Requirements and Procedure for Institutional Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions

Approved by the Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education of the Estonian Quality Agency for Education on 29.04.2025.

I. General provisions

1. Following § 37 and § 38 of the Higher Education Act and taking into account the Standard of Higher Education of the Republic of Estonia, the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (hereinafter *ESG*), and other relevant national legislation and international agreements, the Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education of the Estonian Quality Agency for Education (hereinafter *HAKA*) establishes and publishes the requirements and procedure for institutional accreditation.

2. The aim of institutional accreditation is to assess the institution's capacity to ensure and improve the quality of teaching, research, development, and creative activity, to support institutional development, and to increase its broader impact on society.

3. Higher education institutions are required to undergo institutional accreditation at least once every seven years. Institutions may apply for accreditation earlier but no more frequently than every five years. A new higher education institution must apply for institutional accreditation no later than in its fifth year of operation.

4. In professional higher education institutions offering vocational education, the external quality assurance of vocational education and training is included in the scope of institutional accreditation.

II. Assessment areas, quality criteria, guidelines, and evidence for institutional accreditation

5. The definition of requirements for institutional accreditation is based on relevant legislation of the Republic of Estonia, national strategies, the ESG, and other international agreements. In the case of accreditation of foreign institutions, in addition to the ESG, the legal framework of the respective country is considered, and procedure, quality criteria, guidelines, and evidence may be adjusted accordingly.

6. Institutional accreditation of a higher education institution is conducted across three assessment areas and nine quality criteria:

I Institutional Management

6.1. Strategic Management and Development

The higher education institution has defined its role in the Estonian society and internationally, involving key stakeholders in the planning and management of its development. It considers societal expectations, future challenges, and the principles of sustainable development. Resource management is directly linked to the institution's priorities and development needs. The institution continuously evaluates the achievement of set goals and ensures and promotes quality in all its areas of activity.

6.2. Human Resource Management

Personnel development is based on the institution's development goals and is efficient and effective. The higher education institution values its members and ensures the application of the principle of equal treatment for all staff and learners.

6.3. Infrastructure and Information Management

The management and development of physical and digital infrastructure is purposeful, sustainable, and economically viable. Internal and external communication at the institution is two-way, goal-oriented, and managed. Information management and administration is purposeful, and data protection and data security are ensured.

II Learning and Teaching

6.4. Development of Studies and Study Programmes

In developing studies and study programmes, the higher education institution considers the needs and expectations of society and the labour market, its development goals, field-specific competence and available resources, and ensures compliance with higher education and vocational standards as well as international trends. The curricula are research-based and coherent, their development is continuous and evidence-based. A functional internal evaluation system has been established for the ongoing development of the curricula.

6.5. Learning and Teaching

The higher education institution systematically implements a learning-centred approach that supports the development of self-directed learners and encourages them to take responsibility for planning their studies and careers. The institution's admission requirements and procedure ensure fair access to higher education. The content and process of learning and teaching are research-based, and the knowledge and skills of graduates correspond to the constantly evolving needs of the labour market and the expectations of society.

6.6. Support Systems for Learning and Teaching

The higher education institution considers the diverse needs of learners, monitors and supports their academic progress, development, and well-being.

III Research, Development, and/or Other Creative Activities (RDC)

6.7. Setting of the Goals and Quality Management in RDC

The higher education institution bases the goal setting and implementation of its research, development, and/or other creative activities on its mission, societal expectations, future needs, and principles of code of conduct for research integrity and sustainable development. The institution has defined specific and measurable quality criteria, analyses the results, and applies them in decision-making processes, in setting strategic development directions, and in planning development activities.

6.8. Effectiveness of RDC and its impact on society

The volume and quality of RDC outputs as well as the trends in the institution's research and/or creative fields align with the goals set by the institution and confirm the sustainability of RDC activities. The RDC activities have significant scientific and societal impact due to the specific characteristics of the institution, both at the national and international level.

6.9. Support System for RDC and Career Support for Early-Career Researchers

The higher education institution systematically develops the organisation of RDC activities and support services, providing its members with opportunities to develop their RDC competencies and support for making career choices.

7. The assessment areas and quality criteria for institutional accreditation, along with explanatory guidelines and a list of supporting evidence (including centrally collected data as referred to in point 13) are presented in the table in the annex to the requirements and procedure.

8. Quality criteria refer to the characteristics of inputs, outputs, processes, or their components that allow the evaluation to the extent to which the quality of activities or outcomes meet the expectations derived from the agreed expectations of various stakeholders, including the institution's strategic objectives and applicable legislation. Compliance with these criteria is mandatory.

9. Guidelines are non-binding instructions or frameworks that guide activities or decision-making without being a mandatory requirement. Unlike mandatory quality criteria, guidelines offer flexibility and options for achieving objectives or implementing actions.

10. Evidence includes objective, documented materials or data that support conclusions and judgments made during the self-assessment process. Data is generally presented as five-year trends with conclusions drawn from them.

III. Self-assessment and preparation of the self-assessment report

11. At the institution's request, HAKA organises a self-assessment training for institutional accreditation and agrees on the approximate date of the assessment visit at least one year before the expiration of the institutional accreditation.

12. The institution ensures the participation of a broad representation (including learners) and other relevant stakeholders in the self-assessment process and includes learners' input in the self-assessment report.

13. Self-assessment is based on centrally collected data (e.g., from the Ministry of Education and Research, Statistics Estonia) as well as data collected by the institution. Centrally collected data is publicly available.

14. Self-assessment report is a comprehensive document in which the institution critically evaluates its goals, activities, strengths, and opportunities for further development for each assessment area, based on the quality criteria outlined in the requirements and procedure. The analysis should reflect trends over at least five years (if relevant), in line with the institution's goals and development vision.

15. Self-assessment report may be up to 60 pages, excluding appendices. A positively evaluated higher education institution operating in multiple research fields and a professional higher education institution providing vocational education may, by agreement with HAKA, extend the length of the self- assessment report.

16. The institution submits the self-assessment report in English to HAKA in electronic format at least three months before the scheduled assessment visit, as agreed with HAKA.

17. HAKA's office reviews the self-assessment report within two weeks of its receipt and, if necessary, returns it to the institution for corrections and improvement. The institution submits the updated report within two weeks.

18. HAKA sends the self-assessment report to the assessment panel no later than two months before the assessment visit.

IV. Formation and responsibilities of the assessment panel

19. The assessment panel (hereinafter *panel*) consists of at least five members. The institution may propose candidates for the panel whose expertise, experience, and profile align with the institution's needs and who have no conflict of interest with the institution under evaluation.

20. The formation of the panel is based on the following principles:

    20.1. Experts (except for the student member) have experience in managing an organisation or one of its units.

    20.2. At least one member is from outside of higher education institutions.

    20.3. The majority of experts are from foreign countries; usually, no more than one expert comes from the same foreign country.

    20.4. At least one member is a student or a recent graduate (within one year of graduation at the time of the formation of the panel).

    20.5. At least two members have management experience in a higher education institution with a similar profile.

    20.6. At least one member has prior experience in conducting reviews at institutional level.

20.7. At least one member of the panel has experience in assessing RDC activities specific to the higher education institution under evaluation; in the case of an institution which has been positively evaluated in multiple research fields, the panel includes, where possible, expertise in all relevant research fields.

20.8. At least one member has management experience in the areas of learning and teaching and study programme development.

20.9. If the panel is evaluating a professional higher education institution offering vocational education, at least one member must be familiar with the vocational education system and has experience in leading the field of learning and teaching in an institution offering vocational education.

21. Panel members must:

21.1. act independently and not represent the interests of any affiliated organisation;

21.2. be impartial in their assessments;

21.3. be proficient in English (C1 level or higher);

21.4. understand the functioning of the higher education system and be aware of current developments in higher education and principles of quality management.

22. After the initial composition is approved by HAKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education, HAKA informs the institution, which has one week to provide their point of view on the composition, request the inclusion of additional members or removal of a member if justified.

23. The final composition of the panel is approved by the Director of HAKA, who also appoints the Chair, the Secretary, and the Assessment Coordinator. The panel members are contracted for their duties.

24. The panel member confirms with a signature the obligation to maintain the confidentiality of the information disclosed during the accreditation process and the content of the panel's discussions as well as the absence of a conflict of interest. A conflict of interest is a situation where a panel member or a person related to them has a personal interest in a decision or action that they are required to make or are in a position to influence. If a conflict of interest arises, the panel member is obliged to immediately inform the Director of HAKA and to withdraw from the panel. A conflict of interest arises, for example, in the following cases:

24.1. at the time of the evaluation, the panel member has professional or other contractual relations with the institution being assessed, is involved in ongoing joint projects, or has been employed by the institution under evaluation within three years prior to the assessment visit;

24.2. the panel member is currently a member of any decision-making or advisory body of the institution under evaluation and/or belongs to the management bodies of the owner of the private higher education institution;

24.3. the panel member is currently studying at the institution or has graduated from the institution less than three years ago;

24.4. a closely related person (spouse or partner, child or parent) of the panel member is a member of the institution's community.

25. The working language of the panel is English. If the institution wishes to use an interpreter during the assessment visit, it must agree on the interpreter with the Assessment Coordinator at least two weeks prior to the assessment visit. HAKA sets the following requirements for the interpreter: the interpreter must have the necessary qualifications for consecutive and/or simultaneous interpretation (master's degree in translation, further training, additional specialty, etc.) in the Estonian-English-Estonian direction and prior experience in consecutive and/or simultaneous interpretation, must be familiar with the relevant terminology, and must not be employed by the institution under evaluation. The use of machine translation must be agreed upon with HAKA in advance, and only validated machine translation may be used. The costs related to interpretation services are covered by the institution.

26. With the consent of the panel Chair, the Director of HAKA may, by directive, assign up to two observers from other quality assurance organisations to the panel. The observer confirms with a signature the obligation to maintain the confidentiality of the panel's discussions. The observer is not entitled to interfere with the evaluation process.

27. All panel members undergo HAKA training, during which they familiarise themselves thoroughly with the quality criteria and methodology of institutional accreditation and acquire knowledge about the organisation and funding principles of the Estonian higher education and research, and in the case of a professional higher education institution offering vocational education, also about the organisation and funding principles of vocational education.

28. Tasks of the panel member:

   28.1. to familiarise themselves with the documents regulating institutional accreditation and to complete HAKA training;

   28.2. to review the institution's self-assessment report and prepare the first draft of the assessment report;

   28.3. to participate in panel meetings and discussions;

   28.4. to participate in the preparation of the assessment visit and the visit itself;

   28.5. to take part in the drafting of the assessment report according to the agreed division of tasks;

   28.6. to review the institution's comments on the initial assessment report and take them into account when finalising the report;

   28.7. to perform other assessment-related tasks according to the internal division of responsibilities within the panel;

   28.8. to adhere to the deadlines agreed upon within the panel.

29. The Secretary of the panel is a panel member who, in addition to the duties of a panel member, compiles the assessment report based on the inputs from other members and, in

cooperation with the Chair, ensures the coherence of the report and the substantiation of the assessments.

30. The Chair of the panel, in addition to the duties of a panel member, performs the following tasks:

    30.1. leads the work of the panel;

    30.2. leads panel meetings;

    30.3. assigns tasks among panel members;

    30.4. provides an overview of the panel's preliminary conclusions at the end of the assessment visit;

    30.5. ensures that the panel's assessments are substantiated;

    30.6. submits the assessment report, approved by all panel members, to HAKA.

31. The work of the panel is supported by an Assessment Coordinator (hereinafter *Coordinator*), who is an employee of HAKA and not a member of the panel.

32. The Coordinator's tasks are:

    32.1. to ensure the smooth operation of the evaluation process in accordance with the substantive requirements and timeline described in this document;

    32.2. to coordinate with the panel members the list of persons the panel wishes to meet during the assessment visit, and the list of additional materials needed from the institution for preparation of the visit;

    32.3. to coordinate with the institution the visit schedule, the names and positions of meeting participants, and to request additional materials from the institution if necessary;

    32.4. to perform other one-time tasks related to the specific assessment, as assigned by the Chair of the panel.

V. Assessment visit

33. HAKA agrees on the week of the assessment visit with the higher education institution no later than six months before it takes place. The institution being assessed designates a person responsible for ensuring the smooth organisation of the visit and providing the panel members with appropriate working conditions at the institution.

34. The panel meets with the institution's self-assessment team 3–4 weeks before the assessment visit. The team has the opportunity to present the institution's profile, quality assurance and information systems. The panel may ask clarifying questions during the meeting and explain to the institution the need for additional materials, if applicable.

35. The visit schedule is prepared in cooperation between the institution and HAKA.

36. The visit may include both stakeholder-specific and thematic meetings.

37. During the site visit, the institution provides the panel members with a suitably equipped room and enables them to:

37.1. Have discussions with the institution's staff, learners, and representatives of internal and external stakeholders selected by the panel.

37.2. Review data and information systems related to learning and teaching, research, development, and learners.

37.3. Access information about staff (CVs, job descriptions, etc.).

37.4. Inspect the institution's infrastructure.

37.5. Examine student research, development, and creative works.

37.6. Review financial data reflecting the institution's financial activities.

37.7. Receive other relevant information related to institutional management and operations as needed.

38. HAKA documents the discussions held during the assessment visit.

39. At the end of the visit, the panel provides the institution with preliminary feedback. The feedback is a structured presentation in which the panel outlines the main strengths and shortcomings identified during the assessment process. Preliminary feedback does not include judgments regarding the fulfilment of quality criteria. The institution can provide their point of view orally in response to the panel's preliminary observations.

40. Within five working days after the site visit, HAKA collects written feedback from participants in the meetings regarding the preparedness and relevance of questions of the panel members and other aspects related to the visit.

VI.   Assessment report and formation of the panel's judgements

41. The assessment panel prepares an assessment report by analysing the conformity of the quality criteria and highlighting the institution's strengths and areas for improvement for both individual criteria and assessment areas. The preparation of the assessment report is based on HAKA's guidelines for institutional accreditation experts, which is available on HAKA website.

42. For each quality criterion, the panel gives an assessment on a four-point scale:

42.1. "The quality criterion is fulfilled" – all requirements included in the quality criterion are met.

42.2. "The quality criterion is substantially fulfilled" – there are some shortcomings in fulfilling the criterion, but the higher education institution has proved its capability to eliminate them. The institution has proved its capability when it has shown through

actions and documents that it has identified the shortcomings itself and is able to eliminate them.

42.3. "The quality criterion is partially fulfilled" – there are significant shortcomings in meeting the quality criterion, but in the panel's opinion, the higher education institution has potential capability to eliminate them. The institution has proved its potential capability when the shortcomings have not been identified by the institution itself; however, but based on other quality criteria it has demonstrated sufficient capability to address those shortcomings.

42.4. "The quality criterion is not fulfilled" – the fulfilment of the criterion is deficient, and the institution lacks proven capability to address the shortcomings.

43. For each assessment area, the panel gives an assessment on a three-point scale: "The requirements of the assessment area are fulfilled", "The requirements of the assessment area are partially fulfilled", "The requirements of the assessment area are not fulfilled". The panel forms its judgement for each assessment area based on the following principles:

43.1. If all quality criteria are fulfilled, the panel will decide that "The requirements of the assessment area are fulfilled".

43.2. If some quality criteria are fulfilled and some are substantially fulfilled, the panel will decide that "The requirements of the assessment area are fulfilled".

43.3. If all quality criteria are substantially fulfilled, the panel will analyse the strengths and areas for improvement and decide between "The requirements of the assessment area are fulfilled" or "The requirements of the assessment area are partially fulfilled".

43.4. If one quality criterion is partially fulfilled and two are fulfilled, the panel will analyse the strengths and areas for improvement and decide between "The requirements of the assessment area are fulfilled" or "partially fulfilled".

43.5. If some quality criteria are partially fulfilled and some are substantially fulfilled, the panel will decide that "The requirements of the assessment area are partially fulfilled".

43.6. If two criteria are partially fulfilled and one is fulfilled, the panel will decide that "The requirements of the assessment area are partially fulfilled.

43.7. If one criterion is not fulfilled and the others are fulfilled or substantially fulfilled, the panel will analyse the strengths and areas for improvement and decide between "The requirements of the assessment area are partially fulfilled" or "The requirements of the assessment area are not fulfilled".

43.8. If one criterion is not fulfilled and at least one is partially fulfilled, the panel will decide that "The requirements of the assessment area are not fulfilled".

43.9. If two or all three criteria are not fulfilled, the panel will decide that "The requirements of the assessment area are not fulfilled".

Diagram 1: Principles of forming judgements of an assessment area in the panel

Fulfilment of a quality criterion

	Quality criterion is fulfilled
	Quality criterion is substantially fulfilled
	Quality criterion is partially fulfilled
	Quality criterion is not fulfilled

Fulfilment of the requirements of an assessment area

	The requirements of the assessment area are fulfilled
	The requirements of the assessment area partially fulfilled
	The requirements of the assessment area not fulfilled

Crit 1	Crit 2	Crit 3	Assessment area

44. For any assessment area and/or quality criterion where the institution has demonstrated outstanding results and/or initiatives, the panel may recognise it with an additional note *"worthy of recognition"*.

45. The panel's judgements are preferably based on consensus. If consensus is not reached, the decision is made by simple majority vote of the panel members, with dissenting opinions and their justifications written in the report. If the vote is tied, the vote of the Chair of the panel is decisive.

46. HAKA sends the draft assessment report to the institution no later than six weeks after the assessment visit.

47. The institution may submit its comments on the draft report within three weeks of receiving it. The panel reviews the comments, takes them into account where possible, and prepares a

response letter to the institution providing explanations and justifications as to which comments were considered and which were not.

48. The final version of the assessment report, approved by the Chair of the panel, is sent electronically to HAKA no later than ten weeks after the assessment visit.

49. HAKA forwards the assessment report to the Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education and to the institution under evaluation.

VII. Decision of the Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education

50. A reasoned decision on the institutional accreditation of a higher education institution is made by the HAKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education of (hereinafter *the Assessment Council*) at its meeting within three months of receiving the assessment report. If necessary, the Assessment Council may invite the Chair of the panel or a member authorised by the Chair to provide clarifications during the decision-making process.

51. In making the decision, the Assessment Council relies on the institution's self-assessment report, the panel's judgements, timely submitted comments by the institution, and any additional materials requested by the Council.

52. If contradictions or insufficient justification are identified in the judgements, the Assessment Council has the right to return the report to the panel for revision and clarification. The panel then reviews, clarifies, and, if necessary, improves or amends the report, and sends it back to HAKA no later than two weeks after being returned. HAKA proceeds with the report as described in points 47–49.

53. The Assessment Council makes the accreditation decision based on the following principles:

53.1. If all assessment areas are assessed as "The requirements of the assessment area are fulfilled", the Assessment Council will decide that the institution's governance, organisation of work, learning and teaching, RDC activities and environment supporting these functions meet the requirements and will accredit the institution for seven years.

53.2. If one assessment area is assessed as "The requirements of the assessment area are partially fulfilled" and the remaining two are assessed as "The requirements of the assessment area fulfilled", the Assessment Council will analyse the institution's strengths and areas for improvement and may either decide that the institution's governance, organisation of work, learning and teaching, and RDC activities and environment meet the requirements and will accredit the institution for seven years, or decide that there are deficiencies and issue recommendations for eliminating them, accrediting the institution for three years.

53.3. If two assessment areas are assessed as "The requirements of the assessment area are partially fulfilled" and one is assessed as "The requirements of the assessment area are fulfilled", the Assessment Council will decide that there are deficiencies in

governance, organisation of work, learning and teaching, RDC activities or environment, provides recommendations for eliminating them, and will accredit the institution for three years.

53.4. If all three assessment areas are assessed as "The requirements of the assessment area are partially fulfilled", the Assessment Council will analyse strengths and areas for improvement and may either decide that there are deficiencies in governance, organisation of work, learning and teaching, RDC activities or environment and provide recommendations for eliminating them, accrediting the institution for three years, or conclude that the institution's governance, organisation of work, learning and teaching, RDC activities or environment do not meet the requirements and will decide not to accredit the institution.

53.5. If even one assessment area is assessed as "The requirements of the assessment area are not fulfilled", the Assessment Council will decide that the institution's governance, organisation of work, learning and teaching, RDC activities or environment do not meet the requirements and will decide not to accredit the institution.

Diagram 2: Formation of the decision of the Assessment Council

Judgements of the assessment areas (AA)	
	Requirements of the assessment area are fulfilled
	Requirements of the assessment area are partially fulfilled
	Requirements of the assessment area are not fulfilled
Decision of the Assessment Council	
	Accreditation for 7 years
	Accreditation for 3 years
	Not to accredit

AA 1	AA 2	AA 3	Decision of the Assessment Council

54. If the Assessment Council is considering two possible accreditation decisions and concludes that a more favourable decision could be made if the institution meets a specific condition, it may issue a decision on the secondary condition in accordance with § 53 of the Administrative Procedure Act.

54.1. If the Assessment Council makes a conditional decision, it must specify in the decision the concrete deficiencies that form the basis for the secondary condition and the deadline (from one to two years) by which the institution must submit a report on the fulfilment of the secondary condition.

54.2. To assess fulfilment of the secondary condition, HAKA involves experts. The assessment must take place no later than six months after the deadline set in the decision of the Assessment Council.

54.3. Panel members involved in assessing the secondary condition provide a report indicating whether the deficiencies noted in the secondary condition have been "fully eliminated", "substantially eliminated", "partially eliminated", "not eliminated".

54.4. If all deficiencies have been fully or substantially eliminated, the Assessment Council will decide that the secondary condition is fulfilled. If deficiencies are partially eliminated, the Assessment Council will consider the severity and may decide that the secondary condition is either fulfilled or not fulfilled. If at least one deficiency is not eliminated, the Assessment Council will decide that the secondary condition is not fulfilled.

54.5. If the Assessment Council decides that the secondary condition has not been fulfilled, it may, according to § 53(3) of the Administrative Procedure Act, either declare the original accreditation decision invalid or establish a new secondary condition. According to § 66 section 2 (3) and section 3 of the same Act, an administrative act that was lawful at the moment of issue may be declared retroactively invalid if the associated secondary condition was not fulfilled.

55. If the Assessment Council decides to accredit a higher education institution for seven years, the institution is awarded the HAKA quality label in accordance with the Statute of the HAKA Quality Label, which is approved by the Director of HAKA by a directive. If the decision of the Assessment Council includes a secondary condition, the label is awarded only after the Council confirms that the secondary condition has been fulfilled.

56. The decision of the Assessment Council outlines:

56.1. Strengths of the higher education institution, meaning achievements exceeding the requirements.

56.2. Areas for improvement and recommendations, indicating non-compliance that affected the decision.

56.3. Opportunities for further development, which do not indicate non-compliance and do not influence the decision.

57. If the panel has marked any assessment area or quality criterion as *"worthy of recognition"*, the Assessment Council also includes this in its decision.

58. HAKA sends the Council's decision along with the assessment report to the institution electronically within two weeks from the date of the decision. If the decision is not to accredit the institution, HAKA also informs the Ministry of Education and Research within reasonable time.

59. Within one week of sending the decision and assessment report to the institution, HAKA publishes the decision, the assessment report, and the self-assessment report on its website.

VIII. Appeals against HAKA accreditation procedures and decisions of the Assessment Council

60. A person who considers that their rights have been violated or their freedoms restricted by the assessment procedures carried out by HAKA or by the decision of the Assessment Council may file a challenge in accordance with the procedure established by the Administrative Procedure Act. The challenge will be filed to the Assessment Council within thirty (30) days as of the day when a person becomes or should become aware of the challenged administrative decision.

61. The Assessment Council forwards the filed challenge to the Appeals Committee[1] of the Assessment Council, which will submit a written impartial opinion to the Council on the justification of the challenge within five (5) days of the receipt of the challenge. The Assessment Council resolves the challenge within ten (10) days of its receipt, considering the reasoned opinion of the Appeals Committee. If further investigation of the challenge is required, the Council may extend the deadline for reviewing the challenge by up to thirty (30) days.

62. A decision of the Assessment Council may be challenged within thirty (30) days as of the day of its delivery, by submitting a complaint to Tallinn Administrative Court (*Tallinna Halduskohus*) in accordance with the Code of Administrative Court Procedure.

IX. Follow-up activities

63. HAKA assumes that the responsibility for addressing the issues outlined in the assessment report and for continuous improvement activities lies with the higher education institution. HAKA requests that a higher education institution, which has received a seven-year accreditation, submit a written report to the Assessment Council two years after the institutional accreditation decision, describing the planned and implemented activities as well as their results based on the areas of improvement and recommendations in the assessment report.

64. If the Assessment Council has imposed a secondary condition to the accreditation decision in accordance with point 54.1, the higher education institution will submit a report to the Assessment Council by the specified date on the elimination of the deficiencies described in the condition. The Assessment Council will involve members of the assessment panel in evaluating the fulfilment of the condition.

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[1] The procedure for forming the Appeals Committee of the HAKA Assessment Council and its working principles are described in the regulation "Procedure for Formation of the Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education and the Appeals Committee," which can be found on HAKA website.

65. After the assessment decision is made, HAKA will organise a feedback seminar at the higher education institution, with a representative from the assessment panel also participating.

66. HAKA organises follow-up seminars where accredited higher education institutions provide an overview of the post-accreditation activities and lessons learned. Follow-up seminars are open to all higher education institutions and aim at sharing best practices and learning from each other.

67. A higher education institution that has received a seven-year accreditation (without a secondary condition) has the option to choose a focus area from among the areas of improvement outlined in the institutional accreditation decision and make an application to HAKA for receiving additional external feedback from competent experts as a follow-up activity for development purposes. The focus topic, along with the institution's own terms of reference, is proposed by the higher education institution within two years after the institutional accreditation decision. HAKA will collaborate with the higher education institution regarding the process of addressing the focus area and selecting the experts.

X.   Involvement of a competent foreign evaluation agency

68. If a higher education institution wishes to have its institutional accreditation conducted by a competent foreign evaluation agency (hereinafter *evaluation agency*), it must submit a motivated application to HAKA for involving the evaluation agency no later than two years before the expiration date of the current accreditation. The application should include the following information:

    68.1. The name and contact details of the evaluation agency, including the website address.

    68.2. A consent letter of the evaluation agency to conduct the accreditation and an estimate of the associated costs.

    68.3. A description of the planned accreditation procedure (including the timeline) and the requirements.

69. The higher education institution may commission the accreditation from an internationally recognised evaluation agency that meets the following conditions:

    69.1. The evaluation agency has experience in institutional evaluation of higher education institutions.

    69.2. The evaluation agency has experience in evaluating research and development activities.

    69.3. The accreditation procedure and requirements are transparent and aligned with the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area, and the evaluation agency is preferably listed in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR).

69.4. The evaluation agency provides an evaluation of the higher education institution in three areas: institutional management, learning and teaching, research, development, and/or other creative activities.

70. The Assessment Council shall make a reasoned decision regarding the suitability of the evaluation agency to conduct the institutional accreditation within one month of receiving the application.

71. If HAKA approves the use of the evaluation agency, it will enter into a tripartite agreement with the higher education institution and the evaluation agency, which will set out the rights and obligations of the parties during the institutional accreditation process, as well as the cost reimbursement procedure.

72. In accordance with § 38 (6) of the Higher Education Act, the costs associated with involving a competent foreign evaluation agency will be covered from the state budget up to the amount of domestic accreditation costs.

73. The assessment report shall be submitted by the evaluation agency to HAKA.

74. If the assessment report contains significant deficiencies and it is not possible to make a final decision in accordance with Estonian legislation, the Assessment Council has the right to return the report to the evaluation agency for further revision and improvement.

75. If the assessment report allows for a final decision in accordance with Estonian legislation, the Assessment Council shall make one of the following reasoned decisions:

75.1. To accredit the higher education institution for seven years.

75.2. To accredit the higher education institution for three years.

75.3. Not to accredit the higher education institution.

76. The procedures described in this chapter as well as the appeals of the final decisions of the Assessment Council, shall follow the procedure set out in Chapter VIII.

APPENDIX. Assessment areas, quality criteria, and guidelines of institutional accreditation

QUALITY CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES	EVIDENCES
I INSTITUTIONAL MANAGEMENT	
1. **Strategic management and development**. The higher education institution has defined its role in the Estonian society and internationally, involving key stakeholders in the planning and management of its development. It considers societal expectations, future challenges, and the principles of sustainable development. Resource management is directly linked to the institution's priorities and development needs. The institution continuously evaluates the achievement of set goals and ensures and promotes quality in all its areas of activity. **Guidelines** - The higher education institution has defined its core objectives and key outcomes, striving for international excellence. The objectives consider the country's priorities and the future needs of society, focusing on innovation and enhancing the institution's contribution to society at large. - The higher education institution bases its development goals and daily operations on the principles of sustainable development, takes into account global trends in higher education and science, and integrates teaching with research, development, and/or creative activities into a cohesive whole.	**MANDATORY EVIDENCE** ✓ The higher education institution's strategic documents, regulations, and action plans ✓ Analysis of the implementation of the development plan and action plans, as well as improvement activities in the institution's core and support processes (examples from various areas) ✓ The institution's performance indicators – trends, results analysis, and improvement activities; for professional higher education institutions offering vocational education, also vocational education performance indicators ✓ Trends in the institution's financial indicators across different areas of activity and income types ✓ The academic ethics principles and standards established at the institution (including those related to the use of artificial intelligence) ✓ Results of employee satisfaction surveys: satisfaction with management

- The development plan of the higher education institution involves its members (including learners[2]) and other key stakeholders in its creation and implementation. Responsibility for implementing the goals and action plans set out in the development plan is clearly defined. The achievement of objectives and the impact of activities are regularly assessed. - The higher education institution has established a clear procedure that allows staff and learners to participate in the institution's decision-making processes. - The institution's members share the core values underlying their activities, adhere to the quality definitions agreed upon at the institution, and are committed to continuous quality improvement. The institution applies quality management principles that create the conditions for members and other key stakeholders to contribute purposefully to enhancing the institution's and their own activities and increasing their impact. - The members of the higher education institution follow the principles of academic ethics in the broadest sense (including those related to the use of artificial intelligence) as agreed upon within the institution. The institution supports its members in understanding and responding to ethical issues. - The higher education institution initiates and implements development activities that enhance societal well-being, disseminate modern skills and knowledge in the institution's areas of competence, and promote lifelong learning. - The higher education institution has identified its strategic partners (including at the international level), collaborates purposefully with them, and participates in local and international cooperation networks. - The higher education institution's resource management is transparent and efficient, supporting the institution's overall development.	**ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE AT THE DISCRETION OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION** ✓ The principles of stakeholder involvement at the higher education institution and examples of their application in selected areas or units ✓ Initiatives aimed at enhancing societal well-being ✓ Projections of the institution's resources (including finances) and risk analysis ✓ Evidence for the accreditation of the "Healthy Campus" initiative ✓ Other evidence related to quality criteria, at the discretion of the higher education institution

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[2] In the context of these requirements and procedures, the term "learners" refers to both students and adult learners, and in professional higher education institutions offering vocational education, it also includes pupils.

- The higher education institution has implemented a risk management system that includes risk identification, mitigation activities, and ongoing monitoring.	
2. Human resource management. Personnel development is based on the institution's development goals and is efficient and effective. The higher education institution values its members and ensures the application of the principle of equal treatment for all staff and learners. **Guidelines** - The principles and actions for recruiting and developing staff are based on the institution's development plan goals, are fair and transparent, and ensure the institution's sustainability. - The institution employs a sufficient number of qualified academic staff and other teaching staff,[3] who are systematically engaged in professional self-improvement, developing teaching and supervising skills, participating in international mobility, and engaging in educational and RDC activities. The higher education institution has a strategy to ensure staff continuity in all areas of activity, and its implementation is purposeful and effective. - The principles of remuneration and staff motivation are defined, accessible to all employees, and followed The higher education institution provides opportunities for professional development for all employees. Regular feedback that supports development is provided to all employees.	**MANDATORY EVIDENCE** ✓ Documents related to personnel development and management ✓ Data on staff numbers, qualifications, and profiles ✓ Results of staff attestation (or other evaluations) ✓ Trends in employee feedback surveys, their analysis: satisfaction with the work environment and remuneration, development opportunities, and the implementation of equal treatment principles. **ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE AT THE DISCRETION OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION** ✓ Competitions for academic positions by field/academic unit. Recruitment effectiveness ✓ Foundations for ensuring equal opportunities and the effectiveness of their implementation ✓ Evidence of the availability of development opportunities for staff ✓ Solutions promoting physical and mental well-being ✓ For professional higher education institutions offering vocational education, also an analysis of teachers' internships and self-assessment results, as well as improvement activities ✓ Other evidence related to quality criteria, at the discretion of the higher education institution

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[3] Here and below, this refers to all higher education institution staff involved in the implementation of teaching and RDC activities, but who are not employed in an academic staff position. For example, a vocational teacher at a professional higher education institution that also offers vocational training, or masters in the creative field.

- The career model for academic staff motivates employees and creates opportunities for advancement. The institution provides effective career support for academic staff at various stages of their careers. The institution ensures methodological and technological support for teaching staff in developing, updating curricula, and conducting teaching with modern learning tools. When evaluating teaching staff's work (including at the attestation), both teaching performance and research, development, and creative work outcomes are considered, along with feedback from learners, effectiveness in supervising, the development of teaching, supervising, and general competencies, international mobility, as well as entrepreneurial or professional experience in the field outside the institution and other activities with societal impact. - The institution supports and promotes the mental and physical well-being of learners and staff by offering necessary support services, a healthy and safe environment, and preventive activities. The handling of complaints from the institution's members (including discrimination cases) is transparent and objective, ensuring fair treatment of all parties based on agreed-upon ethical principles. - Employee satisfaction with the work environment, appreciation of their work, development opportunities, implementation of equal treatment principles, etc., is regularly surveyed and the results are used for improvement activities.	
3. **Infrastructure and information management.** The management and development of physical and digital infrastructure is purposeful, sustainable, and economically viable. Internal and external communication at the institution is two-way, goal-oriented, and managed. Information management and administration is purposeful, and data protection and data security are ensured.	**MANDATORY EVIDENCE** ✓ The infrastructure's alignment with the institution's core activities and objectives, it's modernity and sustainability. ✓ Results from employee satisfaction surveys: satisfaction with working conditions, internal and external communication, information management, analysis of results, and improvement activities

Guidelines

- The institution's teaching, work, and RDC infrastructure (library, digital infrastructure, studios, workshops, laboratories, etc.) meets the needs arising from the institution's specifics and the expectations of its members and other key stakeholders.
- The planning, management, and development of infrastructure and information resources are aligned with strategic goals and priorities, and investments in them are purpose-driven.
- The institution has implemented a systematic and effective data management system that ensures the availability of quality data for better decision-making, creates additional value both inside and outside the organisation, and supports the development and implementation of data-driven services.
- The institution has established information security rules (including data protection and user privacy) and applies them.
  The higher education institution uses up-to-date and relevant digital technological solutions, including study management system, document management, e-learning environments, learning analytics tools, and others.
- The institution ensures the availability of up-to-date academic and scientific literature and access to research databases. The learning environment, including learning materials, tools, and digital learning platforms, supports students in achieving learning outcomes.
- The institution has established clear and transparent internal communication processes and effective information exchange channels to ensure the timely delivery of information to its members.
- The institution's external communication activities are planned and aligned with the institution's values and goals. Updated and accurate information about the institution's core activities is made available to the public.

✓ Results from learner satisfaction surveys: satisfaction with learning and RDC infrastructure, including digital learning environments, internal and external communication, information management, analysis of results, and improvement activities
✓ Documentation regulating information management and cybersecurity within the institution, its distribution, and adherence

ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE AT THE DISCRETION OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION
✓ Results of reputation surveys and their analysis.
✓ Analysis of the cross-use of practical learning environments, teaching materials, and tools
✓ Procedures for complying with occupational safety requirements
✓ Training programs or other learning events for the members on topics like cybersecurity, data protection, emergency response, etc
✓ Other evidence related to quality criteria, at the discretion of the higher education institution

- The security and accessibility of the infrastructure are ensured, and its design takes into account the need to support the mental and physical well-being of the institution's members.	

II LEARNING AND TEACHING

4. Development of studies and study programmes: In developing studies and study programmes, the higher education institution considers the needs and expectations of society and the labour market, its development goals, field-specific competence and available resources, and ensures compliance with higher education and vocational standards as well as international trends. The curricula are research-based and coherent, their development is continuous and evidence-based. A functional internal evaluation system has been established for the ongoing development of the curricula.

Guidelines

- Planning and implementation of studies in both degree and continuing education ensures alignment with national strategies and compliance with the institution's goals and responsibilities. It considers labour market needs, societal expectations, financial possibilities of the institution, and strives for international excellence.
- When launching a new study programme, the institution analyses, in addition to what is mentioned in the previous point, the availability of a sufficient number of competent staff and the necessary financial resources and infrastructure for the quality implementation of the study programme.
- Study programme development is systematic and continuous, involving all relevant stakeholders, with their expectations and needs being taken into account.
- The study programmes are comprehensive and coherent: the learning outcomes of modules and subjects, the proportion of independent work and internships,

MANDATORY EVIDENCE
Centrally collected data used by the higher education institution in the analysis of compliance with the quality criterion:
- ✓ Number of admitted students, enrolled students, and graduates, and their changes over the past 5 years by study programme, including separately by study programme groups in the institution's area of responsibility (for professional higher education institutions also by study programme subgroups)
- ✓ Number of students per full-time equivalent academic staff
- ✓ Number of students per study programme open for admission (by study programme group and study level)
- ✓ Data on international mobility of students (also pupils in professional higher education institutions)
- ✓ Study funding per student (*methodology in development*)
- ✓ Number of graduates from micro-qualification study programmes

Evidence collected by the higher education institution:
- ✓ Description and analysis of the processes for opening, closing, and internal evaluation of study programmes, including involvement of target and stakeholder groups and examples of improvement actions
- ✓ Learner feedback on study programmes and examples of improvement actions based on the feedback
- ✓ Number of participants who have completed continuing education, by type

and the methods and tasks used to assess learning outcomes are consistent with each other. - The study programmes integrate the development of general competencies with subject-specific studies. - The study programmes provide opportunities for learners' international and domestic mobility, and these opportunities are utilised.	✓ Examples of how labour market analyses (including OSKA reports) are used in study programme development **ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE AT THE DISCRETION OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION** ✓ Examples of development activities related to the quality criterion and its guidelines ✓ Joint study programmes and courses (including blended intensive programmes) and other activities supporting internationalisation (at home) ✓ Other evidence related to the quality criterion at the discretion of the higher education institution
5. **Learning and teaching.** The higher education institution systematically implements a learning-centred approach that supports the development of self-directed learners and encourages them to take responsibility for planning their studies and careers. The institution's admission requirements and procedure ensure fair access to higher education. The content and process of learning and teaching are research-based, and the knowledge and skills of graduates correspond to the constantly evolving needs of the labour market and the expectations of society. **Guidelines** - The higher education institution offers flexible degree and continuing education in various forms, considering the needs and possibilities of different target groups. The structure of the study programmes offers students choices based on their needs and enables the integration of degree and continuing education.	**MANDATORY EVIDENCE** **Centrally collected data used by the higher education institution in the analysis of compliance with the quality criterion:** ✓ Proportion of graduates who completed within the nominal study period (including within n+1 or n+2 years) ✓ Alumni satisfaction with the quality of education (Eurogradute) ✓ Results of the national satisfaction and school environment survey (for professional higher education institutions offering vocational education) ✓ Graduate employment rate ✓ Graduate continuation to further studies **Evidence collected by the higher education institution:**

- Admission requirements and procedures ensure fair access for learners and support their readiness to successfully complete the study programme. Academic recognition of foreign qualifications is carried out in accordance with international conventions, intergovernmental agreements, and Estonian legislation.
- Learning and teaching are based on up-to-date sectoral expertise and research, supporting the development of scientific mindset.
- The institution applies and promotes a learning-centred approach in both degree and continuing education. Purposefully selected teaching and assessment methods support deep learning.
- Learners contribute to improving the quality of studies by providing meaningful feedback on the study programme, learning and teaching processes, and the organisation of studies, and this feedback is taken into account.
- The content of studies and teaching methods support the development of both subject-specific and general competencies.
- Internships are integrated into subject studies, requirements for completing the internship are defined, and competent supervision is ensured by both the educational institution and the internship provider.
- The institution has established and implements a code of good practice for learning and teaching.
- Student assessment is objective, supports learning, and aligns with learning outcomes.
- Teaching involves guest lecturers, including from foreign higher education institutions, as well as practitioners from the field.
- The institution's RDC activities are integrated into teaching, offering students opportunities to participate in research projects and development activities, thereby strengthening their research skills.

✓ Key documents regulating study organisation and agreements related to learning and teaching within the institution
✓ Analysis of admission trends and admission requirements
✓ Number of students across different study formats and study loads
✓ Student feedback on the organisation of degree and continuing education studies, teaching (incl. assessment), and the implementation of feedback results and suggestions for improving teaching
✓ For professional higher education institutions offering vocational education: evidence of the evaluation of the suitability of internship placements

ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE AT THE DISCRETION OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION
✓ Involvement of guest/international lecturers and practitioners in teaching
✓ Evidence of internationalisation at home
✓ Feedback from students and alumni on the acquisition of general competencies or other evidence of developing general competencies
✓ Alumni employment and salary by level of study and field; graduate salaries 3–5 years after graduation, including separate data for international alumni
✓ Link between RDC and study programmes, including student involvement in research and development projects

	✓ Examples of development activities related to the quality criterion and guidelines ✓ Employer satisfaction with graduates' skills and knowledge ✓ Offering of elective courses or, in the case of professional higher education institutions offering vocational training, the provision of vocational education in general education schools ✓ Other evidence related to the quality criterion at the discretion of the higher education institution
6. **Support systems for learning and teaching.** The higher education institution takes into account the diverse needs of learners, monitors and supports their academic progress, development, and well-being. **Guidelines** - When providing support services, the higher education institution takes into account the diversity of learners (part-time learners, working learners, learners with special needs, and international students). The institution supports learners with special needs by making adjustments to the teaching process where possible or applying universal design principles. - The individual development and academic progress of learners are monitored and supported. The institution analyses the reasons for dropout and failure rates and takes steps to increase the graduation efficiency rate. - The institution provides academic, career, and psychological counselling for students and (when applicable) pupils, as well as support for digital learning and IT. - The institution has a system for advising and processing applications for recognition of prior learning and work experience (VÕTA), and it is implemented.	**MANDATORY EVIDENCE** **Centrally collected data used by the higher education institution in the analysis of compliance with the quality criterion:** ✓ Proportion of study discontinuations (including first-year dropouts) by study programme groups and study levels, and for professional higher education institutions offering vocational education, also by study programme subgroups ✓ Students' sense of belonging and feedback on support services (from Eurostudent or similar surveys) ✓ For professional higher education institutions offering vocational education, the results of national student satisfaction and school environment surveys regarding support systems **Evidence collected by the higher education institution:** ✓ Recognition of Prior Learning (VÕTA) regulations and their implementation analysis, including the number of credits requested and recognised through VÕTA

- The processes for handling academic disputes, academic dishonesty, and ethical issues are described and functioning, and the members are aware of them and know how to act when problems arise. - The institution supports and recognises students' (and where applicable, pupils') participation in extracurricular activities and civic society initiatives. - The higher education institution regularly evaluates the effectiveness of support systems by collecting feedback from learners and teachers and implements continuous improvement measures based on the results. - The institution supports learners' participation in international mobility.	✓ Feedback from students and (if applicable) pupils on support systems, including counselling services ✓ Existence and implementation of a system for addressing academic dishonesty, including plagiarism detection systems **ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE AT THE DISCRETION OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION** ✓ Analysis of the effectiveness of support systems and continuous improvement actions ✓ Average study duration by level of study and field of study ✓ Examples of learner participation in student organisations, and in pupil organisations where applicable, academic associations, community initiatives, cultural and creative activities, voluntary work in professional and charitable organisations, etc., and how the institution supports these activities ✓ Examples of development activities related to quality criteria and guidelines ✓ Other evidence related to the quality criterion at the discretion of the higher education institution, such as complaint statistics (total number of complaints, number of decisions in favour of the complainant)

III RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, AND/OR OTHER CREATIVE ACTIVITIES (RDC)

7. **Setting of the goals and quality management in RDC.** The higher education institution bases the goal setting and implementation of its research, development, and/or other creative activities on its mission, societal expectations, future needs, and principles of code of	**MANDATORY EVIDENCE** ✓ Strategic documents in the RDC field of the higher education institution and their implementation

conduct for research integrity and sustainable development. The institution has defined specific and measurable quality criteria, analyses the results, and applies them in decision-making processes, in setting strategic development directions, and in planning development activities.

Guidelines

- The higher education institution's RDC activities are based on the institution's mission, vision, and objectives, societal expectations, and future needs, while also considering environmental, economic, and social sustainability aspects.
- The higher education institution has defined quality criteria for its RDC activities and regularly collects and analyses information reflecting the quality and impact of research and creative work. This information is used in strategic decision-making and quality development. The institution assesses the achievement of its goals and uses the evaluation results to plan development activities.
- The institution optimises the distribution of its resources (funding, infrastructure) to ensure effective organisation and development of research and/or creative work.
- The higher education institution ensures compliance with good scientific practice and systematically develops processes and measures to support the implementation of code of conduct for research integrity (including compliance with data protection and information security requirements).

✓ Quality definitions in the RDC field of the higher education institution and their fulfilment
✓ RDC revenue volume and structure: Volume of domestic and international private and public sector contracts. For positively evaluated higher education institutions, based on ETIS data, disaggregated by Frascati fields
✓ Regulation of research ethics standards and good scientific practice, including relevant internal regulations and guidelines in the higher education institution
✓ Organisation of reporting and handling of misconduct cases related to research ethics

ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE AT THE DISCRETION OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION
✓ Principles and mechanisms/measures for the internal distribution of RDC resources in the higher education institution, and the allocation of resources (funding, including investments, infrastructure)
✓ Other evidence related to quality criteria, at the discretion of the higher education institution

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8. **Effectiveness of RDC and its impact on society.** The volume and quality of RDC outputs as well as the trends in the institution's research and/or creative fields align with the goals set by the institution and confirm the sustainability of RDC activities. The RDC activities have significant scientific and societal impact due to the specific characteristics of the institution, both at the national and international level.

MANDATORY EVIDENCE FOR EVALUATED HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Centrally collected data used by the higher education institution in the analysis of compliance with the quality criterion:

Guidelines

- The higher education institution ensures, based on its specific profile, a sufficient volume of RDC activities in all its fields of study.
- The institution monitors the effectiveness of its RDC activities and their alignment with the set goals in terms of output volume and quality. The monitoring results are analysed and evaluated based on both scientific and/or creative quality and national and international societal impact. Based on the results, strategic directions and management decisions are adjusted to ensure that the effectiveness and sustainability of RDC activities align with the institution's goals and societal needs.
- The institution values and promotes the application of RDC results in practical solutions, innovation, and entrepreneurship (including the creative industries sector), offering innovative solutions to issues of societal importance.
- The institution collaborates with businesses, organisations operating in the creative sectors, the public sector, government agencies, and other research institutions to increase the impact and applicability of its RDC activities.
- The institution disseminates the results of its creative and research work to the broader public, ensuring open access to RDC results within available resources.

✓ Trends in the number of peer-reviewed scientific publications by Frascati fields
✓ Trends in the number and proportion of publications included in the top 10% most-cited publications
✓ Impact of scientific articles (InCites and/or Scopus indicator Category Normalised Citation Impact) by Frascati fields

Evidence collected by the higher education institution:
✓ Evidence-based examples of the popularisation and dissemination of RDC results in society
✓ For creative sector higher education institutions, creative research with international reach

MANDATORY EVIDENCE FOR NON-EVALUATED HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Centrally collected data used by the higher education institution in the analysis of compliance with the quality criterion
✓ Research and development results based on ETIS (Research Information System) data, categorised by fields of study according to the specific profile and strategic objectives of the higher education institution

Evidence collected by the higher education institution:
✓ Evidence-based examples of the popularisation and dissemination of RDC results in society
✓ Trends, analysis, and conclusions of applied and/or creative research

	ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE AT THE DISCRETION OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION ✓ The institution's assessment of the most impactful RDC outcomes, optionally describing up to 10 key RDC results per evaluated RDC field, based on the institution's specific profile ✓ The number and level of public presentations of creative works, with indicators presented as a trend (including creative research) ✓ Description of protected intellectual property (including registered patent applications and plant protection product applications, as well as patents and plant protection products) ✓ Publicly available datasets and databases, products/services resulting from RDC activities ✓ The institution's assessment of the most significant evidence-based examples of the societal impact of RDC activities. Examples of practical applications and impacts of research (e.g., technological innovations, policy recommendations, societal changes) ✓ Other evidence related to quality criteria, at the discretion of the higher education institution
9. **Support system for RDC and career support for early-career researchers.** The higher education institution systematically develops the organisation of RDC activities and support services, providing its members with opportunities to develop their RDC competencies and support for making career choices.	**MANDATORY EVIDENCE** Documents and guidelines regulating the RDC activities and/or RDC support services of the higher education institution ✓ Satisfaction of teaching staff and PhD students/junior researchers with the RDC support system

Guidelines

- The higher education institution systematically develops the organisation of RDC activities and RDC support services, ensuring that there is infrastructure as well as administrative and technical support for research, development activities and creative work. RDC support services are targeted and support the achievement of the main process objectives (including assistance in preparing funding applications, project management, and finding international partners).
- The higher education institution promotes knowledge and technology transfer, ensuring systematic mechanisms for supporting the creation and application of value based on knowledge and technology. This includes ensuring that RDC results and innovation reach various sectors of society and the economy.
- The institution implements internal (funding) measures that support the development of research and creative teams in line with the institution's priorities and help ensure their sustainability.
- The university ensures competent and effective supervision for PhD students and early-career researchers who have defended their doctoral theses. The university has agreed on good practices or requirements for supervising PhD students/junior researchers, monitors their implementation, and provides opportunities for developing supervision skills.
- The higher education institution regularly provides opportunities for teaching staff and PhD students to participate in training and workshops that help them develop research skills. The professional higher education institution supports its staff in pursuing doctoral studies.

✓ Satisfaction of teaching staff and PhD students/junior researchers with the supervision

For universities additionally:
✓ Trends in doctoral students and doctoral thesis defences across Frascati fields

ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE AT THE DISCRETION OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION
✓ The number of early-career researchers (up to 10 years after obtaining a PhD) in different academic units or research fields.
✓ Data on teaching staff enrolled in doctoral programs (professional higher education institutions).
✓ Other evidence related to quality criteria, at the discretion of the higher education institution