

enqa.



# NAKVIS/SQAA

## ENSURING CONSISTENCY IN EQA PROCEDURES

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# INTRODUCTION



- Importance of consistency in decision-making and procedures
- The role of EQA in higher education
- Impact of enhancement oriented EQA
- Importance of ESG standards
- QA Culture based on trust: common standards and guidelines, standardized procedures and decision making, transparency and independence, reduction of administrative burden, shared values and stakeholders engagement.







# CASE STUDY: SLOVENIAN EQA MODEL

- Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education (SQAA / NAKVIS) established in 2010
- Represent public body responsible for ensuring the quality of higher education in Slovenia
- Actively involved in international quality assurance associations (ENQA; EQAR; CEENQA; INQAAHE; ECA)
- Alignment with European standards and guidelines (ESGs)
- Organizational structure: three departments, director, council as the highest decision-making body and appeal committee





## MAIN AREAS OF WORK

- Accreditation and evaluation procedures as the core activity of the Agency
- Support activities - regulation in the field of QA, analytical work, international cooperation, project work, communication, informatization
- Legal framework: Higher education Act and Criteria for the accreditation and external evaluation of higher education institutions and study programmes
- The assessments carried out by external experts from the Agency's register of experts
- Quality standards in the areas of assessment from the Agency's regulations



# AGENCY COUNCIL



- Highest decision-making body – 11 members from different stakeholders – members must act professionally, autonomously and independently – preventing conflicts of interest and maintaining impartiality
- Rules of procedure – clearly defined decision making process
- Analysis of non-compliances and recommendations – to ensure consistency of decisions
- Appeals and complaints







# SLOVENIAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

## Higher Education Institutions (HEI)

- 7 universities (3 public + 4 private)
- 1 international association of universities (EMUNI)
- 38 independent higher educational institutions (iHEI)
- 938 study programmes
- cca. 65.000 students

## Higher Vocational Colleges (HVC)

- 49 higher vocational colleges - 28 state in 21 private
- 32 study programmes
- cca. 15.000 students



# EXTERNAL QA PROCEDURES

## Types of accreditation procedures:

- Initial accreditation of a higher education institution (5 years or denied)
- Accreditation of a study programme (indefinitely or denied)
- Re-accreditation of a higher education institutions (maximum 5 years / denied)
- Accreditation of transformations of higher education institution (granted or denied)

## Types of evaluation procedures:

- Extraordinary evaluation of a higher education institution / study programme
- Evaluation of a sample of study programmes

+ External evaluation of higher vocational colleges





# PROCEDURES IN HIGHER EDUCATION – FIELDS OF ASSESSMENT

<i>INITIAL ACCREDITATION</i>	<i>REACCREDITATION WITH A REGULAR OR EXTRAORDINARY EVALUATION</i>
1. Operation of the higher education institution	1. Operation of the higher education institution
2. Human resources	2. Human resources
3. Material conditions	3. Students
	4. Material conditions
	5. Internal quality assurance and improvement, modification, updating and implementation of study programmes
<b>ACCREDITATION AND EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF A STUDY PROGRAMME</b>	
<i>ACCREDITATION</i>	<i>EXTRAORDINARY EVALUATION OR SAMPLE EVALUATION</i>
1. Structure and content of a study programme	1. Internal quality assurance and improvement of the quality of a study programme
2. Study programme implementation concept	2. Modification and updating of a study programme
	3. Study programme implementation

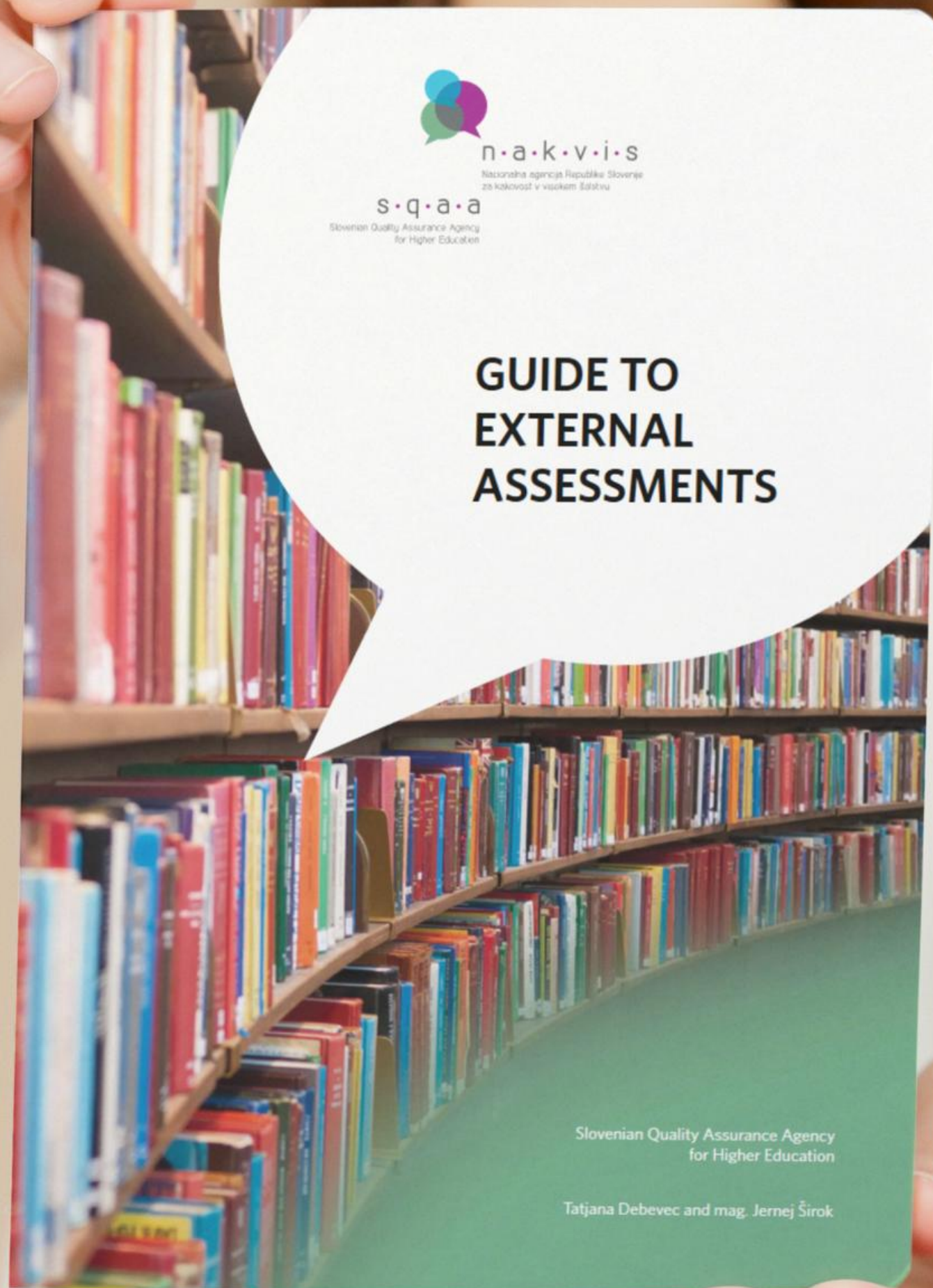




# MAPPING OF THE STANDARDS AGAINST ESG

ESG – Part 1 STANDARDS	Higher education institutions		Study programmes		Higher vocational colleges
	Accreditation (Articles 7 to 9 of the Accreditation Criteria)	Reaccreditation (Articles 10 to 16 of the Accreditation Criteria)	Accreditation (Articles 17 to 20 of the Accreditation Criteria)	External evaluation (Articles 21 to 23 of the Accreditation Criteria)	External evaluation (Articles 6 to 10 of the Criteria for External Evaluation of Higher Vocational Colleges.
(1) Quality assurance policy	ST 1, 2, 3	ST 1, 6, Article 16	ST 1, 2, 4	ST 1, 2, 3	ST 1, 6, 19
(2) Design and adoption of study programmes	ST 1, 6, 7	ST 2, 7, Article 16 (+ Chapter II.2.2)	ST 1, 2	ST 1	ST 18, 20, 21
(3) Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment	ST 3, 4, 10	ST 2, 11, 12	ST 4, 5	ST 4, 5	ST 10, 11, 12, 13, 21
(4) Enrolment, progress, recognition and validation of knowledge of students	ST 1, 2, 3	ST 6, 10, 11, 12, 13 (+ Chapter II.2.2 + Article 23)	ST 5	ST 5	ST 2, 4, 5, 9, 12
(5) Teachers	ST 6, 7	ST 3, 8	ST 4	ST 4, 5	ST 3, 8, 21, 22
(6) Learning resources and student support	ST 4, 8, 9, 10, 11	ST 4, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17	ST 3, 4	ST 4	ST 4, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17, 21
(7) Information management	ST 5	ST 5, 6	ST 1	ST 1	ST 5, 6, 15, 17, 18
(8) Information to the public	ST 1, 3	ST 5, 7	* Covered under institutional evaluation.	ST 5 (+ Chapter II.2.2)	ST 5, 7, 22
(9) Continuous monitoring and periodic assessment of study programmes	ST 1, 5 (+ Article 21, 22 + Chapter II.2.2)	ST 6, 13, Article 16	* Covered under institutional evaluation.	ST 1, 2, 3	ST 6, 13, 18, 19, 20, 21
(10) Cyclical external quality assurance	* Chapters III.3 and III.4 of the Accreditation Criteria				ST 1 (+ Chapter III.3.1 of the Criteria for External Evaluation of Higher Vocational Colleges.





- The need to ensure consistency and accuracy in our assessments
- An important help tool for all our stakeholders
- Transitioning from quantitative to qualitative evaluations
- Navigating this shift with a reliable tool
- Professionally competent assessments of an institution or study programme



# ANALYSIS



ACCREDITATION  
AND EVALUATION  
CRITERIA



THEMATIC ANALYSES,  
SELF-ASSESSMENT  
REPORTS



EXPERT REPORTS

# FINDINGS



- Identified a need for greater depth in content when assessing specific standards.
- The need for further enhancements, particularly in identifying non-compliances, strenghts and opportunities for improvement.
- Assessing compliance with certain standards necessitates more detailed clarification.
- Reports should better encompass internal specifics of institutions and diversity in studies.

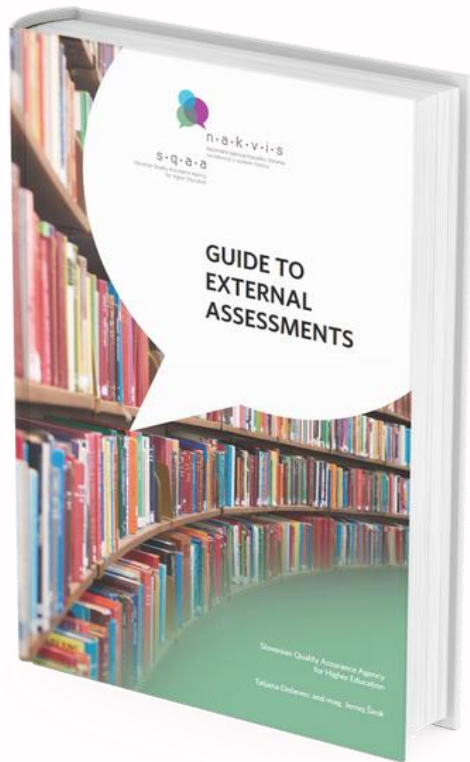


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# ASSESSMENT BY STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION OF STUDY PROGRAMME

## STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF A STUDY PROGRAMME (Article 17 of the Criteria)

Standard 1: **THE STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF A STUDY PROGRAMME ARE SUCH AS TO PROVIDE STUDENTS WITH COMPREHENSIVE KNOWLEDGE AND HELP THEM ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES SET AND THE PLANNED COMPETENCES OR LEARNING OUTCOMES.**

### Assessment criteria:

- a. consistency and cohesion of the content of individual courses and syllabi and the study programme as a whole
- b. cohesion (compliance) of objectives, competences or learning outcomes determined in the syllabi with the objectives and competences of a study programme and its content regarding the type and cycle of study

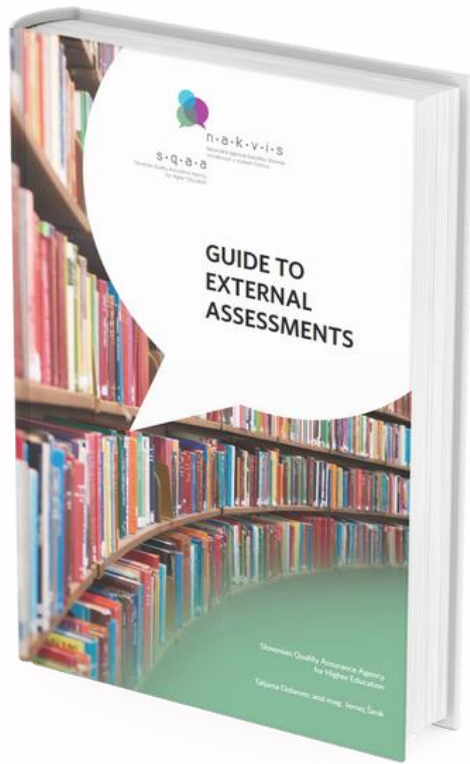
(The following shall be assessed:

- suitability (difficulty, relation between basic knowledge and specifics (specialty)) and the relevance of scientific, professional or artistic contents;
- suitability of the content (difficulty, extent) and the relevance of study literature;
- enabling the acquisition of suitable competences or learning outcomes;
- enabling the acquisition of the appropriate professional or scientific title.

Recommendation: Part of the compulsory study literature should be in the Slovenian language.)

- c. scientific, professional, research or artistic content integrated in the programme
- d. order or distribution of courses by individual semesters and years (horizontal and vertical cohesion) and their credit assessment





cohesion) and their credit assessment

(The assessment shall consider the extension, deepening and meaningful integration of the content of courses from year to year with consideration to electiveness; enabling efficient achievement and testing and assessing of knowledge, orientation towards intermediate and final objectives or competences or learning outcomes determined by the study programme and syllabi.

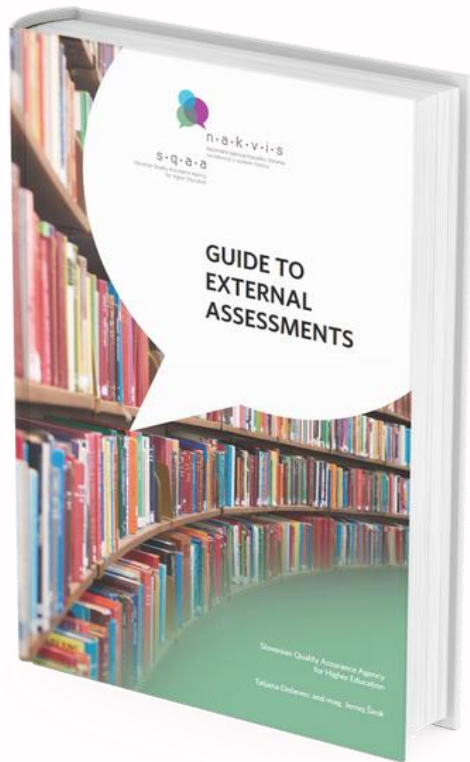
The suitability of the credit assessment of courses shall be determined according to the importance, difficulty and extent of the course (suitable balance of credit points).)

### Explanatory notes:

The assessment according to this standard and the assessment of the study programme in general **is based on the characteristics or specifics of the type and cycle of the study programme**. It should be borne in mind that on this basis, the study content and the related objectives, competencies or learning outcomes must be different from each other and in themselves demonstrate the nature, level and complexity of the study.

An assessment should also take into account other Agency criteria (ECTS).





### Most frequent examples of inadequacy in assessment:

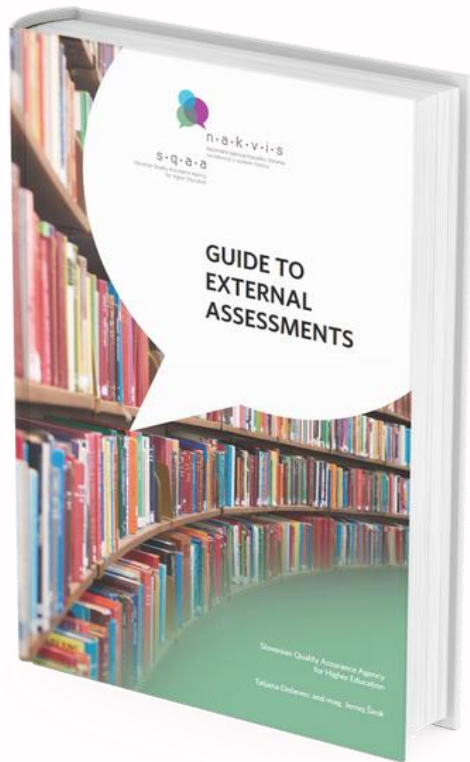
- compliance with a standard is assessed only partially, in-depth substantive assessment is sometimes missing although the provisions for it are very clear;
- uncritical copying from the application without evaluating the statements in terms of contents;
- mere enumeration of the scientific, professional or artistic work of the study programme course holders, without assessing in particular the provisions under the first indent of points a) and b); the work of course holders must be assessed according to Standard 4 in the field of "Concept of study programme implementation";
- lack of evaluation of contents integrated in the programme (point c), often only a mere enumeration; lack of an analytical view of what these contents mean for the whole programme taking into account its correspondence with the field or discipline;
- proposals for changing the curriculum (e.g. more elective courses, increasing the interdisciplinarity of studies etc.) without sound consideration and justification;
- proposals to increase the number of hours (credit points – CP) for practical training and closer links with the economy or employers without justification; lack of in-depth and weighty reflection, especially on the content, type and cycle of the study programme and the competences or learning outcomes for which it educates;
- instead of the prescribed contents, the conditions for the implementation of studies (especially for students) are assessed, although they must be assessed in the next area of assessment "Concept of study programme implementation".

### Guidelines for proper assessment:

It should be established whether:

- in view of the discipline/profession, all basic and other important contents are covered according to the goals of the study programme and the professional or scientific/artistic title;
- the contents are correctly vertically and horizontally integrated;





Too many elective courses may lead to vague educational profiles.

We should avoid recommendations such as focusing first-cycle university studies on applied and special studies; emphasising the needs of the labour market regardless of the specifics of the study programme; recommending the addition of professional and specialised courses to the detriment of theoretical and basic ones; strengthening project work in the study, etc. As a rule, university studies must be sufficiently general, broad in content, theoretically oriented, and must introduce students to science and open opportunities for further study.

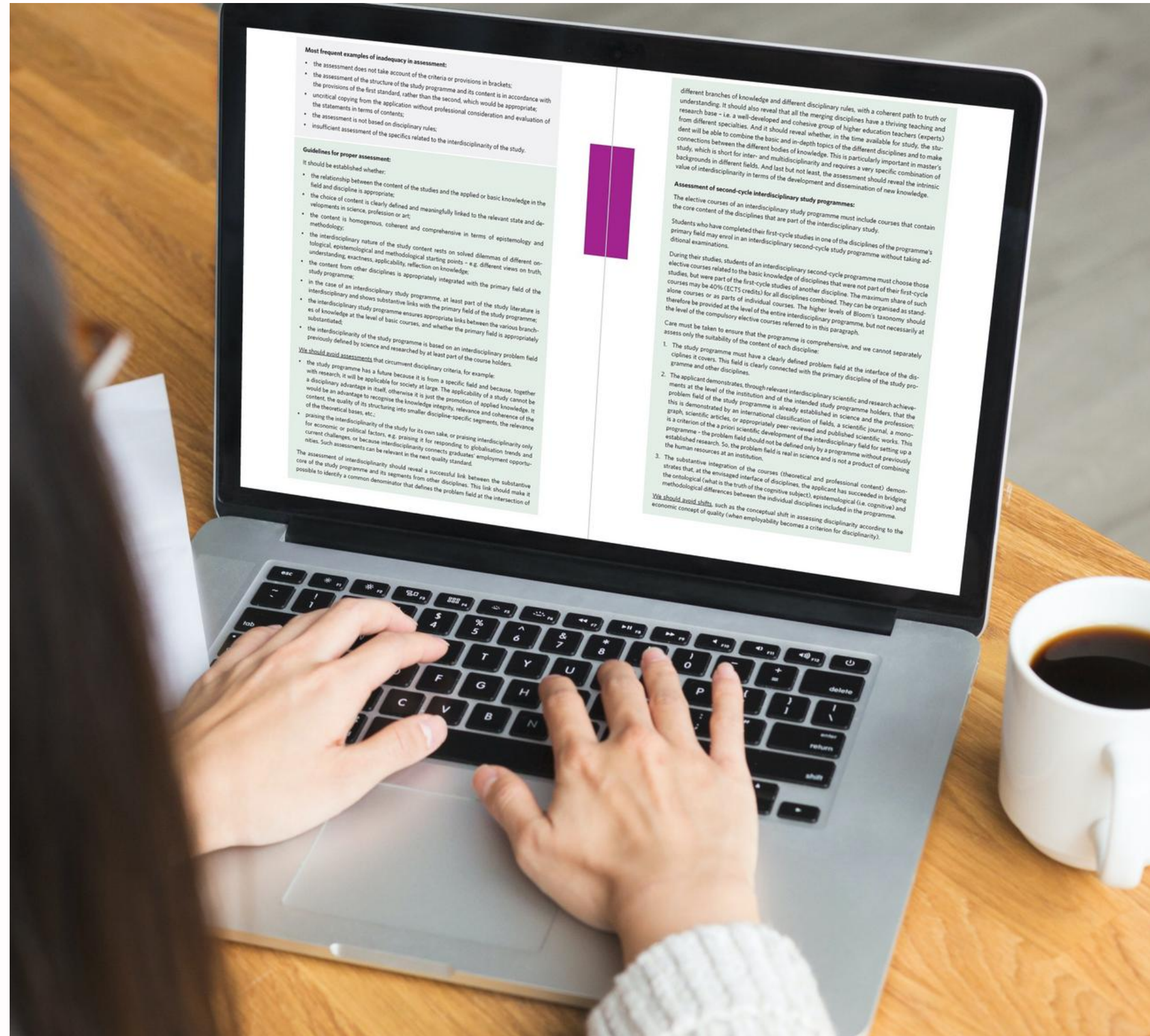
We should avoid the following:

- shift between quality and quantity, when the quality of the syllabus, i.e. its integrity and coherence, is assessed on the basis of mathematical proportions according to the number of credits of compulsory and elective and basic and specialised courses. Such quantitative relationships do not allow to draw conclusions about the coherence, balance, complexity, quality or distribution of study content – this requires an analysis of content, analysis of learning outcomes or competences, and analysis of study literature;
- shift between quality and quantity, common in counting publications and research projects, which is then the basis of direct proclamation of quality of research without recognising its intrinsic value and achievements related to the content of the accredited study programme;
- phase shift in the assessment of study content: despite an in-depth analysis of the study content, which highlights the content-related problems in the curriculum, the assessment ends



# SUMMARY

- A comprehensive and complex tool
- A reference point during the assessment process
- Continuous updates for further improvements



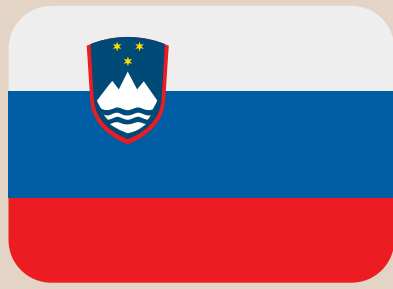


# GROUPS OF EXPERTS



## Composition and conditions

- at least three members (at least foreign expert and one student) \*special conditions for each procedure are outlined in the Criteria for experts
- no conflict of interest (checked with the assessed institution)
- protection of personal and other sensitive data (professional and business secrecy) - statement
- exclusion – if necessary
- public expert reports



## REGISTER OF EXPERTS

### SLOVENIAN EXPERTS

- app. 200 experts: teachers, students, employers and other persons who are involved in quality assessment
- Criteria for experts (conditions for entry): general conditions, specific conditions for accreditation of institutions / study programmes / higher vocational colleges
- Public call for experts – periodically published (shortage fields + students + other needs)
- Commission for the assessment of experts (members of the agency Council)
- 2 part compulsory training: theoretical (carried out by the agency staff) + practical (visit observation) → candidate evaluation → commission / agency council makes the final decision
- 5 year entry into the register; after this period their work is re-evaluated (re-entry or removal)
- Student entry is tied to their students status
- Continuous education: training or consultations organised by the agency



## FOREIGN EXPERTS

- Part of each SQAA procedure – except the evaluation of higher vocational colleges
- Database of app. 450 foreign experts
- evaluators from foreign agencies entered in EQAR or experts from the field of quality assessment in higher education
- ENQA Call for international experts
- ESU Cooperation agreement
- Requirements for foreign experts (fluency in English, experience with quality assurance, familiarity with ESG standards..)



# INDEPENDENCE

- Core value – ESG 3. 3. – core value of SQAA
- Key conditions to ensure independence in our procedures: legal framework, role and structure of the agency bodies, autonomy in decision making
- Mechanisms for Preventing Conflicts of Interest: conflict prevention measures, clear complaint and appeal procedures, training and awareness raising, international experts, international collaboration





# GOAL



- All institutions should provide quality and comparable studies
- Accreditation demonstrates quality and is granted by the agency
- Study programmes and institutions must meet the quality standards in different areas of assessment, while also properly evolve and develop
- A guarantee that the students will obtain a publicly valid education
- The study programme demonstrates sufficient quality
- The study programme meets the expectations of students, society and employers
- Consistency is key!



# If you want to learn more...





# THANK YOU.

## ANY QUESTIONS?



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Nacionalna agencija Republike Slovenije  
za kakovost v visokem šolstvu

s·q·a·a

Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency  
for Higher Education