one member comes from a national minority when a programme or provider in the language of a national minority is to be evaluated, which analyzes the self-evaluation report, verifies, through visits to the applicant institution, the achievement of the requirements of the areas, criteria, standards and performance indicators and elaborates its own evaluation report;
- e) the RAQAHE Council validates the report of experts through verifying the observance of the Methodology for external evaluation and proposes to the Ministry of Education and Research the accreditation or non-accreditation of the applicant institution, accordingly;
- f) for organizations which carry out higher education activities, the accreditation is granted by Law, at the initiative of the Ministry of Education and Research based on the RAQAHE Council's approval.

A decision on an application for provisional authorisation to operate for a study programme is communicated by the RAQAHE Council within six months from the application's registration date. An authorized study programme may be run in the academic year following the date of delivery of the RAQAHE Council's approval and of the Government's Decision. An application for the accreditation of a study programme is formulated by the education provider after three successive cohorts of students having graduated the study programme. A decision on the application for accreditation is communicated by the RAQAHE Council within six months from the date of the registration of the application, based on the self-evaluation report as well as on the external evaluation made by the RAQAHE Council.

Between the delivery of the provisional authorisation to operate and the formulation of the accreditation application, the RAQAHE Council organizes periodic visits for external evaluation of the application of the criteria and standards of quality assurance.

4.1.2. Objectives of provisional authorisation and accreditation

The general objectives of the external evaluation in view of accreditation are:

- the analysis of the quality of the study programmes offered by the higher education institutions and, where necessary, the support of the process of the elimination of education quality dysfunctions and deficiencies;
- support to the permanent improvement of quality of education through dissemination of good practices and encouragement of experience exchange between universities which offer similar study programmes;
- ensuring the process of effective and accessible information to the public with regard to the quality of the study programmes by publishing the institutions' own evaluation reports.

The RAQAHE Council offers public information through its own evaluation reports on two distinct and independent aspects:

- taking as reference the *quality standards* for a discipline or a study programme, the RAQAHE report appreciates the extent to which the foreseen learning outcomes established by the provider of the study programme itself can be actually reached within the respective institution;
- the observance of the quality of the learning opportunities is focused on the effectiveness of the teaching/learning process, on the academic support through adequate learning resources of the progress achieved by students in different programmes.

The specific objectives of the temporary authorisation and accreditation are the following:

- a) to assure the academic communities, the stakeholders and the public at large that the education providing organization, authorized or accredited to organize study programmes demonstrates that it complies to minimum quality standards of a higher education institution;
- b) to promote the engagement of the education providing organization in the direction of the continuous development of academic quality illustrated through learning and research outcomes;

- c) to support higher education institutions in developing a quality management culture as well as demonstrating their achievements through evidence and relevant documents;
- d) to induce the education providing organization to evaluate itself and to cooperate in its external evaluation in order to assure the improvement of quality;
- e) to encourage the education providing organization in cooperating with other higher education institutions in accomplishing, monitoring and comparing academic quality;
- f) to identify and make public any attempt to offer a programme which does not correspond to the minimum standards of academic quality.

4.2. Normative requirements regarding provisional authorisation and accreditation of Licence Degree study programmes

A provisional authorisation precedes the actual development of educational services by an initiator of a Licence study programme. The provisional authorisation is a process which consists, on the one hand, of verifying the extent to which the future provider satisfies the legal provisions through which its initiative can develop into quality outcomes and, on the other hand, in analyzing its capacity for implementing, according to the law, the proposed study programme. In view of the accreditation, the operational experience and the degree of development of a quality culture are taken into consideration.

In this respect, the self-evaluation report presents, in an explicit and documented way, data and information which correspond to a set of normative requirements, with organizational relevance. The other three chapters refer to the level of compliance with the criteria, standards and performance indicators mentioned in Part II of this **Methodology** for the three areas of quality assurance: institutional capacity, educational effectiveness, and quality management.

By studying the documents submitted by the provider of the service for the authorisation or accreditation applied for, and by visiting the provider's premises, the RAQAHE Council verifies the compliance with the following **compulsory normative requirements**:

1. With regard to the legal framework of the organization and functioning of a higher education institution as an education providing organization, the mission and objectives of higher education institution are as follows:
 - a) in order to obtain its provisional authorisation to operate and accreditation, a higher education institution must make proof of its own legal status established through a foundation document;
 - b) a higher education institution which applies for provisional authorisation to operate or for accreditation must prove that it has a clearly formulated educational and research mission;
 - c) the mission of the higher education institution has clear objectives which can be achieved in accordance with the legal provisions;
 - d) the mission of the higher education institution includes elements of specificity and opportunity in accordance with the national qualifications framework and the requirements of the labour market;
2. Teaching staff:
 - a) according to the present Government's Decision, the teaching staff is the staff which runs educational activities in the respective higher education institution;
 - b) the teaching staff must meet the legal requirements for occupying teaching positions;
 - c) the teaching staff tenured in a higher education institution, namely the one at which he/she is based, is taken into consideration when granting the provisional authorisation or the accreditation, for a single teaching load established according to the Law;
 - d) in order to assure the quality of education activities, tenured teaching staff in a higher education institution cannot cover in a single academic year more than three teaching loads, regardless of the education institution in which they work;
 - e) higher education teaching staff tenured in accordance with the Law who retire at the age limit or for other reasons, lose their tenured positions and are considered associate teaching staff, and they cannot cover more than a teaching workload in the respective education institution;
 - f) in order to obtain the provisional authorisation to operate, a higher education institution must have, at each institutional structure for each programme of the Licence cycle that leads to a distinct academic qualification, at least 70% of total teaching positions

included in the teaching load report, constituted in accordance with current legal provisions, covered with tenured teaching staff according to the legal provisions, out of which at least 25%, but no more than 50%, must be professors and associate professors. The number of full-time teaching staff must be higher than 40% of the total teaching positions established in accordance with the legal provisions;

- g) in order to obtain accreditation, a higher education institution must have at each institutional structure for each study programme of the Licence Degree cycle which leads to a distinct academic qualification, at least 70% of the positions included in the teaching staff roster, constituted in accordance with current legal provisions, covered with tenured teaching staff holders of a regular teaching position or of a reserved position according to the legal provisions, out of which at least 25%, but no more than 50%, must be professors and associate professors;
- h) the number of teaching staff whose tenure in higher education has been granted according to the legal provisions, taken into consideration for the provisional authorisation to operate or the accreditation of each institutional structure and each study programme of the Licence Degree cycle, is the one resulted when considering the full-time and part-time positions from the teaching staff roster which these cover in the respective structure or programme;
- i) non-tenured associate teaching staff may occupy, on a temporary basis, a vacant position from the teaching staff roster of the higher education institution which is subject of the RAQAHE Council's recognition, provided it meets the legal requirements for occupying the respective positions;
- j) chair-holders (heads of subjects) must be PhD holders or PhD candidates in the field of the occupied teaching positions; the other teaching staff must have had initial training and the competencies in the field of the taught subject;
- k) in order to obtain accreditation, a higher education institution must prove that the chair-holders have elaborated courses and other academic works necessary for the teaching process, which fully cover the topics of the respective disciplines in the syllabus;
- l) the management of the higher education institution ensures the reproduction of the above-mentioned academic works, and provides an adequate number of copies for students;

- m) associate teaching staff have the obligation to communicate in writing to the head of the institution where they hold their main teaching position as well as to the one where they are employed as associates, and the number of teaching hours given as associates;
 - n) the teaching staff which occupy positions of junior assistant or assistant must hold a certified pedagogical training;
 - o) teaching staff who are highly specialized in a certain field and who are over the statutory retirement age must not exceed 20% of the total number of teaching positions;
 - p) in order to obtain accreditation the management of the higher education institution (Rector, Vice-Rector, Deans, Vice-Dean, and Head of Department) must be tenured teaching staff, having their main teaching load in the institution, or in the internal management structure in which they function, tenured professors or tenured associate professors, and they must not be holders of reserved positions;
 - q) the higher education institution ensures for at least a Licence Degree cycle the corresponding number of competent teaching staff to cover the subjects offered in the curricula;
3. The content of the teaching and learning process:
- a) in order to obtain the provisional authorisation to operate, the curricula must include the fundamental disciplines, the specialized disciplines in the field and the complementary disciplines organized in compulsory disciplines and optional disciplines according to the normative requirements established at national level;
 - b) the study disciplines from the curricula are organized in logical succession and aim to fulfil the following requirements:
 - a clear definition and delimitation of the general and special competencies, by Licence study fields in correlation with the corresponding competencies of Master's studies;
 - compatibility with the national qualifications framework;
 - compatibility with similar plans and study programmes from the member states of the European Union and from other countries, the weight of the disciplines being expressed in ECTS study credits;
 - c) the study disciplines included in the curricula are made up of syllabuses in which are specified the objectives of the disciplines, the basic thematic content, the distribution of

the number of teaching, seminar, and practice hours, by topic, the student evaluation, and a minimum bibliography;

- d) the list of disciplines included in the curriculum and their content, which are specified in the syllabuses, correspond to the licence field and the study programme for which the respective curricula have been elaborated, and correspond to the declared mission;
- e) the academic year will be structured around two semesters averaging 14-weeks, with 20-28 hours per week for the first study cycle (Licence Degree cycle) depending on the field of study;
- f) each semester will have 30 ECTS study credits for the compulsory disciplines, regardless of the form of study—full-time, evening, part-time, distance learning.
- g) “evening”, “part-time”, “distance” or other forms of study – which do not require compulsory campus attendance cannot be offered unless “full time” study form already exists;
- h) the optional disciplines, regardless of the semester in which they are scheduled are finalized with an “examination test”, and their corresponding credit points are given in addition to the 30 study credits of the respective semester;
- i) the ratio between the teaching hours and the other applied educational activities (seminars, laboratory activities, projects, traineeships etc;) must be of 1/1, with no more than +/-20 % admitted deviation;
- j) in Licence study programme for which curricula have been elaborated, a 2-3-week traineeship per year beginning with the second year of study must be included, as well as a period for the elaboration of a diploma paper, during the final year of study;
- k) for traineeship periods, the higher education institution has established collaboration agreements, contracts or other collaboration documents with the practical units, which specify: the place and period of training; the organization mode and guiding principles; the representatives of the higher education institution and of the practical unit responsible for the traineeship etc.;
- l) at least 50% of the testing activities of the study disciplines included in the curriculum are examinations;

4. Students

- a) student recruitment observes the institutions' own admission procedures;
- b) student registration for a competitive entrance examination is only made on the basis of a baccalaureate diploma or other equivalent documents;
- c) the size of the study formations (series, groups, subgroups) is so established that it ensures an efficient development of the education process;
- d) from the faculty timetable it results that the programme submitted for evaluation can be carried out in normal conditions, as required by Law;
- e) the number of students moving up to the next year of study must represent at least 40% of the total number of students of the respective year of study;
- f) student's learning outcomes for a study period must be certified by a transcript of records;
- g) the institution regulated the procedures for student progress from a year of study to the next one, based on accumulated ECTS study credits, as well as the procedures for undertaking two study years in one;
- h) h) students' transfer between higher education institutions, faculties and specializations is internally regulated and it is not made during the academic year;
- i) in order for the institution to be accredited, the first three cohorts of graduates of the higher education institution provisionally authorised to operate must sit for the final examination at an accredited institution which has the same licence domain or study programme established by RAQAHE. The Board of Examiners cannot be attended by members of the teaching staff from the faculties or the study programmes where the candidates to the final examination pursued their studies.
- j) in order to obtain the accreditation of a study programme, the institution must prove that:
 - o at least 51% of the total number of the first three cohorts of graduates passed the final examination;
 - o at least 40 % of the first three series of graduates are legally employed in working positions which correspond to their academic and professional qualification;

- k) diplomas for graduates of higher education institutions provisionally authorised to operate, who sat for their final examination at another accredited higher education institution established by RAQAHE and passed the final examination, are delivered by the institutions that organised the final examinations and must specify the name of the institution where the graduates pursued their studies. The respective diplomas are recognized by the Ministry of Education and Research;
 - l) the certificate and diploma awarding observes the current legal provisions;
5. Scientific Research
- a) the licence domain, that is the study programme submitted for evaluation, has its own research plan, which is part of the faculty's strategic plan, and implicitly of the institution's plan, certified by documents kept within the chairs, departments, faculty etc.;
 - b) the research themes included in the plan correspond to the scientific area of the licence domain, study programme etc., submitted for evaluation;
 - c) the teaching staff carry out research activities within the scientific disciplines included in their teaching load;
 - d) the teaching and research staff carry out scientific research activities validated by: publication of their outcomes in specialized journals published in Romania or abroad by publishing houses recognised by The National Council for Scientific Research in Higher Education (NCSRHE); contributions presented in scientific sessions, symposia, seminars etc. in Romania and/or abroad; cooperation contracts, expertise, and/or consultancy given on a contractual basis or according to convention made with partners from Romania or abroad, evaluated and certified by specialized commissions etc.;
 - e) research outcomes obtained within the laboratories of the education structure submitted for evaluation are validated through publications, patents etc.;
 - f) the faculty organises, together with its teaching staff, researchers, and graduates, scientific sessions, symposia, conferences, roundtables, their contributions and outcomes being published in scientific bulletins which bare an ISBN or ISSN, or in journals dedicated to the organised activity.

6. Equipment

- a) The equipment owned by the higher education institution which is subject to evaluation must correspond to the standards for a quality education process;
- b) In order to obtain the provisional authorisation to operate, the institution must prove with appropriate documents (property documents, rent contracts, inventory records, invoices etc.) that for the study programme submitted to evaluation it has, for at least 2 years in advance of the study year:
 - owned or rented facilities adequate to the education process;
 - owned or rented laboratories with adequate equipment for all compulsory disciplines included in the curriculum, the syllabus of which foresees that kind of activities;
 - adequate software and the related licence for the disciplines included in the curriculum;
 - a library with a reading room and its own fund of publications, adequate to the disciplines included in the curricula, by study cycles (Licence and Master's Degrees)
- c) The capacity of the spaces allocated for the study programme which is subject to evaluation must be of:
 - minimum 1sqm /place, in classrooms;
 - minimum 1.4 sqm. /place, in seminar rooms;
 - minimum 1.5 sqm./place, in reading rooms;
 - minimum 2.5 sqm./place, in IT laboratories and in laboratories for disciplines which require the use of a computer;
 - minimum 4 sqm./place, in laboratories for technical, experimental and design disciplines, etc;
- d) The number of places in teaching rooms, seminar rooms and laboratories must be correlated with the size of the study formations (series, groups, sub-groups, etc.) according to the norms established by the Ministry of Education and Research
- e) Applied works for the main disciplines included in the curricula are carried out in laboratories provided with the necessary IT equipment so that, at the level of a study formation, one computer is available for no more than 2 students in the Licence

Degree study cycle) and one computer per student is available in the Master's study cycle;

- f) The libraries of a higher education institution must ensure:
- a number of places in the reading rooms corresponding to at least 10 % of the total number of students;
 - its own fund of publications from Romanian and foreign specialized literature, which must consist of a sufficient number of copies, completely covering the disciplines included in the curricula. At least 50% of the fund of publications must represent book titles or specialized courses for the study field submitted to evaluation, which have been published within the last ten years by renown publishing houses;
 - the fund of publications must include a sufficient number of copies in order to cover the necessities of all students enrolled in the study cycle and the academic year for which the respective discipline is foreseen;
 - a sufficient number of subscriptions to Romanian and foreign publications and periodicals, corresponding to the stated mission;

7. Financial Activity

- a) In order to obtain the provisional authorisation to operate or the accreditation of a study programme or of a higher education structure, an applicant institution must prove that it has its own income and expenses budget for higher education activities, a fiscal code and a bank account, other than those of the foundation or the association within which it operates;
- b) Annual expenses for salaries in a higher education institution must not exceed 65 % of the total revenue;
- c) In order to obtain its accreditation, a higher education institution must prove that during its provisional authorisation period it used at least 30 % of its annual income for investments in its own material resources;
- d) In order to obtain accreditation, a higher education institution must prove that during its provisional authorisation period it proceeded to the organization of its accounting activity by establishing an inventory record, a balance sheet, a budgeting account and

- a budget control statement, which demonstrate that all expenses were made in accordance with the legislation in force, the obtained revenues and their stated destination, as well as the non-profit profile of the institution;
- e) Students' tuition fees are calculated in accordance to average schooling costs per academic year, within the public education system financed from the budget, for similar Licence, Master's or Doctoral studies, and are communicated to students through various means;
 - f) Students are informed with regard to opportunities of financial aid offered by the institution and the way the tuition fees are used.
 - g) After three study cycles, subsequent to its legal establishment, a higher education institution must prove that it owns 70% of the education premises and their necessary equipment.
 - h) In order to obtain the accreditation, as well as during their further operating, higher education institutions must make proof of the internal and external auditing of their financial activity, by a prestigious auditing company, nationally and/or internationally recognized. The results of the audit together with the annual analysis of the income and expense budget will be discussed in the Senate, and then made available to the public.

8. Institutional Structure and Management

- a) In order to obtain its accreditation, a higher education institution must prove that the legal provisions with regard to the election of the governing bodies (the faculty council, the Senate) as well as of the governing staff at the level of departments, chairs, faculties (dean, vice-dean, scientific secretary), and institution (rector, vice-rector, scientific secretary) have been observed;
- b) In order to obtain the provisional authorisation to operate or the accreditation, the institution of higher education must prove that it has a University Charta, its own general internal regulations, and specific regulations regarding student's professional activity;
- c) When obtaining its accreditation and afterwards, a higher education institution must prove that the legal provisions regarding the publicity and the appointment to teaching positions on a competitive basis have been observed;

- d) In order to obtain the provisional authorisation to operate and the accreditation, a higher education institution must prove the existence of an organisation chart filled in with staff of its own, corresponding professionally to the occupancy requirements of the respective positions;
- e) In order to obtain the provisional authorisation to operate and the accreditation, a higher education institution must prove that it keeps record of student's professional activity according to the legislation applicable to the Ministry of Education and Research in the field, on forms homologated on this purpose (mark sheets, registration books, transcripts of records, diplomas, etc.);
- f) During the provisional authorisation to operate period, a higher education institution must observe the standards based on which the authorisation has been granted. The higher education institutional structures and the operating conditions for the study programmes, as well as for the specialisations for which the provisional authorisation to operate has been granted, can be modified, only based on re-initiation of the evaluation procedures. The RAQAHE Council and other public authorities authorised by Law should undertake verification activities on an annual basis or whenever it is considered necessary, and free of charge. When the non-fulfilment of the quality standards is acknowledged, the provisions of Art. 34 of GEO 75/2005 with regard to the quality of education must be applied.

Each department will detail the mentioned normative requirements by licence domain and by study programme, in relation with the specific of the specialization and the study form.

The observance of these compulsory normative requirements must be certified by justifying documents. The certified information corresponds to each requirement and is presented in the first chapter of the evaluation report. The related justifying documents are presented in the annexes. The first chapter of the self-evaluation report is followed by other three chapters, which cover the three quality assurance areas: institutional capacity, educational effectiveness, quality management.

4.3. Methodological stages of provisional authorisation to operate and accreditation of Licence Degree study programmes

Based on the GEO 75/2005 regarding quality assurance in education, the RAQAHE Interim Council elaborates the methodology for external evaluation, the methodology for provisional authorisation to operate, and the methodology for accreditation.

(1) Methodology for granting a provisional authorisation to operate

The methodology for granting a provisional authorisation to operate to a study and qualification programme or any higher education structure requires the following working stages:

- a) based on the application for the initiation of the external evaluation procedures, in view of obtaining provisional authorisation to operate, submitted by the education provider to the accreditation department of the RAQAHE Council, the RAQAHE Council decides on the initiation of the external evaluation procedure, provided the following two conditions are simultaneously fulfilled:
 - the education provider submitted, together with the application, an internal self-evaluation report, elaborated according to the provisions of the Art. 10 of GEO 75/2005, regarding the higher education structure for which the provisional authorisation to operate is solicited;
 - the education provider proves with documents that the fee required by Law for granting a provisional authorisation to operate has been paid;
- b) the accreditation department of the RAQAHE Council appoints a commission consisting of three experts in evaluation and accreditation, selected from the RAQAHE Roster of Evaluators, which are specialized in the field of the higher education structure submitted for evaluation. This commission analyzes the internal evaluation report and verifies, through a study visit at the applicant institution, the observance of the standards by areas and criteria provided by Art. 10 of the GEO 75/2005, approved through Government's Decision. The verification results are registered by the members of the Commission in the "The Study Visit Record in View of Granting the Provisional Authorisation to Operate", which is signed by all members of the Commission. Based on the Study Visit

- Record, the members of the Commission elaborate the “Evaluation Report in View of Granting the Provisional Authorisation to Operate”, in which they propose and endorse with their signature the granting or not granting the provisional authorisation to operate;
- c) The Evaluation Report made by experts is submitted for analysis to the RAQAHE department specialised in the fundamental science domain in which the education structure submitted for evaluation integrates. The RAQAHE specialised department validates the experts’ report by verifying the observance of the methodology for external evaluation, and then submit it to the RAQAHE Council in order to be discussed and validated;
 - d) The RAQAHE Council, based on the discussion conclusions, elaborate the “Council’s Report” and submit it to the Ministry of Education and Research together with the proposal for granting or, as the case may be, not granting the provisional authorisation to operate for the applicant education structure. The proposal for granting or not granting the provisional authorisation to operate is validated by vote of the members of the Council. Half plus one of the total number of members of the Council, which means eight votes “in favour”, must agree with the respective proposal. This report must bear the signatures of the delegate of the RAQAHE Council for the respective fundamental science field as well as of the members of the RAQAHE Bureau;
 - e) The Ministry of Education and Research, based on the RAQAHE Council’s approval, drafts the Government’s Decision and submits it to the Government in order for the latter to issue the Government’s Decision for granting the provisional authorisation to operate;
 - f) If the RAQAHE Council, while carrying out the annual monitoring of the study programmes provisionally authorised to operate, acknowledge that, following the first two operating years, the standards considered when issuing the authorisation have not been met and that the necessary measures in view of accreditation have not been taken, it may propose to the Ministry of Education and Research to cancel the provisional authorisation to operate of the respective higher education structure.

(2). Accreditation Methodology

The methodology for granting the accreditation of a study and qualification programme or any higher education structure requires the following three working stages:

- a) based on the request for initiating the procedure for external evaluation and accreditation, submitted to the RAQAHE Department for Accreditation by the education provider, the RAQAHE Council decide on the initiation of the external evaluation procedure, provided the following conditions are simultaneously fulfilled:
- the interval between the graduation date of the first cohort of students and the date of the application for accreditation is no longer than two years. In case the deadline is not observed, the delay is sanctioned by cancelling the provisional authorisation to operate (Art. 31 (c));
 - the education provider submitted, together with the application, an internal evaluation report, elaborated in conformity with the provisions of Art. 10 of the GEO 75/2005, regarding the education structure which applies for accreditation, using as terms of reference the standards specific to the accreditation stage;
 - the institution proves with documents that the fee required by Law for the accreditation activity has been paid.
- b) The RAQAHE Accreditation Department appoints a Commission consisting of three experts in evaluation and accreditation from those enlisted in the RAQAHE Roster of Evaluators, which are specialized in the field of higher education structure submitted for evaluation. This Commission analyzes the internal evaluation report and verifies, through study visits at the applicant institution, the observance of the standards for areas and criteria provided by Art. 10 of the GEO 75/2005 approved by Government's Decision. The verification results are registered by the members of the Commission in the "Record of the Study Visit in View of Accreditation", which is signed by all members of the Commission. Based on the "Record of the Study Visit in View of Accreditation", the members of the commission elaborate "The Evaluation Report in View of Accreditation" in which they propose, and endorse with their signature, the accreditation or as the case may be, the non-accreditation of the education structure for which the accreditation has been solicited;
- c) The Evaluation Report elaborated by experts is submitted for analysis to the RAQAHE department specialized in the fundamental science field to which the higher education structure submitted for evaluation pertains, which validates the experts' report by

verifying the observance of the evaluation methodology and submits the report to the RAQAHE Council in order to be discussed and validated.

- d) Based on the discussion conclusions, the RAQAHE Council elaborates the “Council’s Report” and submits it to the Ministry of Education and Research together with the proposal for granting or, as the case may be, not granting the accreditation for the applicant education structure. The proposal for granting or not granting the accreditation is validated by vote of the members of the Council. Half plus one of the total number of members of the Council, which means eight votes “in favour”, must agree with the respective proposal. This report must bear the signatures of the delegate of the RAQAHE Council for the respective fundamental science field as well as of the members of the RAQAHE Bureau;
- e) The Ministry of Education and Research, based on the RAQAHE Council’s approval, drafts the Government’s Decision and submits it to the Government in order for the latter to issue the Government’s Decision for granting the accreditation. In the case of higher education providers, the accreditation of institutions, that is of universities, is made by Law promoted by the Government, at the initiative of the Ministry of Education and Research, and based on the RAQAHE approval;
- f) In case RAQAHE acknowledge that the quality standards have not been met, it informs the Ministry of Education and Research, which applies the provisions of Art. 34 of the GEO 75/2005 with regard to quality assurance in education.

4.4. Accreditation of Master’s Degree awarding institutions

Within the 2006/2007 academic year, existing Master’s Degree programmes are carried out until they are completed. For the 2007/2008 academic year, as well as for the next academic years, entrance examinations will be organized only for Master’s Degree study programmes which have been accredited and operate in Master’s Degree awarding institutions which have been purposely accredited. During the 2006/2007 academic year, universities which run accredited Licence Degree study programmes may apply to RAQAHE

and submit the corresponding self-evaluation reports in order to be accredited as Master's Degree awarding institutions.

Master's Degree study programmes are organized in the following fundamental fields: Exact Sciences, Natural Sciences, Humanities, Theology, Law, Social and Political Sciences, Economic Sciences, Architecture and Urbanism, Agriculture and Forestry, Medical Sciences, Engineering, Military and Intelligence Sciences, Arts. Each field can cover a number of specializations or Master's programmes. At the same time, Master's disciplinary or interdisciplinary programmes may be organized. The profile of a Master's Degree programme can be one of research, in the sense of thoroughly studying a disciplinary scientific field; of complementarity, in the sense of interdisciplinary or trans-disciplinary studying of a scientific field; or of professionalization, in the sense of acquiring professional competences in a specialized field.

In view of accrediting a higher education institution which offers Master's Degree programmes, the areas, criteria, standards and performance indicators presented in Part II of this **Methodology** must be applied. These are particularized in the self-evaluation report for each field of specialization, and, within the latter, for each Master's programme. In the external evaluation made in view of accreditation, there are also applied the provisions of the *Government's Decision no. 404/2006 with regard to the organization and implementation of Master's Degree studies* to which the following requirements must be added:

- 1) Only higher education institutions accredited within the accredited licence domain have the right to organize Master study cycles;
- 2) The standards required for accrediting programmes of the Licence study cycle must be also considered in the accreditation of programmes of the Master study cycle together with the following requirements:
 - a) for the accreditation of a Master study programme, the applicant must prove that:
 - the stated teaching and research mission is justified by elements of relevance and opportunity in accordance with the national qualifications framework and the requirements of the labour market, and addresses teaching and research objectives;

- the stated teaching and research mission corresponds to the profile and specialization of the awarding higher education institution;
- b) for the accreditation of a Master study programme all teaching positions created in conformity with the current legal provisions will be covered with teaching staff tenured in higher education, according to the Law, with the following academic ranks: university professor, associate professor or senior lecturer holding a PhD title in the field of the occupied position, out of which at least 80% are employed on the basis of an institutionally defined teaching load. The rest of the education activities (seminars, applications, projects, etc.) can be covered by other teaching staff, tenured in higher education, holding a PhD in the speciality of the disciplines covered by the teaching position they are occupying, employed on the basis of an institutionally defined teaching load in the respective institution;
- c) the higher education institution has its own adequately equipped research laboratories in the field of the Master study programme for which the accreditation is solicited.

In view of accrediting a Master study programme, all requirements provided by the present **Methodology** must be fulfilled and confirmed by justifying documents elaborated by the higher education institution which applies for accreditation.

4.5. Accreditation of Doctoral Degree awarding institutions (DDAI)

In the 2006/2007 academic year, the existing doctoral programmes are carried out until they are completed. In the 2007/2008 academic year, there will be operating and entrance examinations will be organized only for accredited Doctoral programmes offered by institutions accredited in this respect. During the 2006/2007 academic year, RAQAHE in collaboration with the *National Council for the Attestation of University Titles, Diplomas, and Certificates* proceeds to the accreditation of the DDAI and of the Doctoral study programmes based on the provisions of this **Methodology**, especially those presented in Part II of the **Methodology**, and of the *Government's Decision no. 567/2005 with regard to the Organization and Implementation of Doctoral Study Programmes*. The accreditation of DDAI is made by fields and by Doctoral study programmes.

Final Considerations

The **Methodology** will be applied starting with the 2006/2007 academic year. Based on the provisions of the **Methodology**, the RAQAHE Council will accomplish, by 30 September 2007, the following objectives:

1. apply the **Methodology** in order to resolve the applications for provisional authorisation to operate and accreditation of Licence, Master, and Doctoral study programmes;
2. apply the **Methodology**, on a trial basis, at accredited universities which volunteer for piloting; during the trial period, the following objectives will be accomplished:
 - a) test the relationships between areas, criteria, standards and performance indicators;
 - b) define the variation limits of indicators from the minimum level to the highest possible optional level of reference;
 - c) elaborate and validate self-evaluation user's guides as well as the user's guides for external evaluation and quality assurance;
3. elaborate a report with regard to the status of higher education quality and a set of recommendations for quality improvement;
4. formulate, together with NCHEF and NCRHE, and submit to the Ministry of Education and Research a set of proposals with regard to the optimal relationship between the institutional state of quality and the public financing.