



**STANDARDS FOR INITIAL ACCREDITATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION
INSTITUTIONS AND STUDY PROGRAMS**

Banja Luka, 2021

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PREFACE

Since the establishment of the Higher Education Accreditation Agency of the Republic of Srpska in 2011, significant progress has been made in the area of quality assurance in higher education in the Republic of Srpska. Quality assurance plays a key role in the development of the higher education system and other systems connected to it, and is one of the most important strategic goals of the Republika Srpska in this area. That is why the Republika Srpska decided to pass a special law in the area of quality assurance. The Law on Quality Assurance in Higher Education of the Republika Srpska (hereinafter: the Law)¹, which came into force in July 2020, stipulates that the Higher Education Accreditation Agency of the Republic of Srpska grows into the Agency for Higher Education of the Republika Srpska (hereinafter : Agency), with new competencies in the field of initial accreditation and recognition of foreign higher education qualifications.

The law stipulates that the Agency conducts an external evaluation procedure for the purpose of initial accreditation, in which it is checked whether the higher education institution, university member and/or study program meet the Standards for the initial accreditation of higher education institutions and study programs (hereinafter: Standards). The procedure of external evaluation for the purpose of initial accreditation and the method of verifying the fulfillment of the Standards is governed by the Rulebook on the Initial Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programs. It is prescribed that the Standards are an attachment to the Rulebook on initial accreditation of higher education institutions and study programs and that they form an integral part of it. In accordance with the Law, the Standards are adopted by the Director of the Agency, on the proposal of the Steering Board of the Agency and upon the opinion obtained from the Council for Higher Education of the Republika Srpska. The development of the Standard included consultations with partner organizations and institutions in order to reach a consensus on how to improve the field of higher education through external evaluation for the purpose of initial accreditation of higher education institutions and study programs.

¹ "Official Gazette of the Republic of Srpska", number 67/20

I STANDARDS: PURPOSES AND PRINCIPLES

One of the basic goals in the field of quality assurance is the building of a culture of quality, to which all actors in higher education should be committed: from academic staff and students to the management and professional services of the higher education institution. Through the development of a culture of quality, the involvement of all interested parties, especially students, in quality assurance processes and the development of society and economy is encouraged.

The system of quality assurance in higher education of the Republic of Srpska is based on partnership relations with higher education institutions, students and other interested parties, the development of the system of quality assurance of higher education in accordance with the Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)², openness, professionalism and ethics in all processes of quality assurance, and independence in the processes of external evaluation and objectivity of decisions about outcomes.

The standards are an integral part of the quality assurance system of higher education in the Republic of Srpska.

The purpose of the Standard is to improve the quality of higher education in the Republic of Srpska, encourage the creation of a perspective environment for the development of careers of highly educated experts in the Republic of Srpska, and build trust between all interested parties in the higher education system.

The standards are based on the principles of supporting the development of a culture of quality, taking into account the needs and expectations of students, other interested parties and society, and the responsibility of the higher education institution for its quality and its provision.

² Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

II STANDARDS FOR INITIAL ACCREDITATION

1. Goals and basic tasks of a higher education institution

Standard 1:

The reasons for establishing a higher education institution are aligned with the Network of Higher Education Institutions and other strategic documents in the field of higher education, the needs and priorities of society's development, the improvement of the qualification structure, the development of professions and science, and the existence of conditions for higher education. The higher education institution has adopted basic goals and tasks in accordance with the goals of higher education established by law.

Guidelines for the application of standard 1:

1.1. In the elaboration on the justification of the establishment, the founder states the reasons for the establishment, goals and tasks.

1.2. The basic tasks of the higher education institution, briefly expressed, are determined by the temporary management body of the higher education institution.

1.3. The goals of the higher education institution determine the concrete results that the higher education institution wants to achieve and represent the basis for controlling its work.

1.4. The goals are concrete, achievable and measurable and more closely determine the activity of the higher education institution.

1.5. All activities of the higher education institution, especially the development of study programs, are in accordance with the established basic tasks and goals of the higher education institution.

2. Internal mechanisms for quality assurance

Standard 2:

The higher education institution adopts a quality assurance strategy that contains the basic elements of the internal quality assurance system.

Guidelines for the application of standard 2:

2.1. The higher education institution establishes a clearly and detailed strategy for ensuring the quality of the teaching process, management of the higher education institution, non-teaching activities, as well as working and studying conditions.

2.2. The higher education institution plans to form a committee for quality assurance, made up of teachers, associates, non-teaching staff and students.

3. Organization of a higher education institution

Standard 3:

The founder of a higher education institution has temporary authorities that enable the execution of the necessary activities necessary for obtaining a work permit. The organizational structure and management system ensure the achievement of the goals and tasks of the higher education institution.

Guidelines for the application of standard 3:

3.1. The number and composition of the temporary management bodies of the institution correspond to the requirements for the performance of higher education activities.

3.2. The authorities of the higher education institution organize work on the preparation of curricula and necessary profiles of teachers, as well as other documentation required for initial accreditation.

4. Studies

Standard 4:

The activity of higher education is achieved through academic and professional studies. Academic study qualifies students for work in science, art and higher education, in the real and public sector, and for the development and application of scientific, artistic and professional achievements. Vocational studies provide students with an appropriate level of knowledge and skills that enable them to perform professional occupations and equip them for direct involvement in the work process. The content of qualifications and diplomas of certain types and levels of study correspond to the character and goals of the study programs. The description of the qualifications of each study program must be precisely defined and correspond to a certain level of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). The study programs of the higher education institution are in accordance with the basic tasks and goals and serve their fulfillment.

Guidelines for the application of standard 4:

4.1. Guidelines for the application of the part of the standard that refers to the type and degree of study:

4.1.1. Each study program is a connected and coordinated whole that includes goals, structure and content, policy and procedure of student enrollment, learning methods and methods of knowledge assessment, learning outcomes and student competencies.

4.1.2. A higher education institution offering multiple study programs ensures that all programs meet basic quality standards and that there is a necessary degree of consistency between them.

4.1.3. The higher education institution publishes the objectives of each of the study programs it runs. Objectives include the attainment of specific knowledge and expertise and the methods for acquiring them. Goals may include developing creative abilities and mastering specific practical skills needed for career development.

4.1.4. The study program of the first and second cycle of studies determines the point value of each subject expressed in accordance with ECTS. The study program of the third cycle of studies determines the point value of the course, published scientific/artistic works, presentation of scientific results and dissertations expressed in accordance with ECTS. The number of credits in accordance with ECTS required for obtaining a diploma is regulated by law.

4.1.5. The higher education institution submits study programs and evidence of the compatibility of the individual study program, for the most part, with at least three study programs that are conducted at accredited higher education institutions in countries that are signatories to the Bologna Declaration.

4.1.6. The structure of the study program is based on the development of the competencies of graduated students, and the learning outcomes that express what the student will know, understand or be able to do after completing the education process on the study program.

The starting point for planning the curriculum based on the learning outcomes are the competencies of the graduated students. Therefore, the study program must have defined learning outcomes, course content and methods of working with students. Learning outcomes must be defined at the level of each cycle of the study program, as well as at the level of each subject within the cycle.

4.1.7. At the level of the study program, it is necessary to create a matrix of learning outcomes that allows insight into the mutual compatibility of learning outcomes at the level of the study program and at the level of all subjects studied during the course of study in such a way that the learning outcomes of each subject must contribute to the learning outcomes at the level of the study cycle, and that all learning outcomes at the cycle level must be achieved through different subjects.

Student competencies and learning outcomes must be logically connected in such a way that the learning outcomes are statements of what competencies the student should acquire after successfully completing the study process, with the fact that the acquired competencies may exceed the learning outcomes.

Learning outcomes must be logically linked to ECTS credits, where learning outcomes represent the content and ECTS credits represent the amount of learned content. In the context of linking learning outcomes and ECTS credits, it is necessary to take into account the available time that the student must devote to the duties within the given subject and the student's ability to achieve the planned outcomes in that time.

4.1.8. It is recommended that learning outcomes be defined in accordance with one of the existing methodologies using different hierarchical levels of learning (factual knowledge, understanding, application, analysis/synthesis, evaluation and creation).

4.2. Guidelines for the application of the part of the standard that refers to the qualifications acquired by students:

4.2.1. Qualifications acquired by students at the end of the first cycle of academic studies:

- knowledge and understanding of basic principles in the field of study,
- recognition of problems that arise in practice and the possibility of their quick and efficient solution,
- ability to work in a team in a multidisciplinary environment,
- spreading and monitoring the development of the latest achievements, recognizing the need and possibilities of applying those achievements,
- developed skill of independent education.

4.2.2. Qualifications acquired by students at the end of the second cycle of academic studies:

- knowledge and understanding from the field of study that complements the knowledge acquired in the previous study cycle and represents the basis for developing critical thinking and application of knowledge,
- ability for independent or team scientific research work, leading a research project and involvement in modern scientific and professional achievements,
- the ability to independently perceive problems and tasks that need to be solved through specific research, which can increase the efficiency and economy of a certain procedure or system,
- the ability to integrate knowledge, solve complex problems and reason based on available information about social and ethical responsibility for applying their knowledge.

4.2.3. Qualifications acquired by students at the end of the third cycle of academic studies:

- systematic understanding of a specific field of study,
- possession of skills and methods of research in that field,
- the ability to conceive, design and implement,
- the ability to adapt the research process with the necessary degree of academic integrity,
- the ability to achieve achievements that expand the boundaries of knowledge through original research and work, which has been published and is a reference at the national and international level,
- ability for critical analysis, assessment and synthesis of new and complex ideas,
- the ability to transfer professional knowledge and ideas to colleagues, the wider academic community and society as a whole,
- the ability to promote technological, social or cultural progress in an academic and professional environment,
- the ability to spread, monitor and develop scientific and professional achievements in their field and recognize the need and opportunity to deepen, expand and apply these achievements in the environment,
- the ability to integrate knowledge, solve complex problems and reason based on available information about social and ethical responsibility for applying their knowledge.

4.2.4. Qualifications acquired by students upon completion of the first cycle of professional studies:

- knowledge and understanding of basic principles and tasks in the profession they are engaged in,
- possession of the cognitive and practical skills necessary to fulfill tasks and solve problems by selecting and applying basic methodologies, tools, materials and information,
- ability to work in a team in a multidisciplinary environment,
- adapting one's own behavior and actions to the circumstances, with the aim of solving the problem,
- developed skills of independent education,
- compliance with the professional code.

4.2.5. Qualifications acquired by students at the end of the second cycle of professional studies:

- advanced skills with demonstrated competence and innovation necessary for solving complex and unpredictable problems in a specialized field of work or study,
- specialized problem-solving skills necessary for innovation in order to create new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields,
- the ability to manage and adapt to unpredictable working or learning conditions, which requires a strategic approach.

5. Scientific research and artistic work

Standard 5:

A higher education institution that provides academic studies has organized and planned scientific research and artistic work.

Guidelines for the application of standard 5:

- 5.1.** The higher education institution has provided teachers who are participants in scientific research and artistic national and international projects.
- 5.2.** The higher education institution has a plan for scientific research and artistic work.
- 5.3.** The higher education institution has established procedures and criteria for systematic monitoring and evaluation of the scope and quality of the scientific research and artistic work of the teaching staff.

6. Academic staff

Standard 6:

The higher education institution provides the necessary number of competent teachers and associates for the quality execution of study programs.

Guidelines for the application of standard 6:

6.1. The higher education institution provides teachers and associates who meet the requirements for selection into the appropriate title, in accordance with the law. Teachers must have a valid selection for a scientific-teaching, artistic-teaching, teaching or scientific title at one of the accredited higher education institutions or scientific research organizations that have a competent electoral body in the field for which the selection is made, in accordance with the law.

6.2. The higher education institution provides teaching staff whose scientific, artistic and professional qualifications correspond to the scientific field or artistic field and the level of their responsibilities. Qualifications are proven by diplomas, published works in scientific journals and peer-reviewed collections, representative references in artistic work, as well as records of pedagogical qualities and appropriate professional experience.

In assessing the fulfillment of this standard and scientific, artistic and professional qualifications, the conditions and criteria prescribed by the law and the act regulating the conditions for selection into the profession are applied.

6.3. The total number of teachers and associates corresponds to the needs of the study programs and must be sufficient to cover the total number of teaching hours on the study programs that the institution plans to implement. In the first and second cycle of studies, the number of full-time teachers must provide at least 70% of the teaching hours in each study program. For the study program of the third cycle of study, the higher education institution must provide full-time employment at least one half of the total number of teachers required for the implementation of the study program.

When determining the number of full-time teachers on study programs in the field of medical and health sciences, teachers of clinical branches of medical sciences, who are part-time at a higher education institution and have a full-time contract with a health institution that is the teaching base of a higher education institution, will be considered full-time teachers.

6.4. For full-time teachers, the higher education institution submits evidence of meeting the requirements for selection into the appropriate title in accordance with the law, evidence of selection into the appropriate scientific-teaching or teaching title, and a concluded employment contract (with delayed effect). The mentioned persons must have the citizenship of the Republic of Srpska/BiH or a residence permit.

A teacher and associate who has an established full-time employment relationship with another employer in the country or abroad cannot have an established full-time employment relationship at a higher education institution.

6.5. A teacher achieves an average of 180 hours/240 hours in the field of art, i.e. 6 hours/8 hours of teaching per week, whereby engagement per teacher cannot exceed 10 hours/14 hours of teaching per week at all higher education institutions in the Republic of Srpska/BiH. The total workload of the teacher also includes the fund of classes that the teacher conducts for part-time students.

6.6. If the institution hires a part-time teacher, who is already employed at several higher education institutions, he teaches in each institution in proportion to the percentage of employment, whereby his total employment may not exceed 10 hours/14 hours in the field of teaching art per week at all higher education institutions where he is engaged.

6.7. The number of associates corresponds to the needs of the study programs that the institution plans to implement, whereby the associate achieves an average of 300 hours/360 hours in the field of teaching art per year, that is, an average of 10 hours/12 hours in the field of teaching art per week. Engagement per associate cannot be more than 15 hours/16 hours in the field of art teaching per week at all higher education institutions in the Republic of Srpska/BiH.

6.8. A person retired in accordance with the regulations of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina or another state cannot teach at higher education institutions in the Republic of Srpska.

7. Non-academic staff

Standard 7:

The higher education institution provides non-academic staff who, with their expert and professional work, ensure the successful implementation of study programs, as well as the basic tasks and goals of the higher education institution.

Guidelines for the application of standard 7:

7.1. For administrative and technical tasks, the higher education institution provides the appropriate number of full-time employees.

7.2. The higher education institution organizes the student service with the appropriate number of executors.

7.3. The higher education institution provides the appropriate number of executors in legal and financial affairs, librarian affairs and information system maintenance affairs.

8. Students

Standard 8:

The higher education institution determines the conditions for student enrollment, in accordance with the basic tasks of the higher education institution.

The higher education institution provides the necessary conditions for students to successfully master the study programs.

Guidelines for the application of standard 8:

8.1. The higher education institution adopts the competition for study enrollment as a planning document. The competition includes: the number of students for certain study programs, enrollment requirements, criteria for determining the order of candidates, the procedure for conducting the competition, the method and deadlines for submitting an appeal to the established order, as well as the amount of tuition paid by students whose studies are not financed from the budget, in accordance with the law.

8.2. The number of students that the higher education institution plans to enroll must be in line with personnel, spatial and technical-technological possibilities.

8.3. The higher education institution for study enrollment plans an entrance exam or an aptitude and ability test, in accordance with the law and the statute of the higher education institution.

The order of candidates is determined on the basis of the general success achieved in secondary education and the results of the entrance exam, i.e. the aptitude and ability test. In addition to the general criteria, the higher education institution can establish special criteria on the basis of which the classification and selection of candidates for admission to the higher education institution is carried out.

8.4. The teaching group consists of all students enrolled in a specific study program who attend lectures on the subjects of that study program together.

The maximum number of students in the teaching group per study program is:

a) for social sciences and humanities:

- 1) 100 in lectures and
- 2) 30 on exercises,

b) for biomedicine and healthcare, technical, biotechnical and natural sciences:

- 1) 50 in lectures and
- 2) 15 in exercises,

c) for arts and sports:

- 1) 15 in lectures and
- 2) 5 on exercises.

The minimum number of students in the teaching group per study program is:

a) for social sciences and humanities:

- 1) 30 in lectures and
- 2) 15 in exercises,

b) for biomedicine and healthcare, technical, biotechnical and natural sciences:

- 1) 15 in lectures and
- 2) 5 on exercises,

c) for arts and sports:

- 1) 5 in lectures and
- 2) 1 on exercises.

A new teaching group on the same study program is established when the number of students enrolled above the maximum number for lectures is greater than the prescribed minimum number, and the groups for exercises are determined accordingly.

8.5. Student status ends in cases provided for by law.

9. Space and equipment

Standard 9:

The higher education institution provides the space and equipment necessary for quality performance of all forms of teaching. Standards of space and equipment are determined by field of education.

Guidelines for the application of standard 9:

9.1. A public higher education institution meets the spatial requirements if it has adequate space owned, owned by the Republic of Srpska or a local self-government unit. A higher education institution for the establishment and operation of which funds are not provided from the budget of the Republika Srpska, is obliged to have appropriate space in its own ownership for the performance of higher education activities, and submit evidence of this.

9.2. The higher education institution provides space, the structure of which must meet the basic prerequisites for the teaching process and scientific research, namely:

- facilities that provide optimal surfaces of the total useful office space per one enrolled student,
- amphitheatres, classrooms, laboratories, i.e. other rooms for teaching, as well as library space and reading room, in accordance with the needs of the educational process of a certain educational-scientific, i.e. educational-artistic field,
- adequate workspace for teachers and associates,
- a place in the amphitheater, classroom and laboratory for each student.

The minimum areas of the total useful office space per one enrolled student and according to the field of education are:

- a) natural and agricultural sciences 3m²,
- b) engineering and technology 5m²,
- c) medical and health sciences 7m²,
- d) social sciences and humanities 2m² i
- d) art and sport 9m².

9.3. The higher education institution provides space for administrative tasks, namely at least two offices for the needs of the student service and the secretariat.

9.4. The space provided by the higher education institution for the needs of teaching and for the needs of the administration must meet the appropriate urban, technical-technological and hygienic conditions.

The space must be in buildings that have the necessary building and use permits.

9.5. The higher education institution provides the necessary technical equipment for modern teaching in accordance with the needs of the study program.

9.6. The higher education institution provides equipment and teaching in accordance with health and safety standards.

9.7. The higher education institution provides space for the work of the student parliament.

9.8. The higher education institution provides coverage of all subjects with appropriate textbook literature, teaching aids and teaching aids, which must be available on time and in sufficient numbers for the quality of the teaching process.

9.9. The higher education institution is obliged to have the appropriate number of computer classrooms in accordance with the number of students and the needs of the study programs. The higher education institution provides at least one computer classroom with 20 computers with Internet access for every 300 enrolled students.

9.10. The higher education institution is obliged to have at least one laboratory with 15 places for every 300 enrolled students for study programs in natural and agricultural sciences, engineering and technology, and medical and health sciences.

9.11. A higher education institution that organizes second and third cycle studies in natural sciences Both agricultural sciences, engineering and technology, and medical and health sciences, must have laboratories for performing scientific research work or have a contract with an institution that enables scientific research work to be performed. Depending on the type of study program, the higher education institution is required to have laboratories, special equipment, software and classrooms necessary for carrying out the teaching process in these study programs.

9.12. A higher education institution that conducts certain forms of study as distance education must also have special equipment and classrooms that are necessary for conducting distance education, i.e. a laboratory with professional equipment for distance learning. This laboratory should have:

- a) a single monitor/projector with an image diagonal of at least 100 cm, b) a speaker in the laboratory or headphones for each user,
- c) professional cameras and omnidirectional microphones for digital conferences, g) a computer with appropriate software and permanent high-speed Internet access and d) five desktop or personal computers with a permanent Internet connection.

The number of laboratories is determined based on the total number of hours per week necessary to perform all subjects at the institution that are performed as distance education.

10. Library, textbooks and information support

Standard 10:

The higher education institution has a suitable library supplied with the necessary textbooks for teaching and information resources and services that it uses in order to fulfill basic tasks.

Guidelines for the application of standard 10:

10.1. The higher education institution has a library stocked with literature, which, with its level and volume, provides support for the teaching process and scientific research and artistic work.

The library must have an established register of library materials in electronic and/or printed form.

10.2. The higher education institution must provide an appropriate reading area, with appropriate equipment for monitoring library contents.

10.3. The higher education institution has a general act on textbooks.

10.4. Universities where second-cycle studies are conducted should also have a subscription to at least two international reference scientific journals in the field of second-cycle study programs.

10.5. Universities where the third cycle study is conducted must have direct access to databases with scientific journals or an agreement with the institution that allows the university direct access to databases with scientific journals.

10.6. The higher education institution provides coverage of all subjects with appropriate textbook literature, including electronic editions.

10.7. The higher education institution has information equipment that is necessary for the teaching process and scientific research and artistic work.

11. Financial security of work

Standard 11:

The higher education institution provides sufficient financial resources for work, as well as for the continuation and completion of studies in the event of the institution's closure or termination of a specific study program.

Guidelines for the application of standard 11:

11.1. Higher education institutions are non-profit organizations and can be financed only from those sources that do not affect their autonomy.

11.2. The higher education institution has a financial plan for the period prescribed by law for the duration of the study program, which is an integral part of the higher education institution's business plan.

The financial plan contains clearly presented funding sources, as well as future planned income and expenses by types and dynamics.

11.3. A higher education institution for the establishment of which funds are not provided from the budget of the Republic of Srpska submits a bank guarantee in the amount of 50% of tuition fees for each student and an agreement with another accredited higher education institution from the Republic of Srpska on ensuring the completion of studies for students in case of termination of employment. Before the bank guarantee expires, the higher education institution submits a new bank guarantee to the competent ministry. The agreement with another accredited higher education institution is concluded for at least the duration of the studies, increased by two years.