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Approved

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RECOMMENDATIONS

for ANACEC experts regarding the external evaluation of the quality of study programmes in higher education in a mixed and online regime

1. These Recommendations determine the organization and conduct of the process of external evaluation of the quality of study programmes in higher education by ANACEC expert evaluators in a mixed and online regime during the state of emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. In the conditions of the quarantine conditioned by the COVID-19 pandemic, during its application, the process of external evaluation of the quality of study programmes in higher education within ANACEC will also be carried out remotely.
3. For the purposes of these Recommendations, the terms used mean:
 - ✓ *remote evaluation* – remote interaction process of ANACEC expert evaluators with those in charge of the evaluation process from higher education institutions, with various categories of beneficiaries of study programmes (bachelor's, master's and doctorate), which reflects all components of an evaluation process (objectives, content, methods, forms of organization, evaluation means and tools);
 - ✓ *remote evaluation technology* – evaluation technology carried out mostly with the help of information and communication technology, through the indirect, synchronous and/or asynchronous interaction between the members of the ANACEC external evaluation panel and the beneficiaries of the external evaluation process;

- ✓ *virtual evaluation environment* – the virtual space in which external evaluation activities of the quality of study programmes in higher education are carried out, using a variety of tools and informational resources;
 - ✓ *coordination activity* - periodic meetings of the ANACEC coordinator with the members of the external evaluation panel of study programmes in higher education, mediated by means of electronic communications and telecommunications, with the basic objective of consulting the expert evaluators in order to correctly carry out the external evaluation activities.
4. Types of remote training/evaluation/communication technologies:
 - *Asynchronous technologies* – methods of communication, which allow the transmission and reception of information at individual moments of time for each participant of the process, independently of each other: forums, email, etc.
 - *Synchronous technologies* – communication methods, which allow the exchange of information in real time: video and/or audio conferences, chats (telephone conversations and via electronic messages).
 5. The activities of external evaluation of the quality of study programmes in higher education can be carried out in a mixed mode (face-to-face and remotely, by means of information technologies) or entirely remotely.
 6. The decision on the evaluation format will be taken by the ANACEC management, in accordance with the decisions of the competent national bodies.
 7. External online (synchronous) evaluation activities will be conducted through video and audio interaction with representatives of higher education institutions and beneficiaries of study programmes in higher education.
 8. ANACEC uses the online communication platforms CiscoWebex, Google Meet or BigBlueButton for this purpose.
 9. The process of external evaluation of the quality of online study programmes in higher education will be carried out by the ANACEC external evaluation panels, as follows:
 - 9.1. The process of external evaluation of the quality of study programmes in higher education begins with an online training session for expert evaluators in accordance with the [*Methodology for training the expert evaluators of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research*](#), approved by the Governing Board of ANACEC by Decision no. 10 of December 18, 2018.
 - 9.2. At the training session, ANACEC expert evaluators are familiarized with the external evaluation procedure, the role of the expert evaluator in the external evaluation process, and will study in depth the [*Methodology of external quality evaluation for*](#)

[the authorization of provisional operation and accreditation of vocational education and training, higher education and professional continuous training study programs and institutions](#), approved by Government Decision no. 616 of May 18, 2016 with subsequent amendments, the [Guidelines for the external evaluation of bachelor's degree \(cycle I\) and integrated higher education study programs](#), [Guidelines for the external evaluation of master's degree \(cycle ii\) study programs](#), [Code of professional ethics of ANACEC](#). In the same way, the evaluators get to know the evaluation tools:

the site visit record sheet and the external evaluation report of the panel for the external evaluation of study programmes in higher education. The members of the external evaluation panel present to the ANACEC coordinator all the necessary documents for the completion of the Contract for the provision of evaluation services.

9.3. After signing the *Confidentiality agreement* and the *Declaration on their own responsibility regarding the lack of conflicts of interest*, the members of the ANACEC external evaluation panel receive online access to the Self-evaluation reports of study programmes in higher education and related annexes.

9.4. The members of the ANACEC external evaluation panel are preparing for the external evaluation of the quality of study programmes in higher education for the authorization of provisional operation/accreditation by examining the Self-evaluation reports, the related annexes, the institution's website, the normative acts in force and start completing the external evaluation report, they formulate a series of questions and draw up the list of additional documents, in case they did not find an answer to the performance indicators in the evaluated standards.

9.5. The interviews with all categories of organizers and beneficiaries of the study programmes in higher education will be organized online, by joint agreement with the higher education institutions, on the remote communication platform.

9.6. All members of the external evaluation panel and all categories of interviewees will participate in the online interviews, according to the site visit program elaborated, agreed upon with the higher education institutions. During the interviews, the members of the external evaluation panel will ask questions regarding the creation, design, development and completion of the evaluated study programmes in higher education, and the interviewed persons will answer clearly and concisely all the questions asked. The members of the external evaluation panel will record the answers received during the interviews and the additional requested documents in the site visit record sheet. The site visit record sheet is to be completed within 3 days from the beginning of the visit to the educational institution. The chairperson of the

external evaluation panel will compile the site visit record sheet and send it to the ANACEC coordinator who will check, electronically sign and send the site visit record sheet to the higher education institution by email.

- 9.7. The chairperson of the external evaluation panel will visit the higher education institution (to ascertain the situation regarding the teaching, administrative and auxiliary staff from the evaluated study programmes in higher education) and a member of the external evaluation panel (to visit the educational spaces – classrooms, laboratories, didactic workshops, fab-labs, etc., student dormitories, canteen, medical centre, gyms, etc.), accompanied by the coordinator from ANACEC of the external evaluation panel.
- 9.8. The other members of the external evaluation panel will send the chairperson of the external evaluation panel the request to examine some documents, if necessary, during the visit to the institution.
- 9.9. After the completion of the visit, the members of external evaluation panel will prepare/complete the external evaluation reports of the study programmes in higher education, will send the prepared sections to the chairperson, and the chairperson of the external evaluation panel will compile the external evaluation reports and send them to the ANACEC coordinator within 30 days.
- 9.10. The ANACEC coordinator will examine the external evaluation reports and, if necessary, will recommend to the members of the external evaluation panel the completion and clarification of some aspects identified during the interviews and the visit to the institution. After the completion of this process the external evaluation reports will be forwarded to the educational institution for familiarization and comment, if necessary.
- 9.11. If the educational institution comes with comments within 10 working days, the members of the external evaluation panel are to examine the comments received and meet in an online meeting to decide whether or not to take into account the arguments brought and the additional evidence presented and maintaining or changing the points awarded. The decision is taken by mutual agreement by all the members of the external evaluation commission and recorded in minutes.
- 9.12. Afterwards, the external evaluation reports are presented by the chairperson of the external evaluation panel to the profile committee of ANACEC for validation and, if recommendations are made, they are included in the final version of the external evaluation reports that are sent to the Governing Board for approval.

10. During the online evaluation per standards, the expert evaluators will mention the following aspects:

- 10.1. At the **accreditation standard 1. Policies for quality assurance**, the presence of the normative framework, the institutional policies for carrying out the didactic process online during the pandemic period will be monitored;
- 10.2. At the **accreditation standard 2. Design and approval of programmes**, the syllabuses will be examined (date of approval at the institutional Senate, coordination with the MER and registration, presence on the website of the higher education institution, correspondence with the normative acts in force, the quality of their form and content, the contribution to the achievement of learning outcomes, the analysis of the continuity of specialized subjects from the syllabuses for the first cycle, bachelor and second cycle, master, etc.) and the curriculum of the subjects/modules (placing on the institution's website the sheets of the subjects/modules, the correspondence of the structure of the curriculum with the institutional requirements, the evaluation of the quality of the curriculum of the disciplines/modules, the contribution of the curriculum content to the achievement of learning outcomes and the development of transversal and professional skills, etc.);
- 10.3. At the **accreditation standard 3. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment** there will be examined the forms of organization of the online teaching-learning process, the ICT tools/educational platforms used for online teaching-learning-assessment of academic results, the anti-plagiarism system used, carrying out remote internships, etc.);
- 10.4. At the **accreditation standard 4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification** there will be evaluated the presence of the e-Admission system, the analysis of the mechanism and the rate of promotion of students to the next year of studies, the analysis of the dropout rate of students from the study programme, the evaluation and graduation rate analysis and the possibility of obtaining this data from the information system implemented in the higher education institution, etc.);
- 10.5. At the **accreditation standard 5. Teaching staff**, the structure of the teaching staff at the evaluated study programme will be examined (full-time/part-time; internal/external part-time, age), the degree of correspondence of the professional qualification of the teaching staff with the field of the study programme (position held, basic/initial professional training, scientific and scientific-didactic title), the

share of teaching staff who hold scientific-didactic/honorary titles involved in teaching theoretical courses in the study programme, the achievement of the plan for editing the curricular support and scientific research activity, innovation and technological, creative transfer to the evaluated study programme, scientific publications of teaching staff, participation of teaching staff (involved in the study programme) in scientific/community research projects and at national and international scientific events, etc.);

- 10.6. At the **accreditation standard 6. Learning resources and student support** there will be evaluated the institutional framework for planning, recruitment, coordination and development of administrative and auxiliary staff from the study programme, the structure of administrative and auxiliary staff (position held, basic studies, professional qualification, age) employed at the study programme, the presence and endowment of the spaces used in the teaching and research process at the study programme (centres, incubators, research laboratories, virtual laboratories, etc.), providing students with literature and updated curricular support in physical and digital format and their accessibility, students' access to the funds of the Institutional Repository and International Scientific Databases, etc., the analysis of funding sources, tuition fees and the use of financial resources allocated in order to ensure the needs of the study programme; the share of students from the study programme benefiting from scholarships and other forms of material support, etc.;
- 10.7. At the **accreditation standard 7. Information management** there will be examined the implementation of the university management information system (UMIS) within the higher education institution, the type of information in the databases and the methods of access by students and staff of the study programme, etc.;
- 10.8. At the **accreditation standard 8. Public information**, the website of the higher education institution will be accessed, the design of the institutional web page, the content of information of public interest regarding the study programme placed on the website of the educational institution/faculty /department/ chair, the periodicity of updating the information on the institution's website, etc. will be examined;
- 10.9. At the **accreditation standard 9. On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes** there will be analysed the effectiveness of the study programme monitoring and review process, the ways of monitoring the teaching-learning-assessment activities within the online study programme, the conduct of online questionnaires on the university platforms of students regarding the teaching-learning-assessment activities within the study programme, the automatic

processing and analysis of the results of the beneficiaries' questionnaire regarding the content of the study programme, the record of the employment and the professional evolution of the graduates of the study programme in SIMU, ICT means used in the professional orientation of high school students/students, the employment rate of graduates of the study programme according to the field of professional training, etc.;

- 10.10. At the **accreditation standard 10. Cyclical external quality assurance** there will be evaluated the implementation of the e-management system of secretarial activities, the institutional procedures for communication, execution and monitoring of the provisions and recommendations of the MER and relevant ministries with reference to the study programme, the consideration of observations and the implementation of the plan of corrective measures regarding the fulfilment of the recommendations and mandatory improvement areas formulated by the members of the external evaluation panels of ANACEC/other quality assurance agencies, actions taken to develop the study programme as a result of the external evaluation.
11. The given recommendations lose their relevance once the end of the exceptional situation conditioned by the COVID-19 pandemic is decreed.
12. After returning to the external evaluation activity of the quality of study programmes in higher education in the normal regime, online evaluation elements/sequences can be used for the training of the expert evaluators of the ANACEC external evaluation panels, as well as for the interviews with various categories of beneficiaries of the evaluated study programmes.