



# QUALITY ASSURANCE STANDARDS FOR SECOND CYCLE STUDY PROGRAM MASTER OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

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*"On adoption of Higher Education Quality Code"*

# QUALITY ASSURANCE STANDARDS FOR SECOND CYCLE STUDY PROGRAM “MASTER OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES”

## STANDARDS AND CRITERIA

### I. I. STUDY PROGRAM PROVISION

**Standard I.1** The Higher Education Institution provides second cycle study programs “Master of Professional Studies” in accordance with its mission and objectives, aiming at maintaining national interests and values.

**Criterion 1** The institution provides a study programs in compliance with national interests.

**Criterion 2** The study programs aim at preserving and consolidating national academic and cultural values.

**Criterion 3** The study programs are designed and delivered in accordance with the goals and mission of the institution and field of activity.

**Criterion 4** The study programs are designed and offered in line with and promotes local and / or national economic development.

**Standard I.2** The study programs are in line with the development strategy, statute and other regulatory acts of the Higher Education Institution and its academic fields.

**Criterion 1** The institution clearly stipulates that the study programs are designed and delivered in compliance with and in implementation of the institution's own development strategy.

**Criterion 2** The statute and the regulation of the institution clearly define its academic priorities and demonstrate that the study programs are designed and delivered in accordance with and in implementation of the latter.

**Criterion 3** The designation, organization, structure and content of the study programs are provided in accordance with institution’s areas and academic profiles.

**Criterion 4** The second cycle study programs in “Master of Professional Studies” are designed and developed in accordance with national development strategies, national interest and global development trends.

- Standard I.3**      **The "Master of Professional Studies" study program aim to meet the needs of the labor market and is provided in accordance with its requirements.**
- Criterion 1**      The "Master of Professional Studies" study programs have set well-defined objectives for student training in those programs, which include in-depth scientific competences, skills and professional competencies that students should acquire at the end of the study program, which characterize the profile of the program in accordance with the level of studies in which they are offered and with the requirements of the labor market.
- Criterion 2**      The institution conducts studies on the local and international labor market for the study programs it provides before its opening, after students' graduation, and periodically. These studies should include: data from formal communication with employers of the respective field of study, their needs and requirements, student employment opportunities, data on real employment of graduates and expected developments in the relevant sector.
- Criterion 3**      The study programs training objectives, structure and content, as well as study program expected learning outcomes guarantee the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competences that respond to market needs and facilitate student employment.
- Criterion 4**      The study programs are aligned with similar study programs provided by international institutions in order to facilitate study transfer or student employment in the international market in the future.
- Criterion 5**      The study programs are drafted in accordance with the objectives set out in the EU legislation and directives on higher education and regulated professions, and it relies on the institution's long-standing experience and European countries best practices.
- Criterion 6**      The "Master of Professional Studies" study programs include vocational training in professional practices in line with the study program purpose and objectives and international directives on regulated professions.
- Criterion 7**      Based on the institution's profile and aiming at attracting foreign students and internationalizing the institution, teaching elements, modules, courses or the entire program may be included in a foreign language in the "Master of Professional Studies" second cycle study program.
- Criterion 8**      The "Master of Professional Studies" second cycle study programme may be temporarily opened in order to meet the qualified staff needs in a specific field.

<b>Standard I.4</b>	The “Master of Professional Studies” second cycle study programs are in line with the academic field of the main / central unit (department) responsible for the study program at the institution.
<b>Criterion 1</b>	The institution demonstrates that it has the necessary experience, capabilities and resources in the academic field to provide a study program in that field.
<b>Criterion 2</b>	The general and specific scope of the study program should be in line with the academic and research field of the main unit responsible for the study program, according to the classification / codification of the study programs based on the national and European guidelines and directives.
<b>Criterion 3</b>	The general and specific field of the study programs should be in line with the academic and research area of the main unit, responsible for the study programs, according to the classification / codification of study programs based on the national and European guidelines and directives. In the case of interdisciplinary programs, at least one of the cooperating units should ensure this compliance.
<b>Criterion 4</b>	In cases when the institution offers a “Master of Professional Studies” second cycle study program for a specific field, not included in the institution’s profile, its quality is guaranteed by the partner institutions.
<b>Standard I.5</b>	<b>The Higher Education Institution ensures cooperation establishment with institutions, companies, third parties, local and / or foreign business actors with the view to deliver study programs, in compliance with the field and specification of the latter.</b>
<b>Criterion 1</b>	The institution established effective internal cooperation relations for study programs design, supervision and maintenance of the by allocating tasks among units and staff, assigning respective responsibilities and the analyzing on an ongoing basis their work.
<b>Criterion 2</b>	In the framework of students’ learning and learning objectives achievement, the institution establishes cooperation relations with counterpart institutions at the national or international level with local and / or foreign business actors.
<b>Criterion 3</b>	With the view to deliver "Master of Professional Studies” study programs the institution enters into special agreements with field institutions, research

institutes, companies to enable professional training, clinical practice, or internships etc.

- Criterion 4** The Higher Education Institution establishes official relationships and cooperates with employers to carry out and supervise the training/internship, depending on the specific nature of study programs it offers.
- Criterion 5** The Higher Education Institution, in coordination with the employers, offers further professional training for the graduated students.
- Criterion 6** The unit responsible for study program drafts periodic analytical reports as regards benefits from the cooperation agreements with the view to deliver study programs.

## **II. STUDY PROGRAMS ORGANIZATION, MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION**

**Standard II.1** The "Master of Professional Studies" study programs are organized in accordance with national legal provisions and bylaws in force covering these study programs.

- Criterion 1** The study programs are organized into courses and modules evaluated in credits, in accordance with the applicable national legislation and according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).
- Criterion 2** The "Master of Professional Studies" study programs aim at equipping students with specific skills in a wide range of professions and specialties.
- Criterion 3** The study programs provide advanced knowledge in a field of study or professional field, including critical understanding of the theories and field academic principles.
- Criterion 4** The second cycle study programs help students acquire advanced knowledge, skills and competences in academic or professional fields, necessary to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialized field of study or professional field.
- Criterion 5** The second cycle study programs contain all the components composing the study program design, as set forth by the legal and sub-legal acts.
- Criterion 6** The study programs have clearly defined practicums by grouping courses / modules according to specific categories and corresponding load on credits.

**Criterion 7** The study programs determine the load on credits dedicated to professional, laboratory and clinical practice equivalence according to the provisions of national bylaws and in compliance with the European directives.

**Standard II.2** The main / central unit responsible for the study program meets the legal requirements and quality standards prescribed for these units.

**Criterion 1** The main / central unit responsible for the study program meets all legal requirements on evaluation and accreditation.

**Criterion 2** The main / central unit responsible for the study program meets the legal and sub-legal requirements on academic organization and structure.

**Criterion 3** The main / local unit responsible for the study program meets the legal requirements on academic staff number and qualification the relations between full-time, part-time and visiting staff.

**Criterion 4** The main / central unit responsible for the study program meets the legal and sub-legal requirements on academic organization and structure.

**Criterion 5** The main / central unit responsible for the study program encourages the academic staff to engage in of teaching, laboratory and clinical practice.

**Criterion 6** The main / central unit responsible for each study program appoints a person as the coordinator of the study programs, who is responsible for program progress and development and professional training in accordance with its objectives.

**Criterion 7** The Program Coordinator reports periodically to the Head of the Main / Central Unit and documents any information related to the study programs.

**Standard II.3** The second cycle study programs are detailed, structured and organized in accordance with the standards and objectives of the second cycle study programs.

**Criterion 1** The main / central unit, responsible for the second cycle study programs, has the necessary information on study programs' organization, structure and content.

**Criterion 2** The study programs are organized into courses, modules, professional training and practicums, in accordance with the applicable legal provisions.

**Criterion 3** The study programs are organized into courses and modules evaluated with credits according to the national and European system, divided into academic years and semesters.

**Criterion 4** The study programs have a detailed syllabus, which incorporates the necessary information on the teaching workload, hours in / outside the auditorium, attendance / program follow-up and the knowledge assessment methods, etc.

<b>Criterion 5</b>	The study programs provide students with all the necessary information related to the general and specific criteria for admission, transfer and studies equivalence.
<b>Criterion 6</b>	The study programs contain the necessary information on course programs (detailed syllabuses) for each subject, training, seminars or laboratory classes, as well as all the components of each program in and outside the auditorium in accordance with the approved formats.
<b>Criterion 7</b>	The content of the study programs are subject to continuous improvement and update and at the beginning of each academic year the eventual changes are approved, and the complete file.
<b>Standard II.4</b>	<b>The structure, organization and content of the study programs are in accordance with the training objectives, the qualification level based on the National and European Qualifications Framework, learning outcomes and competencies, and labor market requirements.</b>
<b>Criterion 1</b>	The workload study program is structured in accordance with the applicable legal and sub-legal provisions.
<b>Criterion 2</b>	The designation, content of activities, division of courses and training enable and deepen knowledge and skills and / or student employment.
<b>Criterion 3</b>	The courses / modules, division into years and semesters, and credit and classes evaluation enables the achievement of study program academic objectives and the expected results of learning and vocational training.
<b>Criterion 4</b>	Study program design, subjects and their designation, credits, and theory vs. practice ratio is in line with the profile of the master program and approximated with similar international programs.
<b>Criterion 5</b>	The division based on training activities and theory versus practice ratio enable teaching objectives achievement, transfer of studies, mobility and employment at the end of the study programs.
<b>Criterion 6</b>	Course / module programs are updated continuously based on the required and recommended literature of the last 5 years.
<b>Criterion 7</b>	The content of the study program guarantees the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences intended for the second cycle study programs.
<b>Criterion 8</b>	Organization of study programs ensures professional skills, competences and training.
<b>Criterion 9</b>	Study programs' content promotes further study opportunities and / or hiring of students in line with expectations and labor market demands.

<b>Standard II.5</b>	<b>The academic staff covering the study program meet the quantitative standards and have the appropriate and special academic and professional qualification in accordance with the program area in order to guarantee the teaching standards under the framework of the study program.</b>
<b>Criterion 1</b>	The full-time and part-time academic staff engaged in study program delivery meets the applicable legal requirements.
<b>Criterion 2</b>	The full-time and part-time academic staff engaged in delivering the study program has the appropriate academic qualification, at the required level to manage study program course modules.
<b>Criterion 3</b>	The qualification level and general and specific academic and research field of academic staff covering the study program is in accordance with the study program, and its modules nature and specifications.
<b>Criterion 4</b>	The Higher Education Institution, in cooperation and collaboration with other Higher Education Institutions, as well as business representatives and companies provides sufficient, appropriate and qualified staff for students mentoring, counseling and supervision of during practicum, diploma thesis and other specific activities, depending on study program nature.
<b>Criterion 5</b>	The Higher Education Institution provides and guarantees support teaching and scientific staff engagement for the delivery of laboratory classes and maintenance of laboratories and other teaching facilities, according to the specific study program nature.
<b>Standard II.6</b>	<b>The Higher Education Institution encourages students and partners to participate in the study programs continuous improvement and their successful delivery.</b>
<b>Criterion 1</b>	In order to improve the study programs' content and adjustment to the labor market requirements, the responsible structures consult and take into account the proposals of collaborators and partners from the labor market.
<b>Criterion 2</b>	In the framework of improving the study program, the institution promotes and includes students and their structures in the discussions. The proposals are discussed and reflected only if they aim at improving the study program.
<b>Criterion 3</b>	The institution maintains contact and is consults with graduate students in order to obtain their proposals for study programs' improvement.

**Criterion 4** In cooperation with public and non-public institutions, local government units, etc., the institution updates, adjusts and reorganizes special programs in compliance with specific local and developmental requirements and needs.

### **III. TEACHING, LEARNING, EVALUATION AND COMPETENCES**

**Standard III.1** The Higher Education Institution pursues a clear policy to guarantee and promote the quality of teaching and develops special guidelines and directives designed for teaching methods development and monitoring.

**Criterion 1** The Higher Education Institution drafts guidelines at the institutional level for the development and use of various and innovative teaching methods based on the field of study and subjects/ modules.

**Criterion 2** The responsible central structures design monitoring mechanisms and periodically evaluate the academic staff teaching and innovative skills.

**Criterion 3** The institution guarantees the students engagement in the teaching methods periodic assessment, competences assessment, including complaints addressal.

**Criterion 4** The responsible structures for teaching quality monitoring and assurance, make public the evaluation results.

**Criterion 5** The institution, through evaluation mechanisms and achieved results, promotes examples of best practices, as well as encourages and motivates the academic staff to further improve teaching.

**Standard III.2** The institution guarantees the development of the teaching, learning, and professional and scientific training with the best methods and practices.

**Criterion 1** The most common channels of teaching, learning process, and knowledge transfer are lectures, seminars, laboratory work, course assignments/essays, projects, professional clinical practice, public lectures and any other models approved by the institution.

**Criterion 2** The academic staff must accept, observe and respond to students' diversity and needs, by providing various forms, methods and alternative teaching and learning opportunities, in accordance with the scope and nature of the study program in general, and the course modules in particular, and student feedback is encouraged in order to improve teaching practices.

- Criterion 3** The institution supports its academic staff to improve didactic competences. The institution enables the use of diverse and flexible pedagogical methods, which are appropriate and consistent with the expected learning outcomes, teaching objectives and labor market demands.
- Criterion 4** The academic staff engaged in teaching is competent in explaining knowledge and concepts, by using various teaching methods according to topics and profiles.
- Criterion 5** The institution periodically evaluates and improves teaching methods forms and methods, including students participation in the process and reflecting their thoughts and suggestions.
- Criterion 6** The academic staff uses interactive methods and discussion to make classes more appealing to students and encourage them to participate.
- Criterion 7** Teaching forms and methods encourage the student's sense of autonomy, by providing teacher supervision and support and building a mutual respect relationship between them.

**Standard III.3** The central units guarantee the development of teaching, learning, and professional training, by making available all the necessary physical, didactic and logistic infrastructure to successfully carry out the teaching and scientific activity.

- Criterion 1** The teaching and scientific process is carried out in adequate and quality premises, which are clean and appropriately maintained.
- Criterion 2** The premises dedicated to the learning process are functional and equipped with the necessary logistics for a qualitative learning process and practicums.
- Criterion 3** The academic staff and students use various IT systems, and consolidated IT infrastructure necessary for the learning process.
- Criterion 4** The required and recommended literature, made available to students in the study program language (in hard copy or soft copy), guarantees the acquisition of knowledge required in the study program.
- Criterion 5** The library of the institution guarantees a sufficient number of recent publications in the main field of the study program and sufficient and comfortable reading premises for students during the learning process.
- Criterion 6** In terms of teaching and learning process, the academic staff and students have access to online libraries in similar fields to the study program.
- Criterion 7** The laboratory infrastructure necessary for lab classes, course assignments, diplomas and specific studies is continuously used by the students.

- Criterion 8** In terms of teaching, academic staff uses on-line platforms (e-learning) and supports and encourages academic staff and students to use them.
- Criterion 9** The academic staff and students use internal communication systems to access electronic documents and their personal dedicated profile.
- Criterion 10** The academic staff guides students in the selecting their diploma thesis topics, and assists and supports them during their development.
- Standard III.4** **The institution establishes special institutional structures, which raise the awareness on improving the study programs' teaching and learning quality.**
- Criterion 1** The institution establishes structures/ units at the institutional level to promote the continuous improvement of teaching, and coordinate its activity with the main/ central units in the framework of improving the quality of teaching.
- Criterion 2** The main/ central unit is responsible for teaching quality and raising the academic staff and students' awareness on the quality the study programs provide.
- Criterion 3** The structures and responsible units support the experimentation and development of innovative teaching methods.
- Criterion 4** The academic and support staff are constantly qualified in the field of scientific research to assist in the further improvement of teaching.
- Criterion 5** The structures and units in charge continuously train academic staff to improve their teaching skills and implement new methods.
- Criterion 6** The academic and support staff are responsible for implementing the study programs and committed to improve teaching and implementing new methods.
- Criterion 7** The academic staff test new teaching methods, analyzes objectives/expectations and report periodically on results to the structures and units in charge.
- Criterion 8** In the framework of cooperation and inclusion of partners in the teaching process, the institution engages field professionals, not part of the academic structure, in different stages of the study program. These professionals give proposals and ideas on the different ways of teaching.
- Standard III.5** **The institution drafts regulations and special procedures on testing and assessing professional competences and skills and guarantees their implementation.**
- Criterion 1** The criteria and the testing and assessment method of professional competences and skills are defined in special regulations and are announced to the students.

**Criterion 2** At the beginning of each course / module students are informed on testing and assessment method of professional competences and research skills provided for in the course / module syllabus.

**Criterion 3** The testing and assessment method of professional competences and research skills is realized in various models and ways, providing students with the opportunity to demonstrate the acquired competences and knowledge.

**Standard III.6** The institution guarantees a fair and transparent evaluation based on each student's merits.

**Criterion 1** The testing and assessment of professional competences and research skills is carried out throughout the entire academic year and is mirrored in the final assessment.

**Criterion 2** The institution makes use of electronic testing and evaluation systems, which eliminate various forms of abuse and enhance transparency.

**Criterion 3** The final testing and assessment of professional competences and skills assessment is carried out by exam panels composed of at least 2 members, one of whom is the chairperson of the commission.

**Criterion 4** The testing and assessment of written competences is anonymously conducted with codification and the institution provides a dedicated infrastructure monitored by the appropriate trained staff and / or surveillance equipment.

**Criterion 5** The assessment of competences and skills is accompanied by comments / *feedback* (if necessary) and includes recommendations for the learning process in order to help students improve in the future.

**Criterion 6** The responsible units and academic staff avoid and do not tolerate plagiarism and cheating during exams and assignments.

**Criterion 7** The results of checking professional competences and skills are merit-based and delivered in time, based on the stipulations in the relevant regulations.

**Criterion 8** The institution guarantees students' right to be acquainted with the assessment procedure, and to request the assessment be reviewed in accordance with the regulations and evaluation procedures.

**Criterion 9** Any claim or complaint is reviewed by the evaluation commission and then by the ad-hoc commission. The followed procedure is documented and archived.

**Standard III.7** Study program delivery guarantees students' creativity and practical skills enhancement, by simultaneously providing in-depth knowledge on professional and scientific competences.

- Criterion 1** The study program is delivered in a way that guarantees the students' competences acquisition and develops professional and special skills development.
- Criterion 2** The study program guarantees the development of specific skills in the field of information technology, including as well human, social, communication, and interaction (including foreign language) resources.
- Criterion 3** Student's competences and skills, presented in the study program and syllabi of each subject, are analyzed and reviewed at the end of each course.
- Criterion 4** At the end of each course / module, the academic staff points out the most important issues and guides students throughout their implementation and final test.
- Criterion 5** The academic staff (full time or visiting) delivers public lectures and workshops on new science and technology developments outside the study program.
- Criterion 6** Teaching is carried out on a competences-basis in order to provide students the opportunity to develop their competences in labs and practicums.
- Criterion 7** The academic staff supports discussion and teamwork in interpreting and solving certain problems / issues.
- Criterion 8** The academic staff creates a suitable climate for the development of innovative ideas, advanced and scientific studies, and support.
- Criterion 9** The institution supports the development of innovative ideas, students advanced research and scientific studies, by providing them with financial support.
- Criterion 10** The academic staff combines forms of teaching with partner institutions to enable and increase student mobility.

**Standard III.8** **The institution follows a clear knowledge implementation procedure through laboratory, professional and clinical practices and internships.**

- Criterion 1** In the context of teaching and skill acquirement, the responsible units guarantee premises in and outside the institution, which are appropriate for carrying out the laboratory and professional practices.
- Criterion 2** Through cooperation and partnership, the Institution guarantees carrying out clinical practices and internships in contemporary forms and technology, with the aim of acquiring professional knowledge and competences in the best way possible.

**Criterion 3** Professional and clinical practices and internships carried out during studies, are equivalent in credits and are documented with the special documents, supplemented with the trainer’s opinion and respective assessment.

**Standard III.9** **The institution pursues a clear student graduation procedure in the study program and provides the students with the necessary documentation.**

**Criterion 1** The institution drafts a special procedure for the final exam or diploma defense before the graduation and publishes it.

**Criterion 2** The responsible structures and academic staff assist students by providing the necessary information, instructions and materials in the framework of final exam and diploma defense.

**Criterion 3** The special commission for the final exam administration is based on the testing of knowledge acquired during the last three academic years including all courses / modules based on their importance and specific importance.

**Criterion 4** The academic staff guides and assists students in selecting their diploma thesis topics.

**Criterion 5** The institution assists students in carrying out measurements, analyzes, and tests in or outside institution premises, according to the specific objectives and scope of study.

**Criterion 6** Diploma Thesis Mentor assists the student in producing and processing the relevant results, as well as in drafting the thesis according to the approved instructions and guidelines. He guarantees the quality of the results and approves whether or not the work is complete and appropriate to be presented before the commission.

**Criterion 7** At the end of the exam or diploma defense, the student is evaluated with a final grade.

**Criterion 8** At the end of studies, the student is provided with a diploma and its supplement licensed by the ministry responsible for education.

**Criterion 9** At the end of the studies, a full official copy of the study program is made available to the student.

**Criterion 10** The institution retains a copy of the students’ documentation for an indefinite period of time and issues attestations to the students, on a case-by-case basis, if required.

#### **IV. HUMAN, FINANCIAL, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND LOGISTICS RESOURCES FOR STUDY PROGRAM DELIVERY**

<b>Standard IV.1</b>	<b>The Higher Education Institution follows transparent legal procedures on recruiting, evaluating and selecting staff for the study program.</b>
<b>Criterion 1</b>	The Higher Education Institution collects, stores and updates each academic year the data of the personnel engaged in the study program. These data include the academic staff involved in the program and the person responsible for organizing the study program, workload and academic staff engagement in each academic semester and year, as well as the teaching and the scientific support staff.
<b>Criterion 2</b>	The Higher Education Institution drafts and implements procedures for academic staff recruitment, in accordance with the applicable legal basis and the institution's internal regulatory.
<b>Criterion 3</b>	The Higher Education Institution drafts special and specific procedures and criteria, for the of staff recruitment, which are part of regulatory acts and makes them public.
<b>Criterion 4</b>	The Higher Education Institution follows recruitment and evaluation procedures based on the announced general and specific criteria that ensure the selection of staff with the appropriate level of qualification and in accordance with the nature, structure, modules and the study program content.
<b>Standard IV.2</b>	<b>The Higher Education Institution is mainly responsible for the quality of staff who cover the study program and support for performing tasks efficiently and effectively.</b>
<b>Criterion 1</b>	The institution is committed to provide the staff with the appropriate environment and equal opportunities for performing their tasks professionally.
<b>Criterion 2</b>	The institution is committed to provide staff who administers the study program with continuous training and further professional development.
<b>Criterion 3</b>	The institution organizes specific programs regarding innovative teaching methods and use of new technologies for academic and scientific research staff's further professional qualification.
<b>Criterion 4</b>	The Higher Education Institution demonstrates an optimal employee commitment to meet second cycle study programs' objectives.

- Standard IV.3**      **The Higher Education Institution makes available the learning premises and the appropriate infrastructure for the delivery of study programs’ teaching process and practical training, according to the nature and area of the study program.**
- Criterion 1**      The institution provides sufficient and appropriate teaching facilities for the development of theoretical teaching activity, depending on the number of students and study groups, in accordance with the specific nature of the study program and respective modules.
- Criterion 2**      Learning premises such as classrooms, labs, studios and the like are equipped with electronic and information technology devices that guarantee the realization of the theoretical and practical teaching process through the use of contemporary teaching methodology and technology.
- Criterion 3**      Laboratories, studios, ateliers or other premises, according to the specific nature of the program, shall contain the necessary equipment and tools to meet module requirements, theoretical and practical training, and the overall study program objectives.
- Criterion 4**      The institution provides at least one information technology lab, equipped with advanced programs appropriate to the area of the study program/s it provides.
- Criterion 5**      The institution guarantees, with its available capacities and / or in cooperation with other institutions and entities that the premises are sufficient, appropriate and dedicated for the development of professional training and other practical activities.
- Standard IV.4**      **The Higher Education Institution provides students with learning support premises, library, special learning premises and the necessary literature to support the learning process for the students of each study programs.**
- Criterion 1**      The institution makes available to students the resources library, thus guaranteeing students equal access to the study program.
- Criterion 2**      The library should be equipped with the necessary literature such as: basic textbooks, recommended literature, both in Albanian and foreign languages, necessary and appropriate books or journals to cover all modules and courses according to each study programs.
- Criterion 3**      The institution should enable the adequate conditions for students’ equal access to the on-line library for each study program course.
- Criterion 4**      The library should be equipped with computer programs and other technical equipment, enabling unrestricted use by all students.

- Criterion 5** The institution should develop and implement a detailed plan for adding new items to the library and updating the existing fund in order to assist the students of each study programs.
- Criterion 6** The library schedule (opening hours) should be in line with the teaching process schedule, but not limited to, and beyond, appropriate to students number and needs, as well as its capacity.
- Standard IV.5** **The Higher Education Institution has an internal institutional management system, which is made available to the management, information and monitoring of academic, financial and administrative activity for the study programs.**
- Criterion 1** The institution has in place a management system for the management of all student-related information and activity from enrollment to the study programs up to graduation.
- Criterion 2** The internal management system manages the information, documentation and activities of, research staff, administrative staff and partners involved in the program implementation.
- Criterion 3** The management system provides dedicated access to information and documents for all study program staff and students.
- Criterion 4** The management system has integrated platforms and modules that enable interactive communication and information exchange among staff and students.
- Criterion 5** The management system guarantees real-time monitoring of academic and administrative activity and enables individual and real-time reporting to management and unit heads.
- Criterion 6** Information related to the study programs, academic staff, and the various events and activities is published in the website in at least two languages, one of which is Albanian.
- Standard IV.6** **The Higher Education Institution guarantees the necessary financial support for the implementation of the teaching / research process, study program progress and students' support.**
- Criterion 1** The institution drafts a financial report on the study program costs and the financial support plan required for the study program progress for at least one full cycle study program.

- Criterion 2** A study program funding plan should include funding for human resources made available to the program implementation, operating costs for premises maintenance and teaching process support technologies, library and literature enrichment costs, and access to on-line libraries, financial obligations, national or international grants received and service contracts on the study program performance, and other items, according to its specific nature.
- Criterion 3** The institution conducts an annual audit, assesses and documents the financial situation and its financial effectiveness. The financial report contains a detailed financial statement of income deriving from tuition fees and other financial contributions for students or financial resources allocation.
- Criterion 4** At the end of each full cycle study program, the institution documents the financial reports for the past three academic years and plans the special interventions and eventual diversification of the program funding to ensure its smooth performance and progress.
- Criterion 5** The Higher Education Institution must demonstrate that it guarantees financial sustainability throughout the development of the study program and has the necessary financial capacity to improve the financial situation and generate the necessary income in the future.

## V. STUDENTS AND THEIR SUPPORT

- Standard V.1** **The Higher Education Institution drafts, follows and implements policies and procedures on students admission, selection, progress, transfer, knowledge assessment and graduation in the study program.**
- Criterion 1** The institution develops and implements policies and procedures that cover the full academic cycle study program, from enrollment to university up to graduation, in accordance with applicable legislation and regulatory acts.
- Criterion 2** Policies and procedures from enrollment to graduation guarantee equality and equal rights to all study program applicants and students.
- Criterion 3** Students' admission and selection criteria and procedure, progress throughout the attendance of the study course, transfer, recognition of previous or part-time studies, competence assessment and graduation are easily understandable and accessible to the public.
- Criterion 4** The institution drafts and publishes at the beginning of each academic year the criteria for the selection of candidates to be admitted to the second cycle study program.

<b>Criterion 5</b>	Prior to the beginning of each academic year, the institution instructs the public and interested parties on study program general and specific criteria and requirements.
<b>Standard V.2</b>	<b>The Higher Education Institution makes available to the students of the study program detailed and comprehensive information on the academic progress, recognition, and knowledge assessment up to the studies completion and graduation.</b>
<b>Criterion 1</b>	The institution provides full and detailed information on the criteria and procedures for students' academic progress and transition from one academic year to the other.
<b>Criterion 2</b>	The institution informs students about diploma recognition procedures and criteria regarding previous qualifications or part-time studies.
<b>Criterion 3</b>	The institution informs students about the criteria and procedures on knowledge and skills assessment during the study program.
<b>Criterion 4</b>	The institution informs students about study program graduation criteria and procedures.
<b>Criterion 5</b>	Before the beginning of and throughout each academic year, the institution publishes special directives and organizes briefings to inform potential students and current students about the study program.
<b>Standard V.3</b>	<b>The Higher Education Institution provides students with comprehensive and detailed information on training objectives, structure, organization, study program content, expected learning outcomes and employment opportunities.</b>
<b>Criterion 1</b>	The students are thoroughly informed on study program design, organization and duration.
<b>Criterion 2</b>	The institution provides study program students with the necessary information and documentation on course content and training activities.
<b>Criterion 3</b>	The institution informs students on employment opportunities as well as institutional support on career counseling and labor market.
<b>Criterion 4</b>	Students are provided with extensive and up-to-date information on the teaching process development and organization, logistics, infrastructure and services in order to accomplish it.
<b>Criterion 5</b>	Information about the study program is provided through the internal information management system and should be easily accessible even to distance students.

<b>Standard V.4</b>	<b>The Higher Education Institution collects, manages, updates and maintains detailed information about the number of students attending the second cycle study programs from their admission to university, as well as employment/career data through an internal IT management system.</b>
<b>Criterion 1</b>	The institution produces annual statistics on the number of current and graduated students in each study program.
<b>Criterion 2</b>	The institution produces annual statistics on the number of students enrolled to the second cycle study programs, dropouts during the or before the end of the program, or the successful completion of the academic year in which the study programs are delivered.
<b>Criterion 3</b>	The institution possesses data on the students' progress throughout the study programs course from their admission up to their graduation.
<b>Criterion 4</b>	Student statistical data are managed through the internal information system and must be secured and easily accessible to authorized persons.
<b>Criterion 5</b>	The institution should develop periodic monitoring reports on incoming and exiting students' profile and quality, as well as their employment rate, along with appropriate measures to improve these indicators.
<b>Standard V.5</b>	<b>The Higher Education Institution includes and engages students in decision-making and advisory bodies such as drafting, approving, reviewing and improving the study programs, teaching methods and the quality of provided resources and services.</b>
<b>Criterion 1</b>	The institution envisages students and their representatives' involvement and engagement in decision-making and advisory bodies, according to HEI legal and regulatory acts of the HEI.
<b>Criterion 2</b>	The Higher Education Institution should ensure that students and / or their representatives' involvement in decision-making, counseling or evaluation on the academic process be realistic, specific, productive and with easily verifiable and measurable results.
<b>Criterion 3</b>	In designing and improving the study programs, the institution should take into account the academic load of students in the study program and the provision of the student progress procedures throughout the program, including recognition of their full or partial study programs.

- Criterion 4** The Higher Education Institution guarantees the students' involvement in drafting, reviewing and improving the study programs on a regular basis and reflects their suggestions and contributions.
- Criterion 5** Students are encouraged to give their input on equality and knowledge assessment and control transparency, including their right to appeal with the responsible body / unit / lecturer the result, assessment, and evaluation awarded.
- Standard V.6** **The institution has special units and procedures for student admission, induction, counseling, complaints and issues management, as well as a problem-solving strategy which are easily accessible and usable by students.**
- Criterion 1** The institution has a special units and procedures which ensure student information and assistance in accordance with the legal provisions and HEIs regulatory acts of.
- Criterion 2** The institution has set up and introduce da special system for student information, counseling, progress and assistance in matters related to the teaching process and study program.
- Criterion 3** The institution provides students with career counseling assistance. The Career Counseling Office / Unit welcomes students continuously and periodically, providing specific information and guidance in terms of completing the learning process, selection and induction regarding professional training in other institutions (internships), and also advises them on labor market.
- Criterion 4** The Career Office / Unit follows-up students after graduation, by collecting, processing and storing data on the type and quality of study program student employment and makes them available to students, relevant bodies and authorities.

## **VI. STUDY PROGRAMS' QUALITY ASSURANCE**

- Standard VI.1** **The Higher Education Institution drafts and implements transparent policies and procedures on the study programs' quality assurance within the framework of internal quality assurance system.**
- Criterion 1** The Higher Education Institution has in place policies, structures and procedures for Internal Quality Assurance (IQS), in accordance with applicable legal and sub-legal provisions and with institutional regulatory acts.

<b>Criterion 2</b>	The institution has established and introduced the Internal Quality Assurance System and implements an institutional strategy for continuous quality improvement, including students and external partners and experts.
<b>Criterion 3</b>	The institution uses the appropriate quality assurance instruments. External Quality Assurance in Higher Education is realized through external accreditation assessment processes, analytical and comparative evaluations, as well as other processes that promote and improve quality.
<b>Criterion 4</b>	The Higher Education Institution has drafted a clear policy and follows periodic procedures to ensure and improve the quality of the study programs it provides, within the IQA framework. They aim to create a quality culture at the institutional level, the constituent units and all institutional internal actors.
<b>Standard VI.2</b>	The Higher Education Institution monitors and evaluates periodically through the special units the study programs to ensure training objectives achievement and the intended learning outcomes.
<b>Criterion 1</b>	The Higher Education Institution establishes a special unit for monitoring, reviewing, and supervising the second cycle study programs.
<b>Criterion 2</b>	The institution uses formal and documented processes and mechanisms for reviewing, approving and supervising the second cycle study programs periodically.
<b>Criterion 3</b>	The Higher Education Institution uses assessment methodology, measuring instruments and evaluation instruments for the study programs' progress and success.
<b>Criterion 4</b>	The results of these assessments are documented and put forward to the responsible and decision-making authorities for the study program.
<b>Criterion 5</b>	The evaluation reports should include the expected results, the assessment results of and the measures taken to address the issues and the ongoing quality improvement.
<b>Standard VI.3</b>	<b>The institution makes use of assessment procedures, methodologies, and instruments for the study program opening, development, and progress; graduation, entering the labor market as well as students' further studies.</b>
<b>Criterion 1</b>	The study program internal evaluation is periodically performed by the relevant internal quality assurance unit. The Higher Education Institution

incorporates this information in the institutional self-assessment procedure within the accreditation and rating framework.

**Criterion 2** In order to carry out the assessment, the institution uses various appropriate and adequate methods and instruments, in line with the nature and features of the study program scope.

**Criterion 3** In the framework of evaluating study program performance and quality, the Higher Education Institution employs direct methods such as: quality assessment of teaching, didactics, curricula, learning outcomes; parallel assessment of student examinations or assignments, direct observations in the auditorium during exercises / practice, local or standardized tests, results achieved in inter-institutional or national tests such as state exam for regulated professions etc.

**Criterion 4** In the framework of study program quality and performance evaluation, the Higher Education Institution uses indirect assessment methods and instruments such as: students, graduates (alumni), and academic staff's surveys and interviews; academic and administrative assistance, employers and institutions that cooperate for the study program delivery and other parties involved in conducting the assessment of knowledge and competences acquired during this program.

**Standard VI.4** The Higher Education Institution includes academic units, staff and students in the study programs IQA process and informs interested parties on the results and the subsequent action plan.

**Criterion 1** The institution should provide for and guarantee the involvement of internal and external actors, interested in ensuring and improving the study program in internal quality policies and procedures.

**Criterion 2** The institution defines the specific responsibilities and tasks of main units, individuals, students and other parties engaged in the study program internal quality assurance, and guarantees the responsible performance of these tasks.

**Criterion 3** During study program assessment and quality assurance it is important to guarantee the inclusion of the main unit responsible for the study program, academic staff, academic and administrative assistants and study program students.

**Criterion 4** Internal actors inclusion and engagement in the continuous assessment procedures should observe the academic integrity and avoid any kind of discrimination or inequality against staff and students.

- Criterion 5** Partners and / or external experts, who are related to the study program, or can provide valuable expertise and input about the program quality and improvement should actively participate in the assessment and internal quality assurance processes.
- Standard VI.5** **Policies, processes and activities for the study program Internal Quality Assurance should be made public, transparent, and effective, with the view to establish an Internal Quality Assurance Culture.**
- Criterion 1** The policy, strategy, organization and activities within the framework of study program IQA system are transparent and are made public to all students and parties concerned.
- Criterion 2** The Higher Education Institution publishes the results of the study programs assessment, by observing the academic freedom and ethics, as well as the legislation on personal data.
- Criterion 3** The assessment results should go along with an action plan designed to address and improve the identified weaknesses and issues.
- Criterion 4** The institution assesses and ensures activities' effectiveness and impact in the framework of monitoring and quality assessment, with the view to ensure the ongoing study program improvement.
- Criterion 5** The institution organizes periodic activities with staff and students for their information and awareness raising on the long-term quality assurance and study program improvement.