

External review of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC) by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)

Annex 2.1: TERMS OF REFERENCE

August 2011

1. Background and Context

The Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC) is an independent public agency established in 1995. The Centre implements the external quality assurance policy in research and higher education in Lithuania and contributes to the development of human resources by enhancing mobility. The Centre was founded by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania as an expert institution.

The main mission of the Centre is to assist HEI in assuring and improving quality. The Centre fulfils this mission through:

- Assessment of the quality of higher education
- Assessment of the qualifications concerning higher education
- Provision of information on higher education systems and qualifications recognition

SKVC was granted ENQA candidate membership in 2008.

2. Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

This is a type A review, as defined in the *Guidelines for external reviews of quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area*. It will evaluate the way in which and to what extent SKVC fulfils the criteria for the ENQA membership and thus the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*. Consequently, the review will also provide information to the ENQA Board to aid its consideration of whether SKVC should be granted Full Member of ENQA. The review panel is not expected, however, to make any judgements as regards granting SKVC Full Membership in ENQA.

In addition to analysing SKVC compliance with the ENQA membership criteria, and thus with the ESG, the review aims to give background information on the context of SKVC's operation, role and tasks.

3. The Review Process

The process will be designed in the light of the *Guidelines for external reviews of quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area*.

The evaluation procedure will consist of the following steps:

- Formulation of the Terms of Reference and protocol for the review;
- Nomination and appointment of the review panel;
- Self-evaluation by SKVC including the preparation of a self-evaluation report;
- A site visit by the review panel to SKVC;
- Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report by the review panel;
- Scrutiny of the final evaluation report by the Review Committee of the ENQA Board;
- Analysis of the scrutiny by the ENQA Board and their decision regarding ENQA membership;
- Follow-up of the panel's and/or ENQA Board's recommendations by the agency.

3.1 Nomination and appointment of the review team members

The review panel will consist of five members:

- one expert with international experience in external review of the agencies of quality assurance;
- one expert with experience in the area of foreign study, research or institutional assessment;
- one expert with experience in participation in the area of Lithuanian studies, science or institutional assessment;
- one expert with teaching experience at least 1 (one on study programme) and / or at least 1 (one) performance of the research experience;
- one student expert (no lower than second higher education level)

One of the experts will be appointed as the chair of the panel and one as the secretary of the panel. At least one expert shall have good knowledge of Lithuanian language (level C1).

Current members of the ENQA Board will not be eligible to serve as reviewers.

ENQA will provide SKVC with the list of suggested experts with their respective curricula vitae to establish that there are no known conflicts of interest. The experts will have to sign a non-conflict of interest statement as regards the SKVC review.

3.2 Self-evaluation by SKVC, including the preparation of a self-evaluation report

SKVC is responsible for the execution and organisation of its own self-evaluation process and shall take into account the following guidance:

- Self-evaluation is organised as a project with a clearly defined schedule and includes all relevant internal and external stakeholders;
- The self-evaluation report is broken down by the topics of the evaluation: background description of the current situation of the Agency; analysis and appraisal of the current situation; proposals for improvement and measures already planned; a summary of perceived strengths and weaknesses;
- The report is well-structured, concise and comprehensively prepared. It clearly demonstrates the extent to which SKVC fulfils its tasks of external quality assurance and meets the criteria for the ENQA membership and thus the ESG. The report will be submitted to the review panel a minimum of four weeks prior to the site visit.

3.3 A Site Visit by the Review Panel

The SKVC will draw up a draft proposal of schedule of the site visit to be submitted to the review panel at least three months before the planned dates of the visit. The schedule will include an indicative timetable of the meetings and other exercises to be undertaken by the review panel during the site visit, the duration of which will normally be 2 days. The approved schedule shall be given to the SKVC at least two months before the dates of the visit, in order to properly organise the requested interviews.

The review panel will be assisted by SKVC in arriving to Vilnius, Lithuania.

Where appropriate, the site visit will close with an oral presentation and discussion of the major issues of the evaluation between the review panel and SKVC.

3.4 Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report

On the basis of the review panel's findings, the review secretary will draft the report in consultation with the review panel. The report will take into account the purpose and scope of the evaluation as defined under article 2. It will also provide a clear rationale for its findings with regards to each ENQA membership criteria. A draft will be submitted for comment to SKVC within two months of the site visit for comment on factual accuracy. If SKVC chooses to provide a statement in reference to the draft report, it will be submitted to the chair of the review panel within two weeks after the receipt of the draft report. Thereafter

the review panel will take into account the statement by SKVC, finalise the document and submit it to SKVC and ENQA.

The report is to be finalised within three months of the site visit and will not exceed 40 pages in length.

4. Follow-up Process and Publication of the Report

SKVC will consider the expert panel's report and inform ENQA of its plans to implement any recommendations contained in the report. Subsequent to the discussion of the evaluation results and any planned implementation measures with ENQA, the review report and the follow-up plans agreed upon will be published on the SKVC website.

5. Budget

5.1 SKVC shall pay the following review related fees:

- Chair: 17,264 Lt (5,000 EUR)
- Review secretary: 17,264 Lt (5,000 EUR)
- Other panel members (3): 31,075.20 Lt (9,000 EUR)
- Administrative overhead for ENQA Secretariat: 17,264 Lt (5,000 EUR)
- Travel and subsistence expenses (approximate): 20,716.80 Lt (6,000 EUR)

This gives a total indicative cost of 103,584 Lt (30,000 EUR) for a review team of 5 members. In the case that the allowance for travel and subsistence expenses is exceeded, SKVC will cover any additional costs after the completion of the review. However, the ENQA Secretariat will endeavour to keep the travel and subsistence expenses in the limits of the planned budget, and will refund the difference to SKVC if the travel and subsistence expenses go under budget.

6. Indicative Schedule of the Review

The duration of the evaluation is scheduled to take about 9 months, from August 2011 to April 2012:

Agreement on terms of reference and protocol for review	August 2011
Appointment of review panel members by ENQA	August 2011
SKVC begins self-evaluation	September 2011

SKVC self-evaluation completed	end of October 2011
Preparation of site visit schedule and indicative timetable	November 2011
Briefing of review panel members	December 2011
Review panel site visit	early January 2012
Draft of evaluation report to SKVC	end February 2012
Statement of SKVC to review panel if necessary	mid-March 2012
Submission of final report to SKVC and ENQA	end March 2012
Consideration of the report by ENQA and response of SKVC	April 2012
Publication of report and implementation plan	April 2012