



GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING THE INTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT IN THE CONTEXT OF INSTITUTIONAL AND STUDY PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION

INTRODUCTION

The preparation of the Internal Evaluation Report (IER) constitutes one of the most important stages of the accreditation process for higher education institutions and study programmes. The IER represents the main institutional document through which the higher education institution carries out a systematic, structured and evidence-based analysis of its performance, quality assurance mechanisms, achievements, challenges and opportunities for continuous improvement.

In this context, the self-evaluation process is considered an integral part of the institutional quality assurance cycle (Plan–Do–Check–Act), where the findings and analyses carried out through the IER serve as a basis for drafting improvement plans and monitoring institutional progress.

Internal evaluation is not considered merely an administrative requirement for accreditation purposes, but an essential component of the internal quality assurance system. Through this process, the institution assesses the extent to which its policies, strategies, structures, processes and academic activities meet national legal requirements, accreditation standards and internationally recognised principles for quality assurance. It demonstrates the institution's commitment to accountability, transparency and continuous improvement.

The accreditation process in Higher Education

Institutional accreditation and accreditation of study programmes constitute mandatory external quality assurance processes in higher education, defined by the legal and regulatory framework in force. It guarantees institutional recognition of the quality of higher education provision and confirms compliance with national quality standards, ensuring the credibility of the diplomas issued by the institution.

Accreditation is carried out through the following processes:

1. **internal evaluation (self-evaluation), for which the HEIs themselves are responsible**
2. **external evaluation (accreditation), which is carried out by ASCAL and the Accreditation Board (BA).**



The accreditation of HEIs and study programmes is a dynamic process that passes through several stages and extends over time.

The accreditation procedure consists of three phases:

1. **Application for accreditation**, where the accreditation application is initially reviewed by ASCAL, the request is approved, the HEI is notified, etc.
2. **The accreditation process**, which continues with the approval of the accreditation period, implementation of the accreditation process, drafting of the final report, etc.
3. **Final review and decision-making** focuses on the preparation of materials for the Accreditation Board (BA), their review by BA, decision-making, the final decision, publication of decisions and information, and issuance of the accreditation certificate accompanying the BA decision.

Purpose of the guidelines

The purpose of these guidelines is to define a unified methodology and a standardised approach for the preparation, organisation, review and approval of Internal Evaluation Reports for:

- Institutional accreditation;
- Accreditation and reaccreditation of study programmes;

The Manual aims to ensure that all Internal Evaluation Reports prepared within the institution:

- Follow the same structure and methodology;
- Clearly address the requirements of ASCAL accreditation standards;
- Provide reliable and verifiable evidence;
- Contain evaluative analysis and not merely a description of activities;
- Demonstrate continuous quality improvement processes;
- Facilitate effective cooperation with external evaluation experts.

Scope of Application

These guidelines apply to:

- institutional accreditation;
- institutional reaccreditation;
- accreditation of study programmes;
- reaccreditation of study programmes;
- monitoring of accreditation recommendations.

Legal basis:

- Law No. 80/2015, "On Higher Education and Scientific Research in Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Albania"
- Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 621, dated 22.10.2021, "On the approval of the National Education Strategy 2021–2026 and the action plan for its implementation"
- Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 824, dated 24.12.2021, "On the approval of the Higher Education Quality Code", as amended.
- Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 879, dated 18.12.2019, On some amendments and additions to Decision No. 41, dated 24.1.2018, of the Council of Ministers, "On the elements of study programmes offered by higher education institutions", as amended.
- Various regulations approved by secondary legislation on the functioning of ASCAL and the Accreditation Board:
 - Manual on Quality Assurance Procedures in Higher Education 2026.
https://www.ascal.al/media/documents/publikime/Manual_Per_procedurat_e_sigurimit_te_cil_esise_ne_institucionet_e_arsimit_te_larte_2026.pdf
 - Accreditation Standards of the Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education (ASCAL), version in force (2022);
 - Official templates of the Internal Evaluation Report and accompanying documentation published by ASCAL.
- It is based on the European Standards and Guidelines – ESG 2015 and international practices.

ASCAL accreditation standards

ASCAL accreditation standards constitute the main reference framework for evaluating the quality and performance of higher education institutions and study programmes.

The Internal Evaluation Report must address each applicable standard systematically by:

- Explaining institutional policies and practices;
- Presenting evidence demonstrating their implementation;
- Analysing their effectiveness and impact;
- Identifying strengths and areas requiring improvement;
- Presenting planned measures for development and improvement.



Purely descriptive approaches should be avoided, and the way in which quality assurance mechanisms function in practice and contribute to continuous improvement should be demonstrated.

Principles for Drafting the Internal Evaluation Report

- Principle of evidence-based reporting

Every piece of information, statement, analysis or conclusion presented in the Internal Evaluation Report must be supported by documented, verifiable and accessible evidence.

- Principle of objectivity

The report must present achievements, challenges, limitations and areas for improvement in a balanced manner, avoiding promotional or merely declarative approaches.

- Principle of transparency

The information must be accurate, up to date and consistent with institutional documentation and official data.

- Principle of critical analysis

The report must focus not only on describing processes and activities, but also on analysing their effectiveness and impact on quality improvement.

- Principle of continuous improvement

Self-evaluation must clearly demonstrate how monitoring results, student feedback, accreditation recommendations and internal audit findings have been translated into concrete improvement measures.

In addition to the national requirements defined by ASCAL, the drafting of the IER must also reflect the European principles of quality assurance set out in the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015):

- Student-centred teaching

The institution must demonstrate that teaching and learning processes are organised by taking into consideration students' needs, their academic development and the achievement of the expected learning outcomes.

- Quality of teaching and assessment

The institution must present evidence that teaching methodologies, forms of assessment and monitoring mechanisms support effective learning and ensure transparency, fairness and consistency.



- Development of academic staff

The IER must reflect the institutional mechanisms for the selection, recruitment, evaluation, professional development and support of academic staff.

- Stakeholder involvement

The systematic involvement of students, academic and administrative staff, graduates and representatives of the labour market in the processes of designing, monitoring and improving study programmes must be demonstrated.

- Internal quality assurance

The institution must demonstrate the existence and effective functioning of quality assurance mechanisms that involve internal stakeholders and produce measurable improvements.

- Public information and transparency

The institution must ensure accurate, up-to-date and accessible information for students, staff and stakeholders.

Organisation of the Internal Evaluation process

Writing the Internal Evaluation Report – IER (which finalises the PVB) is an important process and is carried out by the Internal Evaluation Group. The Internal Evaluation Group is established by order of the Rector and is responsible for organising all work related to collecting the necessary evidence and writing the report.

Deadlines and phases of the process

The process of preparing the Internal Evaluation Report is organised into the following phases:

Phase I – Planning

- Establishment of the Internal Evaluation Group;
- Analysis of accreditation standards;
- Drafting the work plan and process calendar.

Phase II – Collection of evidence

- Identification of the necessary evidence;
- Requests for information from the responsible units;
- Verification and organisation of documentation.

Phase III – Drafting the report

- Writing the analysis according to the standards;
- Integration of evidence;
- Completion of statistical tables.



Phase IV – Review and improvement

- Review by NJZHKC;
- Addressing comments and suggestions;
- Improvement of the draft.

Phase V – Approval and submission

- Finalisation of the IER;
- Preparation of the accreditation file;
- Submission to ASCAL and uploading to AMS.

The Curriculum Development and Quality Unit is responsible for:

1. Training the internal evaluation group
2. Providing the necessary guidance for the PVB and the writing of the IER and supporting the Internal Evaluation Group (GVB) throughout the entire process.
3. Reading the IER and providing consultations for improvements until the final report is finalised
4. Following the entire process of drafting the report and collecting evidence until the process is finalised.
5. Uploading the IER documentation and information to ASCAL's management system. The DA is officially submitted to ASCAL within the specified deadline (in electronic CD version).
6. Maintaining communications with ASCAL throughout the accreditation procedure before and after the visit to the institution.

Every institutional unit involved in the accreditation process must provide the requested information and evidence within the specified deadlines.

Faculties and departments are responsible for providing information related to:

- Study programmes;
- Academic staff;
- Teaching processes;
- Research activities;
- Student performance;
- Stakeholder involvement.

The Internal Evaluation Group is responsible for:

1. Requesting from the relevant units, collecting and updating all necessary information (including information about the institution) for the evidence required to draft the internal evaluation report for the study programme. It cooperates with the department and other support units such as the secretariat, human resources, Dean of Students.





alumni office, finance office, etc., regarding all data presented in the report. Every piece of information included in the IER must be based on data provided and confirmed by the responsible units.

2. Organising the evidence in accordance with the required formats. It drafts, extracts and processes documents or data during the internal evaluation period.
3. Drafting the Internal Evaluation Report (IER) according to the format approved by ASCAL / BA, in two languages (Albanian and English), and the final Report after comments and suggestions from the Curriculum Development and Quality Assurance Unit. It drafts a summary of the IER according to the approved format in two languages (Albanian and English).
4. Preparing the document file (Accreditation File) to be submitted to the accreditation Agency (PDF, CD containing the PDF documents).
5. Preparing the document file (Word, PDF and printed with the signed original documents) for the UMB archive.
6. Preparing the information also in electronic version (CD) and managing the accreditation procedure opened in ASCAL's management system.

Evidence management

The preparation of the Internal Evaluation Report is based on the systematic collection, organisation and administration of evidence.

Identification of evidence

Evidence must be directly related to the accreditation standards and criteria.

Sources of evidence

A preliminary list of evidence is provided at the end of the report template. It is not a final list and leaves open the possibility of references to other data that are considered necessary to be integrated and mentioned during the writing of the report.

Evidence may include:

- The Statute;
- Institutional regulations;
- Strategies and development plans;
- Decisions of governing bodies;
- Statistical reports;
- Monitoring reports;
- Survey results;
- Cooperation agreements;
- Financial reports;
- Human resources documentation;
- Scientific research reports.



Coding of evidence

The use of a unique identification system is recommended:

- Evidence 1 – Statute;
- Evidence 2 – University Regulation;
- Evidence 3 – Institutional Strategy;
- Evidence 4 – Study Programme Regulation;
- etc.

Verification of evidence

Before being integrated into the report, each item of evidence must be verified for:

- validity;
- updating;
- authenticity;
- connection with the relevant standard.

1. WRITING THE REPORT

The report for the internal evaluation of study programmes is organised into 6 main areas:

1. Provision of the study programme
2. Organisation, management and administration of study programmes
3. Teaching, learning, assessment and competencies
4. Human and financial resources, infrastructure and logistics for the implementation of the study programme
5. Students and their support
6. Quality assurance of study programmes

*In 2-year professional programmes, Area 6 is not included in the new standard.

Area 6 on quality assurance is written by NJZHKC for all groups, on the basis of which, if necessary, each group will complete the data for the programme it covers.

Method of writing the report

The report is written by referring to the necessary arguments and citing data, regulations, procedures, decisions, etc. that substantiate the argument regarding fulfilment of the criterion.

The Internal Evaluation Report must be analytical in nature and not merely descriptive.

Descriptive example:

“The institution ensures qualified academic staff for the implementation of the study programme and supports their professional development.”



This wording merely states the existence of staff, but does not show:

- the number of staff;
- what criteria are used;
- how quality is monitored;
- what improvements have been made.

Analytical example:

“The institution ensures the implementation of the study programme through the engagement of academic staff with a high degree of alignment between the staff’s academic background and the field of the programme. The process of engaging staff is based on the criteria defined in internal institutional acts and the legal requirements for higher education.

During the evaluation period, the institution has continuously monitored the structure and stability of academic staff, analysing the ratio between full-time and part-time staff, teaching workload, alignment of the field of expertise with the courses taught, and contribution to scientific research.

Based on periodic analyses and identified needs, the institution has undertaken measures to strengthen academic capacities through the recruitment of new staff, support for continuous qualification, and encouragement of lecturers’ involvement in research and professional activities.

The effectiveness of these measures is assessed through indicators such as the stability of academic staff, student evaluation results, research activity and the alignment of staff with the needs of the study programme.”

The relevant evidence may include:

- List of academic staff and CVs;
- Employment contracts;
- Recruitment procedures;
- Reports on students’ evaluation of lecturers;
- Evidence of participation in conferences/research projects;
- Teaching workloads.

Every factual statement or data-based conclusion must be accompanied by the corresponding evidence reference, for example:

Standard I.1

The higher education institution offers study programmes in accordance with its mission and purpose, with the academic field of the

The report is written by _____ referring to _____





main and basic unit responsible for the study programme, and which aim to preserve national interests and values.		various items of evidence. All evidence mentioned in the report must also be included in the electronic file of the study programme. Evidence is indicated as [evidence, article, or page no. in the document being referred to]
Criteria	Evaluation	
Criterion 1. The higher education institution offers study programmes that do not conflict with national interests and aim to preserve and consolidate national academic and cultural values.	The mission of the study programme is consistent with the objectives and mission of the institution, to offer study programmes in the field of education and research for the first cycle of studies in the discipline of, oriented towards professional practice and in accordance with labour market requirements. The programme reflects the mission and vision of the institution, as expressed in the UMB Statute. [Evidence 1, Statute, Article 5] The Bachelor study programme in Psychology aims to prepare competent and ethical professionals engaged in the science of psychology and the application of the knowledge acquired when practising the profession of psychologist. [Evidence 2, Study Regulations, Article 3].....	

2. PREPARATION OF THE FILE FOR ASCAL

At the end of the process of collecting evidence and writing the internal evaluation report, the accreditation file is prepared and submitted to ASCAL in accordance with ASCAL's Guidelines and directives.

<https://www.ascal.al/media/documents/publikime/Udhezues%20per%20Administrimin%20e%20dokumentacionit%20n%C3%AB%20kuad%C3%ABr%20t%C3%AB%20akreditimit%20t%C3%AB%20institucioneve%20t%C3%AB%20arsimit%20t%C3%AB%20lart%C3%AB%20dhe%20programeve%20t%C3%AB%20studimit.pdf>

The internal evaluation file submitted to ASCAL contains:

1. The covering letter
2. The declaration of truthfulness of the information
3. The printed Internal Evaluation Report, signed by each member on every page and stamped on every page.
4. All documentation arranged according to the table of contents of the file, electronically on CD.





The internal evaluation file is also sent to ASCAL through ASCAL's management system (a process carried out by NJZHKC).

An identical copy of the internal evaluation file submitted to ASCAL is kept in the institution's archive.

3. Quality control of the Internal Evaluation Report

Before submission of the report, the final quality control must be carried out.

Checklist

- All standards have been addressed;
- All criteria have been addressed;
- Every statement is supported by evidence;
- All evidence is up to date;
- Evidence references are accurate;
- Statistical tables are complete;
- Consistency between the text and the evidence has been checked;
- There are no contradictions between the statistical data and the description;
- Previous accreditation recommendations have been reflected;
- The Albanian and English versions are harmonised;
- Strengths have been identified;

4. COMMUNICATION

The draft report is sent to NJZHKC by email. All communications related to drafting the internal evaluation report will be made using "reply all" to the initial email launching the process, for several reasons:

1. There may be several programmes undergoing accreditation, and following emails separately makes the work and coordination more difficult and important emails may inadvertently be overlooked.
2. Documenting how the work on writing the report has progressed is also evidence that enables monitoring and evaluation of the process.
3. Everyone is informed about the progress of the group's work.
4. All emails will also include in cc the official communication address of the head of department and the NJZHKC coordinator.

5. Preparation for external evaluation

After submission of the accreditation file, the institution must prepare for the external evaluation process.





This includes:

- Organisation of supporting documentation;
- Preparation of academic and administrative staff;
- Organisation of meetings with external evaluation experts;
- Ensuring access to the requested evidence;
- Coordination of experts' additional requests.

ACCREDITATION STANDARDS AND REPORT FORMAT

The internal and external evaluation of study programmes and the institution is carried out based on the Higher Education Quality Code and the report formats defined by ASCAL.ASCAL

- Manual "Evaluation of teaching quality through the national student questionnaire" (approved by VBA No. 14, dated 01.02.2019) ([miratuar me VBA Nr.14, datë 01.02.2019](#))
- Summary tables template <https://www.ascal.al/sq/informacione/publikime#modeli-i-raportit-te-vleresimit-te-brendshem-2022><https://www.ascal.al/sq/informacione/publikime#modeli-i-raportit-te-vleresimit-te-brendshem-2022>
- Internal Evaluation Report templates for first-time or periodic accreditation (new 2022 standards) <https://www.ascal.al/sq/informacione/publikime#modeli-i-raportit-te-vleresimit-te-brendshem-2022><https://www.ascal.al/sq/informacione/publikime#modeli-i-raportit-te-vleresimit-te-brendshem-2022>

Monitoring of accreditation recommendations

NJZHKC monitors the implementation of recommendations resulting from institutional and study programme accreditation processes.

For each recommendation, the following are defined:

- implementation measures;
- responsible unit;
- implementation deadline;
- evidence of implementation;
- implementation status.

The monitoring results are reflected in periodic quality assurance reports and are used as a source of information for future self-evaluation and accreditation processes.

Prepared by

Curriculum Development and Quality Unit

