



NEAQA Serbia

National Entity for Accreditation and
Quality Assurance in Higher Education

May 29, 2020

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

OF REPORTS OF THE PEER-REVIEW PANELS ON THE ACCREDITATION OF FIRST AND SECOND DEGREE STUDY PROGRAMS IN THE FIELD OF MEDICAL SCIENCES, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE NEW REGULATIONS WHICH CAME INTO FORCE IN MARCH 2019

- Dr. Ana Jakovljević, NEAQA Secretary -

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with new regulations on accreditation, which came into force in March 2019, peer-review panels, composed of three members, were introduced; one teacher, one student and one representative of the economy, with the task of reviewing the documentation submitted along with the request by the Higher Education Institution (HEI), as well as verifying the accuracy of the statements during the visit in order to determine the factual situation relevant to the decision on accreditation.

This thematic analysis focuses on reports of the peer-review panels on eight programs of the first and second degree in the field of medical sciences. The HEIs that submitted requests for accreditation of study programs are the following: College of Medicine of Vocational Studies "Sveti Vasilije Ostroski" Belgrade, State University in Novi Pazar, University of Belgrade - Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and University of Novi Sad - Faculty of Agriculture.

Within the mentioned number, there are reports of different types and levels of studies as shown in Table 1:

Table 1

Program type	Number
Basic Academic Studies	0
Master of Academic Studies	0
Integrated Academic Studies	1
Specialist Academic Studies	2
Basic Vocational Studies	3
Master of Vocational Studies	2
Specialist Vocational Studies	0
Total	8

Although the sample is currently small, this thematic analysis can provide a partial insight into the current situation when it comes to the reports of the peer-review panels in the field of medical sciences, but also to expand the context of observing accreditation in relation to the previous two thematic analyses that focused on the accreditation procedures of HEIS and study programs in the field of technical and technological sciences.

In the reports of the peer-review panels, that are the subject of this thematic analysis, a similar model of conduct is noticeable as in the previous analyses, so here too we should think about modifying the form and harmonizing it with the ENQA panel's reporting method, that within each standard contains a part in which the factual situation is stated, and which, is the vast majority of reports is not clearly separated as such, followed by panel comments and commendations/recommendations.

The analyzed reports generally contain a summary of the stated factual situation and a statement of the fulfillment of the standards, so it might be necessary to correct the report model with the following categories for each of the standards being analyzed: relevant facts, analysis of facts, commendations, recommendations and conclusion of the peer-review panel, in order to formulate the comments more clearly and implement them more efficiently.

Some reports contain information about the visit, while others do not provide any information on that topic, so it might be necessary to improve the reports in that segment as well. The same applies to self-evaluation reports. Additionally, regarding self-evaluation reports, it might be good to make a distinction between what the institution itself has recognized and what the peer-review panels suggests. Examples of excellence should also be better defined.

As well, one part of the report contains comments in which the institution is criticized without suggestions on how to eliminate the shortcomings. These observations must be taken into consideration.

It should also be noted that it is necessary to specify which remarks are correctable and which cannot be corrected in the time frame required to act on them, since the panels also listed those related to the technical correction of the documentation as well as recommendations related to the essential improving of the quality of the institution. An example of a possible solution to this issue, but only in the context of the time component that is required to assess the fulfillment of the standard, is found in Table 2.

Table 2

	<i>Correction of remarks</i>
<i>Short term - up to 30 or 60 days from the visit</i>	Additional documentation is submitted and the standard is considered met
<i>Medium term - up to 4 years</i>	Making a recommendation
<i>Long term - up to 7 years</i>	The standard is not met

Finally, it is observed that the description of the standard does not match the numerical rating given at the end of the report, especially in the case of the first accreditation. Although by many standards the institution is objectively at the very beginning of the development of the system, very high marks are given for the fulfillment of the standards. Also, some reports for the first accreditation do not contain recommendations for improvement.

Table 3 lists the numbers of commendations and recommendations for 8 first- and second-degree study programs according to the standards for the accreditation of study programs, while Chart 1 shows a schematic representation of the number of recommendations.

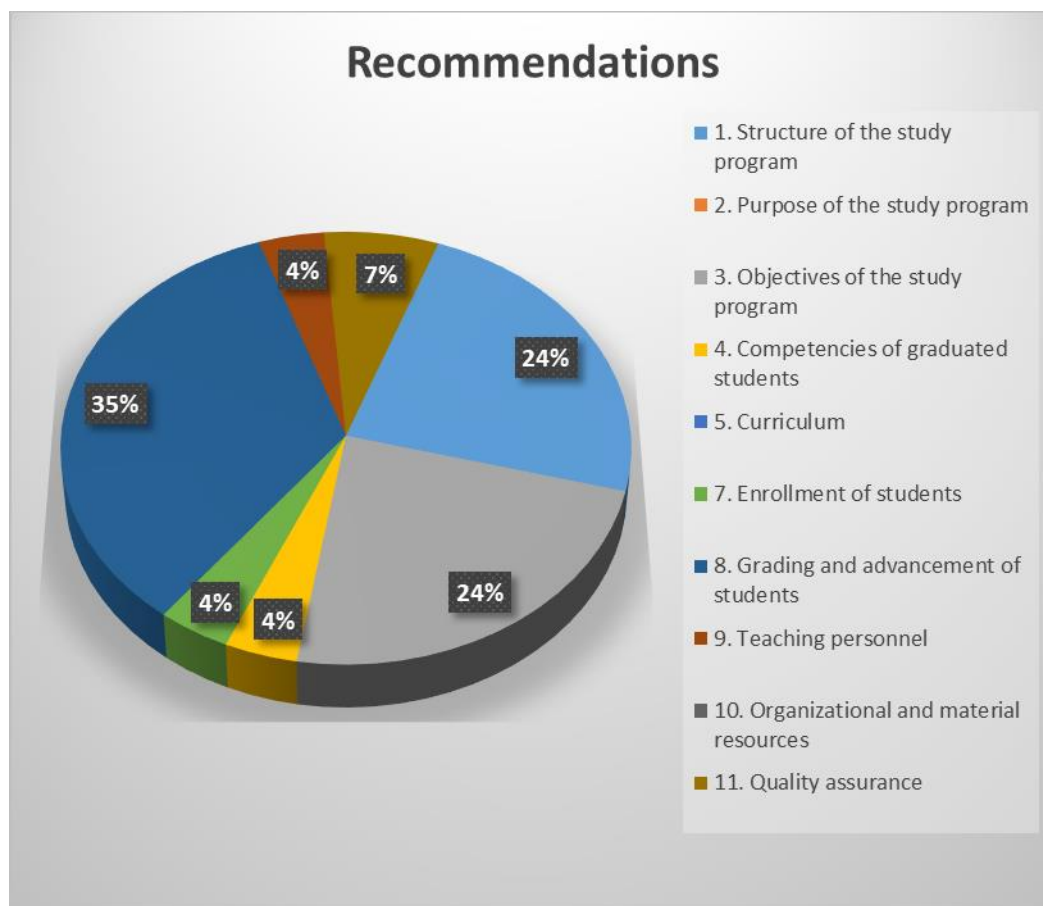
Table 3

Evaluation subject	Commendations	Recommendations
1. Structure of the study program	0	0
2. Purpose of the study program	0	0
3. Objectives of the study program	0	0
4. Competencies of graduated students	0	1
5. Curriculum	0	7
6. Quality, modernity and international compliance of the study program	0	1
7. Enrollment of students	0	0
8. Grading and advancement of students	1	1
9. Teaching personnel	1	7
10. Organizational and material resources	0	2
11. Quality assurance	0	10
Total	2	29

The table shows that the peer-review panels gave a percentage of 6.45 commendations and 93.54 percent of recommendations to institutions for improving the quality of study programs. Most of the recommendations were in the domain of Standard 11 - Quality Assurance. A more detailed analysis of commendations and recommendations according to standards for accreditation of HEIs is provided in Annex 1. In addition to the small sample, the real frequency of recommendations and commendations is difficult to measure in this analysis. Due to the application of standardized procedures, the recommendations given to the institution within one study program are very often repeated, especially in cases where panels with the same or similar composition had the task of reviewing several study programs, so multiple repetitions of recommendations and commendations were not included in the final number. Instead, the annex shows the number of recommendations and commendations that have been established for each standard.

A graphic presentation of the recommendations within the standard is provided below.

Chart 1



1. Structure of the study program
2. Purpose of the study program
3. Objectives of the study program
4. Competencies of graduated students
5. Curriculum
6. Quality, modernity and international compliance of the study program
7. Enrollment of students
8. Grading and advancement of students
9. Teaching personnel
10. Organizational and material resources
11. Quality assurance

TRENDS AND QUESTIONS ARISING FROM THE COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PEER-REVIEW PANEL

4. Competencies of graduated students

Regarding the competencies of graduated students, the panel recommended a clearer separation of general and subject-specific competencies.

5. Curriculum

Within this standard, the recommendations were in the domain of the curriculum structure, which should be more clearly defined through the subjects and an analysis of active teaching hours. Also, to precisely determine the method of defining ESPB, and for teachers and associates to familiarize themselves with the ESPB guide, the methodology of defining the study program and curriculum, the way of writing learning outcomes (cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains), methods of acquiring, building and improving students' competencies, methods of active teaching and learning and methods of evaluating student achievements.

6. Quality, modernity and international compliance of the study program

The recommendations of the panel refer to the comparability of study programs with programs from abroad and to the specification of subjects.

8. Grading and advancement of students

Within this standard, the panel commended the method of gaining points during pre-examination requirements and on the final exam, which is defined for all subjects, but not in a completely uniform manner, considering the specificity of the subjects as well as the different outcomes of individual subjects according to which the assessment methodology was determined. This is considered important in order to realize and achieve the planned learning outcomes. The recommendation within this standard referred to the provision of assessment of students' competencies based on learning outcomes through appropriate methods of evaluating student achievements.

9. Teaching personnel

Within this standard, the panel reviewed several aspects, so the recommendations refer to the quality of the teaching personnel as well as the public availability of data on teachers and associates engaged in study programs. The commendations refer to the implementation of a long-term policy of quality selection and encouragement of young personnel, which achieves a timely and planned rejuvenation of the teaching personnel.

10. Organizational and material resources

The recommendations within this standard related to the accessibility for persons with disabilities, as well as the list of equipment for modern teaching.

11. Quality assurance

Within this standard, the panel focused on several aspects related to quality assurance. The emphasis was on the necessity to innovate the quality strategy, to improve the work on self-evaluation and to eliminate the perceived deficiencies within the given deadlines. As well to increase the number of students in the Institution's Quality Commission and to improve the access to information on the website.

CONCLUSION

Regardless of the small sample in this analysis, it is still possible to draw preliminary conclusions about the working method of peer-review panels that coincide with the conclusions of previous thematic analyses, which can be useful for improving the panels' work and contribute to the standardization of reports as a basis for future thematic analyses.

In order to standardize the reports in the future, it is necessary:

1. That NEAQA clearly defines the rules of conduct of peer-review panels (on evaluation, examples of excellence, etc.);
2. To complete the report of the peer-review panels;
3. To organize additional training for reviewers;
4. To further educate the Secretariat, which should direct the work of the reviewers in the phase of preparation of preliminary reports, during the visit as well as during the preparation of the final report in accordance with the positions and conclusions of the Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance (CAQA), established on the basis of previously conducted analyses.

Annex 1

<i>Subject of evaluation</i>	<i>Subcategories</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	
		<i>Commendations</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>
4. Competencies of graduated students	Definition of competencies	0	1
5. Curriculum	Curriculum structure	0	2
	ESPB	0	4
	Name	0	1
6. Quality, modernity and international compliance of the study program	Comparability	0	1
8. Grading and advancement of students	Assessment and monitoring method	1	1
9. Teaching personnel	Quality of teaching personnel	1	2
	Teacher engagement	0	2
	Public data	0	3
10. Organizational and material resources	Space accessibility	0	1
	Equipment	0	1
11. Quality assurance	Students in the quality assurance process	0	1
	Transparency	0	1
	Planning	0	1
	Self-evaluation	0	7