

PLAN OF EDUCATION OF EXPERTS OF THE AGENCY FOR DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE B&H

Work package 4: Strengthening capacities of the quality assurance in higher education system

Lead Beneficiary: Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance B&H

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INTRODUCTION

Plan of education of experts who conduct the accreditation of higher education institutions and study programmes in Bosnia and Herzegovina was created based on pre-defined activities within Work Package 4: Strengthening the Quality Assurance Capacity in the Higher Education System, the SMEQA projekta („Strengthening Capacities and Mechanism for Enhancement of Quality Assurance System in Higher Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina“), which envisages the enhancement of the capacities of experts engaged in external evaluation and quality assurance procedures. It was developed with the aim of ensuring a systematic, quality and uniform approach to strengthening the competencies of experts involved in external quality assurance processes in higher education. Additionally, the document aims to systematically present the expert training plan, in accordance with the HEA¹ Expert Training Manual, the project plan, and the HEA needs.

It is important to emphasise that the Expert Training Manual, is the reference document in accordance with trainings, have been continuously organised and delivered since 2015. This document forms the basis for the planning and delivery of training, and has significantly contributed to the standardisation and quality of the expert training process. However, in line with the project activities and the need for further system improvement, this Plan represents an upgrade to it, particularly in the section concerning the more precise definition of the dynamics and organisation of the additional training to be implemented in the coming year.

Within the Work package, the importance of the continuous professional development of experts has been recognised, particularly in the context of aligning with Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in European Higher Education Area. Therefore, this Plan is aimed at defining the objectives, content, methodology, and dynamics for training implementation, in order to ensure the transparency, objectivity, and efficiency of the process of accreditation of higher education institutions.

Adopting this Plan creates prerequisites for improving the quality of the work of experts, strengthening institutional capacities, and the consistent application of relevant standards and procedures in accreditation processes, in line with the project's objectives and expected outcomes.

¹ HEA – Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance B&H

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THE BASIS FOR THE CREATION OF THE PLAN OF EDUCATION/TRAINING

In accordance with Article 48, subparagraph 2, and Article 49, subparagraphs 1, 2, and 3, the HEA has regularly updated the legal framework for selecting experts, based on needs, trends, and good practices.

Based on the determined competences, the HEA, through its acts, determines:

- the criteria for the selection of domestic and international experts² participating in accreditation procedures.
- the procedure for forming a commission for the selection of domestic and international experts.
- the procedure for conducting a public call for the selection of domestic and international experts.

With the aim of simplifying the application, decision-making, and selection process for inclusion on the HEA's list of experts, as well as reducing the identified administrative burden for both applicants and the work of the Commission for the Selection of Experts in the evaluation of submitted applications, the HEA revised the relevant documents in 2022/23.

Accordingly, the latest revision of the documents resulted in the following documents:

- [Decision on Criteria for Selection of Domestic and International Experts who Provide Assessment and Conduct Quality Reviews and Give Recommendations on the Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programs](#) ("Official Gazette of B&H", no: 22/23 – hereinafter: Decision on Criteria for Selection of Experts),
- [Decision on Manner of Forming the Commission for Selection of Domestic and International Experts who Provide Assessment and Conduct Quality Reviews and Give Recommendations on the Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programs](#) („Official Gazette of B&H", no: 22/23 – hereinafter: Decision on Manner of Forming the Commission for Selection of Experts)
- [Rulebook on Conducting a Public Competition for Selection of Domestic and International Experts who Provide Assessment and Conduct Quality Reviews and Give Recommendations on the Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programs](#)

² Full name: domestic and international experts who provide assessment and conduct quality reviews and give recommendations on the accreditation of higher education institutions and study programs.

[Programs](#) („Official Gazette of B&H“, no: 22/23 – hereinafter: Rulebook on Conducting a Public Competition).

In addition to the above, to ensure and continuously improve quality, the HEA adopted the previously mentioned Expert Training Manual, which is continuously updated in accordance with new trends and good practices.

The Manual defines two types of training for experts that refer to the categories of domestic experts after selection on the List of experts and those that refer to experts appointed to Expert Committees for specific accreditation procedures, namely:

- General training, which consists of a theoretical and practical part, is intended for domestic experts who have been selected on the List of experts, and
- Preparatory meeting, intended for experts from the List of Experts after being appointed to the Expert Committee.

Attendance at the trainings is mandatory and is one of the criteria for appointing experts to the Expert Committee for accreditation.

It should be noted that, in accordance with Article 49, paragraph 4 of the Framework Law, the HEA appoints the expert panel based on proposals from the competent education authorities regarding the selection of experts from the established List.

PUBLIC COMPETITION FOR EXPERTS

As a rule, the HEA is required to publish a public competition once a year for the selection of domestic and international experts.

The decision to publish the public competition is made by the HEA Director and it is announced by scientific/artistic fields. However, if the HEA determines that there is an insufficient number of experts on the List in a particular category or within a specific scientific or artistic field, it will conduct a public call procedure only for that category of experts, i.e. for the selection of experts in the specific scientific/artistic field.

The timing of public competitions is aligned with the schedule of accreditation procedures for higher education institutions and study programmes. The large number of study programmes offered by higher education institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina requires a greater number of competent experts from different categories and scientific/artistic fields and disciplines.

With the intensification of accreditation procedures for study programmes, and based on their planning, the HEA published three public competitions per year over the past two years, to ensure enough competent experts in fields and disciplines where there were shortages.

In addition, in exceptional cases when there is no expert of the required profile on the established list for the accreditation of a higher education institution or study programme, or when such an expert exists but is unavailable, the HEA may appoint an expert from the list of another agency that is a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), or from the list of another agency with which the HEA has a signed agreement.

The Decision on Criteria for Selection of Experts establishes: the criteria for selection, the procedure for their selection through a public competition, and the method of announcing the competition, the selection of experts in exceptional cases, the content of the List of experts, the obligations of experts, the procedure for updating the List, and the termination of expert status.

In carrying out regular activities to implement its prescribed competences, the HEA adopted the Decision to launch a public competition for the selection of experts. By adopting the same decision in 2025, the HEA continued the previous practice, enabling potential

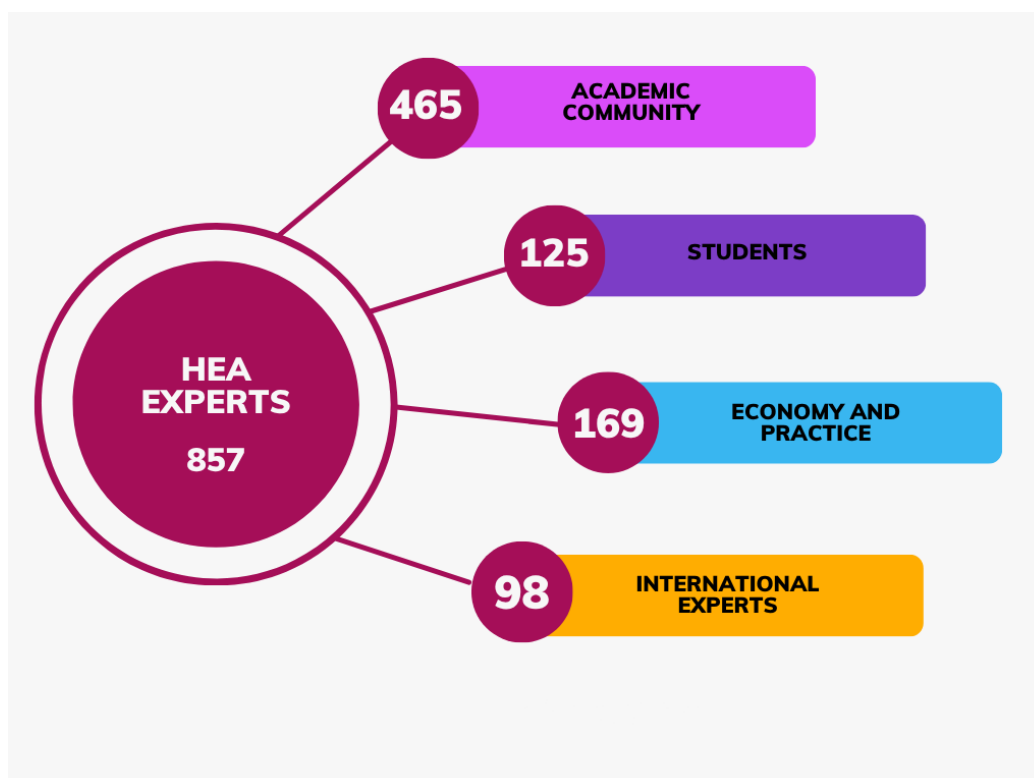
candidates to submit applications during the following periods:

- From 1 February to 1 March of the current year;
- From 1 June to 1 July of the current year;
- From 1 October to 1 November of the current year.

Applying the revised documents and acting in accordance with the established procedure and the conclusions of the Commission for the Selection of Experts, in relation to the above-mentioned decisions on the launch of the public call, the List of Experts has been updated and currently includes 857 new experts in four categories.

The Commission for the Selection of Experts consists of five members, including one representative each from: the Rectors' Conference of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a cantonal Ministry of Education, the competent Ministry of Education of the Republika Srpska, the competent Department for Education in the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the HEA.

OVERVIEW OF EXPERTS



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The List of Experts currently includes 857 experts across all four categories. The largest group consists of representatives from the academic community in Bosnia and Herzegovina, followed by representatives from economy and practice, students, and international experts.

In all categories, social sciences are the most represented, particularly among members of the academic community and economy and practice representatives. The significant representation of technical sciences and biomedical and health sciences further confirms the diversity of expert profiles available for nomination to commissions.

Natural and biotechnical sciences are less represented, but are present in all categories, allowing for adequate disciplinary coverage of these fields when required. Humanities also have stable representation, including student participation, ensuring a plurality of academic perspectives.

Student representatives involved in external quality assurance processes come from various scientific fields, with social sciences predominating, but technical, natural, biomedical, biotechnical, and humanities fields are also represented, contributing to the quality and relevance of the students' contributions to the work of the expert committees.

PLAN OF EDUCATION/TRAINING

This document (and the training methodology described herein) is based on the Expert Training Manual, which has been applied since 2015. Based on surveys and evaluation questionnaires regularly conducted by the HEA after each completed training session, it has been recorded that the methodology and types of training are considered highly useful and appropriate.

The evaluation of all trainings conducted during 2024 and 2025 indicates a high level of participant satisfaction, particularly regarding the comprehensiveness, relevance, and clarity of the information presented about the accreditation process. The findings confirm that the trainings have enabled an adequate understanding of all key stages of the procedure, with clearly defined roles for participants, indicating that the existing training model is methodologically sound and functionally adapted to the needs of experts involved in external quality assurance processes.

Positive assessments also relate to the organizational and logistical aspects of the trainings. Particularly valuable elements include the simulation of visits to higher education institutions, practical work, and interactive learning methods, which contribute to a better understanding and application of the knowledge gained. At the same time, certain

opportunities for improvement have been identified, particularly regarding the further deepening of specific content.

Taking these findings into account, the existing training model represents an adequate and stable foundation for the further development of experts' competencies and will be maintained throughout the planned period. Future activities will focus on its enhancement through the development and implementation of thematic trainings, aimed at further strengthening specific knowledge and skills in priority areas, in line with identified needs and recommendations from evaluations, which are elaborated in more detail later in this document.

In light of the above, this document also includes a description of the new approach and new trainings planned for 2027, primarily thematic trainings for students, representatives from economy and practice, as well as the introduction of online training in English for international experts.

Additionally, through project activities aimed at strengthening international cooperation, particularly within the SEQA ESG 2 project (Supporting European QA Agencies in meeting the ESG), during which a peer-exchange visit to the Slovak Accreditation Agency (SAAHE) was conducted, the HEA established successful cooperation with this Agency. As a direct result of this collaboration, an initiative was developed to organize joint expert training, focusing on the revised Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2026).

The section "Joint Trainings with Foreign Agencies" describes the training that the HEA plans to implement in cooperation with SAAHE.

TYPES OF EDUCATION/TRAINING

The HEA has consolidated its previous experience in conducting trainings by adopting the Expert Training Manual, which is regularly updated and according to which approximately 80% of the experts on the List have completed training to date. The Manual consists of two parts:

- The first part covers the types of trainings, including guidelines and materials required for organizing expert trainings;
- The second part comprises annexes. The annexes include documents and forms used by HEA staff conducting the trainings, as well as by HEA coordinators or the Expert Committees in accreditation procedures.

The HEA currently conducts two types of trainings: general training and preparatory meetings.

GENERAL TRAINING

The training is organized in two parts:

A – Theoretical, conducted online via the Adobe platform;

B – Practical, conducted in-person in Banja Luka and Sarajevo.

Experts are considered to have completed the general training after successfully completing the theoretical part, followed by the practical part of the training.

Theoretical Part

The theoretical part of the general training is conducted via the Adobe Connect platform of the Agency for Civil Service of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which provides a range of options for high-level interaction between participants and trainers. Before the theoretical part of the general training, experts receive the following documents in the invitation email:

- Methodology for writing reports of the Committee of Experts for the accreditation of higher education institutions and study programmes;
- Decision on the criteria for the accreditation of higher education institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Decision on the criteria for the accreditation of study programmes of first- and second-cycle in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Participants in the theoretical part of the general training, register through a link sent to their email addresses. During the training, in addition to the criteria used in accreditation procedures, experts will be introduced through relevant presentations to:

- The legal framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina – a brief overview to increase general awareness of the context;
- The accreditation procedure in the general context;
- Participants and their roles and responsibilities;
- The review, interpretation, and assessment of accreditation criteria;
- Professional conduct during the accreditation process;
- Report writing.

After each presentation, experts answer a set of questions and have the opportunity to discuss each topic, as well as to evaluate the training conducted in an online format. Participants can join from any location, but they are required to have a stable internet connection, a camera, and a microphone. At least one staff member serves as the training moderator, managing the session by monitoring the flow of the training, handling questions, and overseeing interaction during quizzes, while another staff member presents and explains the relevant presentation content.

Practical Part

The practical part of the general training is conducted according to a pre-prepared agenda and other materials, which are provided to all participants at least seven days before the training. Only participants who have completed the theoretical training are invited to the practical session.

Before the practical training, experts receive the relevant annexes from the Manual, documents, presentations, and materials for practical work, including:

- Agenda for the practical training;
- Methodology for writing reports of the Committee of experts for the accreditation of higher education institutions;
- Accreditation criteria, application of criteria, and report writing for external evaluation;
- Professional conduct of experts;
- Templates and guidelines for practical exercises;
- Extract from the Self-evaluation report.

The content and implementation of the practical training are divided into several phases, which are described in detail in the Manual, according to which HEA staff prepare and conduct the training. The preparatory phase begins with individual preparation, during which participants read and analyze the extract from the self-evaluation report within the allotted timeframe. This extract is provided after participants confirm their attendance at the scheduled training (at least seven days before the practical training).

After completing the preparatory phase (individual preparation), participants are divided into groups, and appropriate roles are assigned within each group. It is important to ensure that the groups are diverse. Participants' real-life perspectives should be mixed within the groups to stimulate teamwork experience.

Once roles are assigned, the groups prepare within the allotted timeframe for a visit to a higher education institution, as a commission of experts would do the day before an actual institutional visit. During this phase, three groups are advised to focus on specific aspects.

Expert Committee Group:

- Read the self-evaluation report (SER) and consider possible questions;
- Reflect on what is unclear in the SER;
- Identify what is missing in the SER;
- Consider how to formulate questions;
- Plan how to organize interviews – time management, who will ask the questions;
- Consider the outcome – a report needs to be written as a team work: how to divide this task, how to organize work, and how to ensure evidence for findings/opinions?

Higher Education Institution Group:

- Read the SER;
- Reflect on the report critically (perception vs. reality);
- Consider possible questions from the expert committee and potential answers.

Observers:

Observers are required to monitor participants' performance in order to provide feedback and suggestions for improvement. Their task is to follow the work of the Expert Committee group during the preparation phase and the simulated site visit, take notes, and provide feedback and recommendations. Observers are instructed to focus on the following aspects:

- Observe the interaction between members of the Expert Committee;
- Observe the interaction between the Expert Committee and the higher education institution;
- Observe how questions are formulated and asked (orally);
- Observe verbal and non-verbal communication;
- Observe applied time management.

After the 'group' preparation phase, the simulation of a site visit follows, which is carried out in three steps:

- Simulation of interviews between the Expert Committee and the higher education institution;
- The Expert Committee internally reviews the assessment of the criteria, based on evidence taken from the SER extract and collected during the interviews, and reaches conclusions while preparing an oral report;
- Oral reporting at the end of the site visit by the Chair of the Expert Committee to the representatives of the higher education institution.

During the simulation, it is important to motivate participants to fully assume the roles assigned to them and to enact these roles in order to train perspective-taking, flexibility, and open-mindedness.

After the simulation phase, feedback from the observers is presented within the foreseen time, with findings recorded on a flipchart, followed by an open discussion on potential areas for improvement or clarifications regarding the described phases.

Following the discussion, HEA staff present the legal and procedural aspects of the reporting phase, including report writing in the accreditation process, providing examples of strong and weak reports.

Evaluation of the General Training

After the training is conducted, participants receive the training materials along with a link to complete the evaluation questionnaire. The questionnaire includes questions related to the clarity of the materials presented, the relevance and usefulness of the training, the competencies of the trainers, and the opportunity to suggest potential improvements. Based on the responses received, the HEA updates the Manual and implements improvements to the training.

PREPARATORY MEETING

This type of training is mandatory for experts appointed to Expert Committees for specific accreditation procedures. It consists of at least one online meeting and a preparatory meeting held in-person, one day before the visit to the higher education institution.

The purpose of the **online meeting**, which takes place no later than 10 days after the appointment of the Expert Committee, is to allow members to get acquainted, appoint the Committee Secretary, present all phases of the process, outline the rights and responsibilities of all Expert Committees members, and determine the work schedule and communication methods. Representatives of the competent educational authority for the higher education institution under accreditation are also invited to this meeting.

Prior to this meeting, Agency staff (the coordinator for the specific procedure) correspond electronically with the Expert Committee members, providing them with a complete set of pre-defined materials to support their work. Additionally, international experts on the Committee receive supplementary materials covered during the general training to familiarize them with the specific contextual features.

During the **preparatory meeting**, held one day before the visit to the higher education institution, the accreditation procedure coordinator, together with the Expert Committee members and a representative of the competent educational authority, addresses the following topics:

- Specific provisions of the relevant legal framework;
- Use of assessment templates;
- Expert Committee's working methods and members' roles;
- Communication within the Expert Committee;
- Preparation of oral reports;
- Writing the final report;
- Code of ethics and guidance on the conduct of Expert Committee members during the visit to the higher education institution.

ADDITIONAL EDUCATION/TRAININGS

In addition to the trainings regularly conducted by the HEA, in line with the schedule for updating the List of Experts (General training) and appointing Expert Committees (Preparatory meeting), the HEA has recognized the need to organize targeted, thematic trainings for different categories of experts. These trainings consider the specific needs of

the experts, their previous experience, their role in external evaluation procedures, as well as joint trainings with other European agencies.

Training of Experts by Categories and Thematic Trainings

For experts from economy and practice, trainings are planned to enhance their understanding of the higher education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the legal and institutional framework, the structure of study programmes, principles of defining learning outcomes, and the role of internal and external quality assurance. Special emphasis will be placed on strengthening their ability to assess the relevance of study programmes in relation to labor market needs, while maintaining academic standards and the autonomy of higher education institutions.

For international experts, targeted thematic sessions are planned to cover the specificities of the national higher education system, the competencies of different levels of government, accreditation procedures, as well as the interpretation and application of national criteria in the context of ESG standards. These trainings contribute to better preparation of international Expert Committees members, their more effective integration into evaluation processes, and greater consistency in approach and assessment.

Regarding student representatives, further development of student representatives' competencies is planned through trainings focused on understanding the accreditation process, the roles and responsibilities of students within the Expert Committees, as well as developing the analytical and communication skills needed for active and constructive participation in evaluations. This further strengthens the role of students as full members of expert teams.

In addition, thematic trainings are planned for all categories of experts in areas of common relevance, such as the application of ESG standards (including revisions), the evaluation of digital and hybrid education, the use of data and evidence in the assessment process, and the improvement of external evaluation reports.

With the aim of further improving the training system, the HEA will seek to develop and strengthen cooperation with related quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area, particularly through the exchange of experience, joint thematic workshops, and the development of expert training. Such an approach contributes to the alignment of practices, the strengthening of experts' capacities, and the continuous improvement of the quality of external evaluations.

Joint Trainings with Foreign Agencies

In the forthcoming period, the implementation of joint trainings is planned in cooperation with the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (SAAHE). These trainings will be based on the HEA's existing training model, with further enhancement through international exchange of experience and good practices. This cooperation builds on already established partnerships and the expressed interest of SAAHE in further joint activities in the area of capacity development for experts in external quality assurance.

The trainings are planned to be delivered through a combination of online and practical components. The online component will focus on aligning approaches, exchanging experiences, and familiarizing participants with key updates included in the revised ESG, while the practical component, to be implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina, will include interactive activities such as simulations of evaluation procedures, group work, and the analysis of concrete practical examples.

The trainings will be delivered in English, and participants will primarily be selected from the HEA's List of Experts, with the possibility of including experts in accordance with the specific needs of the partner agency. In this way, a targeted exchange of knowledge and experience in areas of common interest will be ensured, further strengthening the international dimension of experts' work.

The training programme, including its thematic focus and methodological approach, as well as the criteria and process for selecting participants, will be defined through joint working and consultative meetings with SAAHE, thereby ensuring alignment with the priorities of both agencies and the relevance of the content to the current needs of the quality assurance system.

The trainings will be delivered in English, and participants will primarily be selected from the HEA's List of Experts, with the possibility of including additional experts in line with the specific needs of the partner agency. This approach will enable a targeted exchange of knowledge and experience in areas of common interest, while further strengthening the international dimension of experts' work.

The training programme, including its thematic focus and methodological approach, as well as the criteria and process for selecting participants, will be defined through joint working and consultative meetings with SAAHE, thereby ensuring alignment with the priorities of both agencies and the relevance of the content to the current needs of the quality assurance system.

By retaining the existing training model, which has been recognized as high-quality and functional, and enhancing it through an international component and thematic upgrades, continuity in the development of competencies will be ensured, while at the same time strengthening the European dimension of quality assurance and the implementation of the revised ESG standards. Such cooperation creates opportunities for further improving training approaches, developing new ideas, and strengthening the professional network of experts, to the mutual benefit of the partner agencies and the wider quality assurance community in higher education.

ACTIVITIES TIME FRAME



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Training of experts 2027

