

**NATIONAL CENTRE
FOR PUBLIC ACCREDITATION**



GUIDELINES

**FOR EXTERNAL REVIEWS
OF STUDY PROGRAMMES OF HIGHER EDUCATION,
SECONDARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION,
POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES**

PUBLIC ACCREDITATION

Yoshkar-Ola, 2023

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1 EXTERNAL REVIEW

1.1 General provisions

The guidelines are designed to evaluate study programmes of higher education, secondary vocational education, postgraduate (residency, assistant internship) programmes.

The standards of the National Centre for Public Accreditation include basic and additional criteria for educational programmes of secondary vocational and postgraduate education:

- when conducting an external review of secondary vocational education, the programmes are evaluated against basic criteria and additional criteria for secondary vocational programmes;
- when conducting an external review of postgraduate education, the programmes are evaluated against basic criteria and additional criteria for postgraduate programmes.

External review of a single study programme as well as of a cluster¹ of study programmes can be carried out within one review procedure.

If the External Review Panel considers that the marks on the standards of certain educational programmes in the cluster significantly differ from the marks of the other programmes, the External Review Panel can exclude such programmes from the cluster without any repercussions for the whole cluster. Educational programmes excluded from the cluster are evaluated separately by the Review Panel and a separate Final Report is prepared on the outcomes of the review.

1.2 Composition of the External Review Panel

External review of study programmes is performed by the External Review Panel. The selection process of experts is carried out by the National Centre for Public Accreditation (hereinafter – NCPA). The composition of the Panel is agreed with the educational institution to avoid a conflict of interest. The educational institution has the right to decline the suggested nominations of experts with the justification of the reasons for doing so (no more than two nominees).

Any person is eligible to serve as a Panel member if they have a sufficient level of knowledge, experience and expertise in the fields of teaching and quality assurance, have received special training, and have no financial or other personal or professional relations with the higher education institution to be reviewed.

In order to provide the European approach to the evaluation of education quality NCPA engages international experts for performing external review. Such experts are nominated by foreign accreditation agencies in the field of quality assurance.

A Review Panel comprises from three to five members who are:

- sufficiently qualified to evaluate the study programmes included in the cluster;
- holding the managerial positions in the sphere of education or industry;
- capable of evaluating the quality of training of graduates who have completed the programmes undergoing accreditation.

The Review Panel is formed in such a way that the qualification of experts corresponds to the level of education, specialties and (or) field of studies and makes it possible for them to professionally evaluate every educational programme undergoing accreditation.

A Review Panel includes:

- Review Chair, responsible for coordination of the Panel work, preparation and oral presentation on preliminary conclusions, which were drawn up during the site visit; agreeing with the Review Panel members and approving the Final Report on the external evaluation of the study programmes.

¹ A cluster of study programmes is a group of related study programmes (secondary vocational, bachelor's, specialist's, master's, postgraduate), the external review of which can be conducted by one External Review Panel.

- Deputy Chair, responsible for drafting the Final Report on the results of the external review of study programmes.
- Expert in quality management/quality assurance.
- Representative of the professional community (an employer) who is to assess whether the quality of students' training meets the requirements of the professional standards and the labour market.
- Representative of the student community who is responsible for evaluation of the compliance between the study programmes under review and students' needs and expectations.

The External Review Panel is composed with due regard to gender balance.

Should several clusters of study programmes undergo accreditation in an educational institution, a separate External Review Panel is nominated for every cluster.

NCPA appoints the coordinator from the list of its staff members (hereinafter – NCPA coordinator), who is responsible for coordination of the Panel's work. The educational institution appoints a person in charge of the process of the public accreditation of study programmes (hereinafter – Institution coordinator).

1.3 Purpose and objectives of the external review

The main purpose of the external review is to evaluate the study programmes against the Standards for Public Accreditation developed by the National Centre for Public Accreditation in accordance with the international standards and the requirements of professional standards and the labour market.

The external review is conducted by an External Review Panel and comprises a site visit and preparation of a report on the outcomes of the external review of study programmes.

In order to achieve the purpose, the Review Panel's work is aimed at the verification of the information provided in the self-evaluation report prepared by the Institution, as well as at the collection of sufficient data on site to obtain full and reliable information on the study programmes under review.

The External Review Panel works on site for 2-3 days in accordance with the site visit schedule, which includes meetings with stakeholders. During the site visit the Panel members can visit classes, laboratories, education facilities; they can request additional materials (documents, information) necessary for the procedure of public accreditation.

The External Review Panel prepares the Final Report, which is based on the review of: the self-evaluation report of study programmes; presented documents and information; interviews with representatives of stakeholders, students, postgraduates, graduates, employers and the management of an educational institution.

1.4. Responsibilities of the National Centre for Public Accreditation

Within the public accreditation procedure NCPA is responsible for:

- Organizational and methodological support of the procedure of external evaluation.
- Appointing a coordinating person responsible for public accreditation procedure on behalf of NCPA.
- Providing regulatory and methodological materials on organizing and performing self-evaluation of study programmes.
- Consulting the coordinating person from the educational institution on the issues of self-evaluation and drafting the self-evaluation report.
- Conducting a training webinar for persons responsible for accreditation and the staff of the study programme (on request).
- Agreeing the site visit schedule with the educational institution and the panel members.
- Nominating and appointing the review Panel members.

- Agreeing the Panel composition with the institution under review in order to avoid a conflict of interests.
- Liaising between the external Panel members and the persons in charge of public accreditation procedure in the higher education institution.
- Providing the external Panel members with normative and methodological materials regulating their work.
- Mailing an electronic version of the self-evaluation report of the study programmes to the Panel members 35 days prior to the site visit.
- Agreeing the schedule of the site visit by the coordinator from the educational institution under review and the Chair of the External Review Panel.
- Organizing a preliminary meeting of the EXTERNAL REVIEW PANEL members.
- Conducting a briefing of the EXTERNAL REVIEW PANEL members.
- Coordinating the work of the External Review Panel during the site visit.
- Agreeing the draft Report on the results of the external review of study programmes, with the educational institution under review for the purpose of avoiding any factual errors.
- Submitting the draft Report on the outcomes of external evaluation to the Review Chair for the final approval.
- Preventing public disclosure of any information concerning the evaluation of study programmes, contained in the working papers of the External Review Panel.

1.5. Responsibilities of the coordinating person from the higher education institution under review

It is the responsibility of the coordinating person from the higher education institution under review to:

- Act as a liaison person with the NCPA coordinator.
- Coordinate the self-evaluation process of the study programmes, as well as the process of the self-evaluation report writing.
- Ensure that the self-evaluation report on the study programmes is submitted to NCPA on time (not later than 35 days prior to the site visit).
- Draft the site visit schedule and agree it with the NCPA coordinator.
- Provide necessary additional information about the study programmes on request of the members of the External Review Panel.

During the site visit – arrange the meetings and interviews of the Panel members with stakeholders as stated in the site visit schedule.

1.6. Responsibilities of the Review Chair

- Liaise with the NCPA coordinator.
- Review the self-evaluation report, provided by the HEI, prior to the site visit, gather comments on the self-evaluation report from the rest of the Panel and consider their opinions.
- Through the NCPA coordinator communicate to the Institution the lines of inquiry to be pursued during the site visit, and ask for additional information, if needed, prior to the site visit.
- Hold the preliminary meeting of the Review Panel members before the site visit in order to determine the main strategy of the visit, find out if a request for additional information about the study programmes and supporting documents should be made.
- Keep up continuous work during the process of the external review. Chair all the scheduled meetings and discussions.

- Prevent public disclosure of any preliminary findings of the review of the study programmes provided in the working papers of the External Review Panel.
- Hold a Panel meeting to discuss and agree about recommendations for improvement of quality of the study programmes and preliminary conclusions of the external review.
- Chair the final meeting of the External Review Panel and representatives of the educational institution under review and speak on the results of the external review of the study programmes.
- Coordinate the process of drafting the Final Report on the results of the external review of the study programmes.
- Submit the signed Final Report to the NCPA coordinator.
- Prevent public disclosure of any preliminary findings of the review of the study programmes contained in the working papers of the External Review Panel.
- Destroy all confidential materials following the receipt by NCPA of the Final Report on the external review.

1.7. Responsibilities of the Review Deputy Chair

- Liaise with the NCPA's coordinator.
- Analyze the self-evaluation report of the study programmes and define lines of inquiry prior to the site visit.
- Require through the NCPA coordinator, additional information about the study programmes under accreditation, if needed.
- Participate in the Panel briefing on the day before the site visit in order to identify the main strategy of the site visit and to require any additional information and evidence (if needed).
- Keep up continuous work during the process of external review.
- Speak at the meetings on agreement with the Review Chair.
- Use the confidential information received from the educational institution exclusively for the purposes of the external evaluation.
- Collect and summarize opinions and comments from the EXTERNAL REVIEW PANEL members and draft the Final Report on the outcomes of the external review of the study programmes.
- Agree the draft of the Final Report with the Panel members.
- Submit the draft Final Report on the results of the external review of the study programmes to the NCPA coordinator.
- Prevent public disclosure of any evaluation marks of the study programmes provided in working papers of the External Review Panel.
- Destroy all confidential materials following the receipt by NCPA of the Final Report on the external review.

1.8. Responsibilities of Panel members

- Liaise with NCPA and the Review Chair.
- Analyse the self-evaluation report prior to the site visit and draw up lines of inquiry.
- Require through the NCPA's coordinator additional information about the study programmes under accreditation, if needed.
- Participate in the Panel briefing on the day before the site visit in order to identify the main strategy of the site visit and to require any additional information and evidence (if needed).
- Keep up continuous work during the process of external review.

- Speak in the meetings as agreed with the Chair.
- Use the confidential information received from the educational institution exclusively for the purposes of the external evaluation.
- Contribute to the preparation of the initial draft report on the outcomes of the review of the study programmes.
- Prevent public disclosure of any evaluation marks of the study programmes provided in working papers of the External Review Panel.
- Destroy all confidential materials following the receipt by NCPA of the Final Report on the external review.

2. PREPARATION OF THE SITE VISIT BY THE EXTERNAL REVIEW PANEL TO THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION UNDER REVIEW

2.1 Materials to be reviewed

The following methodological and legal documentation should be distributed to the members of the External Review Panel prior to the site visit:

- NCPA’s regulating documents relating to external reviews of the study programmes.
- Guidelines for external reviews of study programmes of higher education, secondary vocational education, postgraduate programmes.
- A copy of the self-evaluation report.
- Information about the composition of the External Review Panel.
- The schedule of the site visit.

Additional information about the study programmes.

2.2 Review of the self-evaluation report

The NCPA coordinator sends an electronic copy of the self-evaluation report of the study programmes under accreditation to the Panel members not later than 35 days prior to the site visit.

Every Panel member should carefully study the self-evaluation report prior to the pre-visit Panel briefing, during which the following issues should be discussed:

- Does the self-evaluation report contain sufficient information with regard to the requirements of NCPA?
- To what extent is the specificity of the programmes under review reflected?
- Are the strategic purposes of the study programme achieved?
- Are the problems related to the implementation of the programmes under review clearly formulated? Have any concrete ways to address the problems been identified?
- What are the preliminary outcomes of the evaluation against the key NCPA standards and criteria?
- What are the main lines of inquiry which need to be specifically addressed during the site visit?

What additional information on the programmes under review should be requested from the educational institution?

2.3 Organizational support to the Review Panel

Organizational support to the External Review Panel is provided by the NCPA Coordinator and the Coordinator from the educational institution under review.

The NCPA Coordinator maintains contact with the educational institution to be informed about readiness of the institution for the site visit; provides organizational, methodological, informational support to the External Review Panel.

The Coordinator from the educational institution provides assistance to NCPA on the issues of the site visit.

2.4 Scheduling the programme of the site visit of the External Review Panel to the educational institution under review

The institution supplies a provisional timetable of activities for the site visit to NCPA and to the Review Chair for consideration.

The agenda of the site visit should be well-planned in order to make schedule more efficient. The planned meetings should provide an opportunity for crosschecking the facts presented in the self-evaluation report.

The programme of the site visit should include meetings with institutional administration, heads of institutes (deans of faculties), department chairs, programme supervisors, members of the teaching staff, students, postgraduates, alumni and representatives of the professional community (employers).

When planning the site visit, it should be kept in mind that the External Review Panel should have a sufficient amount of time for conducting Panel meetings at which the Panel members can review the evidence presented, draw and discuss preliminary findings, as well as decide the basic structure and agenda of the following meetings and interviews with key institution and programme personnel and stakeholders.

3. SITE VISIT BY THE EXTERNAL REVIEW PANEL TO THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

3.1 Meetings and interviews

During meetings and interviews with the representatives of the educational institution the Panel checks information provided by the institution in the self-evaluation report.

Results of the meetings and interviews provide the basis for evaluation of the study programmes. For this purpose each Panel member is provided with reference tables with the review and assessment criteria.

Preliminary meeting of the Review Panel

Prior to the site visit or at the beginning of the first day of the site visit the Review Panel holds a preliminary meeting during which the NCPA coordinator introduces the Panel members, holds a briefing, distributes methodological materials (Guidelines for external review of study programmes, reference tables with the review criteria, etc.).

The Review Chair instructs the Panel members on the programme of the site visit.

The Review Panel members should:

- Discuss the self-evaluation report and emphasize the issues, which need special attention of the Review Panel; prepare questions to be asked at the meetings and interviews.
- Identify additional information, which should be requested from the educational institution.

Meeting with the university administration

Meeting with the university administration is aimed at getting general information about research, educational and financial activity of the educational institution, the development strategy of the institution; the quality assurance system; employment of graduates; international cooperation, on the role of educational programmes undergoing accreditation in the development strategy of an educational organization and the region.

Meeting with directors of Institutes (deans of faculties)

Meeting with directors of Institutes (deans of faculties) and their deputies is aimed at obtaining information about the system of quality assurance, career guidance work, admission, transfer of students from other educational institutions; about academic and research work of departments; structure of funding; distribution of finances between departments; extracurricular activities of students.

Meeting with heads of departments

Interviews with heads of departments and their deputies are aimed at the discussion of issues related to the development and delivery of the programmes under review, as well as organization of academic and methodological work of the department; educational work with students; research activities and general management.

Meeting with students

Interviews with students give an idea of effective implementation of student-centered education; about assessment of student learning outcomes/competences, student work load; about the role of students' independent work in the learning process; student involvement in research; student mobility programmes; the level of teachers' professional competency and the material resources available for carrying out the educational process.

Interviews with students should be conducted with the Panel members only.

The group should represent students of different years of training enrolled in the study programmes undergoing accreditation.

Meeting with the teaching staff

During the meeting and interview with the teaching staff issues connected with the delivery of the study programmes as well as research, academic mobility, career development, material, technical, information resources and financial provision of teaching; hiring and dismissal of staff are discussed.

Themes/issues are raised that have been earlier discussed at the meeting with Heads of departments and students.

Meeting with postgraduates / residents / assistant interns

Interviewing postgraduates/residents/assistant interns provide information on continuity and consistency of educational levels; role of research work on each level of education; quality and availability of material and technical resources for research work.

The group should include postgraduates/residents/ assistant interns of different years of study enrolled in the study programmes undergoing accreditation.

Meeting with alumni

Alumni are a very important source of information. Opinions of alumni provide information on contentment with the level of education, expectations in career progress and pay increase, employability and opportunity for further education.

The interview should be conducted in the absence of the members of the educational institution in order to make the respondents feel free to express their opinions. The group should include alumni, who graduated from the study programmes under review.

Meeting with employers

The key issue that should be discussed during the meeting with employers is the level of competence of graduates from the programmes undergoing accreditation, demand for the graduates on the regional labor market. The problems of cooperation

and interaction with the educational institution in the field of management, agreeing the content of the study programme and quality evaluation are also discussed at the meeting. The interview should be conducted in the absence of the members of the educational institution.

The group of employers should include representatives of organizations that regularly employ graduates from the programmes. If possible, employer organizations should not be represented by former students of the institution offering the study programme under review.

The final meeting of the External Review Panel members with representatives of the educational institution

The Chair of the External Review Panel should clearly and briefly present the key issues, which are important for effective delivery of the study programmes, point out strengths and weaknesses of the study programme undergoing accreditation, propose alternative ways of solving identified problems and recommendations on the plan of actions aimed at improving the quality of the study programmes.

Conclusions on the results of the review should not be mentioned.

There is no discussion on the findings of the review.

3.2 Working facilities for the Review Panel

For the time of the site visit the Institution should provide the Review Panel with a separate working room as a place for Panel meetings and review sessions. For the whole time of the site visit only the Panel members will have access to the room.

The room for the Panel work should be spacious and separated from other rooms, and contain a big table for the documents, a table for the Panel collegiate work, and be equipped with a telephone with international access, and a computer with an access to the Internet, and a printer.

All the documentation related to the external review process including the list of the teaching staff members, curricula, working programmes, student works, research papers, catalogues, leaflets, etc. should be gathered in the specified working room.

3.3 Reference tables with review criteria

At the preliminary meeting the Panel members are distributed reference tables with review criteria, which are working documents developed by NCPA for convenience and summarizing the outcomes of the Panel's work. Each Panel member should complete all the reference tables independently prior to the Panel discussion of the preliminary findings with regard to different aspects of the review. Each Panel member should contribute to the investigation of the pursued lines of inquiry by giving comments for each Reference table.

3.4 STANDARDS AND CRITERIA OF PUBLIC ACCREDITATION FOR STUDY PROGRAMMES

Standard 1. Policy (goals, development strategy) and quality assurance procedures of study programmes

Educational institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public, is compatible with the strategy of the educational institution's development, and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders (administration, teaching staff, and students) should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders (employers, employer associations, branch ministries and departments).

Table 1 – Criteria with regard to Standard 1

№	Subject of evaluation
Basic criteria for higher education, secondary vocational education, postgraduate programmes	
1.1.	Availability of a documented internal quality assurance system providing continuous enhancement of quality in accordance with the developmental strategy of the educational institution
1.2.	Participation of all stakeholders (administration, teaching staff, students, employers, employer associations, research organisations, branch ministries and departments – key partners in employment of graduates) in developing and implementing a quality assurance policy through relevant structures and processes
1.3.	Participation of all structural units of the educational institution in quality assurance processes and procedures

Recommendations for the educational institution

Policies and processes are the main pillars of a coherent institutional quality assurance system that forms a cycle for continuous improvement and contributes to the accountability of the institution. It supports the development of quality culture in which all internal stakeholders assume responsibility for quality and engage in quality assurance at all levels of the institution. In order to facilitate this, the policy has a formal status and is publicly available.

Quality assurance policies are most effective when they reflect the relationship between research, learning, and teaching and take account of both the national context in which the institution operates, the institutional context and its strategic approach.

Such a policy supports

- establishment of the quality assurance system;
- departments, schools, faculties, university administration, and other units; individual staff members and students to take on their responsibilities in quality assurance;
- academic integrity and freedom and is vigilant against academic fraud;
- guarding against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against students and staff;
- involvement of external stakeholders (key employers) in quality assurance.

The policy translates into practice through a variety of internal quality assurance processes that allow participation across the institution. The institution decides how the policy is implemented, monitored, and revised.

The quality assurance policy also applies to any activities performed by third parties under contract with the institution.

Standard 2. Educational programmes

Educational institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the relevant level of the national qualifications framework.

Table 2 – Criteria with regard to Standard 2

Nº	Subject of evaluation
Basic criteria for higher education, secondary vocational education, postgraduate programmes	
2.1.	Availability and accessibility of clearly defined, documented, approved and published goals and objectives of a study programme and expected learning outcomes and their correspondence to the mission and goals and objectives of the educational institution
2.2.	Availability of procedures for design, approval and revision of a study programme (including expected learning outcomes) with the account of the development of science and industry, and also with the consideration of stakeholder opinions (administration, teaching staff, students, employers)
2.3.	Consideration of the requirements of professional standards (if available) and the labour market
Additional criterion for secondary vocational education	
2.4.	Orientation of the content of work placement and pre-graduation practical training towards developing in students the practical skills required by employers
Additional criterion for postgraduate programmes	
2.5.	Availability of a research/artistic/ industrial component, integration with academic and field-specific science and knowledge in postgraduate study programmes

Recommendations for the educational institution

Study programmes are at the core of higher education institutions' missions. They provide students with both academic knowledge and skills, including general cultural competencies, which may influence their personal development and be applied in their future careers.

Programmes

- are designed so that overall programme objectives are in line with the institutional strategy;
- have explicit intended learning outcomes;
- are designed with the involvement of students;
- are designed so that they enable personal development and smooth student progression throughout the study programmes;
- define the expected student workload (e.g. in ECTS);
- include well-structured placement opportunities (where appropriate);
- are subject to a formal institutional approval process by external stakeholders;
- content of work placement and pre-graduation practical training is oriented towards the development of students' practical skills required by employers;
- include a research/artistic/ industrial component, integration in academic and field-specific science in postgraduate study programmes.

Standard 3. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

Educational institutions should implement processes of student-centred learning in their study programmes. The methods through which the programmes are delivered should encourage students to take an active part in the learning process.

Table 3 – Criteria with regard to Standard 3

Nº	Subject of evaluation
Basic criteria for higher education, secondary vocational education, postgraduate programmes	
3.1.	Consideration of the needs of diverse groups of students and the possibility of offering individual learning paths (course selection, further qualification, modular training, double-degree programmes)
3.2.	Consideration of non-formal ² and informal ³ education (if available) when assessing learning outcomes/students' competencies (online courses, further education programmes, microcredentials, startups)
3.3.	Use of clearly defined criteria and objective assessment of acquired learning outcomes/competences of students corresponding to the expected learning outcomes, goals of the study programmes and their purpose (diagnostic, formative or summative assessment) <i>*Define the forms of assessment for artistic programmes (concerts, performances, plays, etc.) and engineering programmes (technical testing, etc.)</i> <i>**For postgraduate programmes indicate how the implementation of postgraduates' individual work plans (research and curricular) is monitored</i>
3.4.	Information about study programmes, criteria and procedures for assessment of learning outcomes/competencies, examinations, tests and other types of control
3.5.	Independent assessment of learning outcomes: certified examinations, Federal Internet Examination for graduates from Bachelor's programmes, Federal Internet Examination in the Sphere of Higher Education", Federal Internet Examination in the Sphere of Professional Education, academic competitions, etc.
3.6.	Availability and effectiveness of appeals procedure and procedures
Additional criterion for postgraduate programmes	
3.7.	Thesis defense in due time (within one year after the postgraduate programme completion)
3.8.	Publications and research activity of postgraduate students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – publications in peer-reviewed national and international scientific journals and journals included in the List of peer-reviewed journals approved by the Higher Attestation Commission; – presentation at scientific events (conferences, forums, symposiums, etc.); – winners of national and international academic contests for postgraduate students (awards, diplomas, patents, etc.)

Recommendations for the educational institution

² Non-formal education refers to education that occurs outside the formal school system. (clubs, training sessions, short programmes, etc).

³ Informal education – is the type of knowledge that one gains through several life experiences at the workplace, from parents or elders, etc. Informal education is gained under the influence of society and the community.

Student-centred learning and teaching plays an important role in stimulating students' motivation, self-reflection and engagement in the learning process. This means careful consideration of the design and delivery of study programmes and the assessment of learning outcomes.

Student-centred learning and teaching

- respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths that allow for course selection, elective modules, completing a further qualification, modular training, double-degree programmes, etc.;
- considers and uses different modes of delivery, where appropriate;
- flexibly uses a variety of pedagogical methods;
- regularly evaluates and adjusts the modes of delivery and teaching and learning methods;
- encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher;
- promotes mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship;
- has a system of student information (website, personal account, information booths, etc.);
- has appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints.

Considering the importance of assessment for students' progression and their future careers, quality assurance processes for assessment take into account the following:

- Assessors are familiar with the existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field;
- The criteria for and methods of assessment are published in advance;
- The assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved;
- Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the learning process;
- Where possible, assessment is carried out by more than one examiner;
- Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures;
- A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.

Standard 4. Student admission, support of academic achievements and graduation

Educational institutions should have and consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student "life cycle", e.g. student admission, support of academic achievements, recognition of graduates' qualifications and graduation.

Table 4 – Criteria with regard to Standard 4

Nº	Subject of evaluation
Basic criteria for higher education, secondary vocational education, postgraduate programmes	
4.1.	Systematic career guidance targeted at recruiting and selection of applicants should be in place <i>*For postgraduate programmes indicate the availability of master's programmes (students' research work) which can be continued in postgraduate programmes</i>
4.2.	Adherence to academic integrity (availability of documents on academic integrity, methods to evaluate students' works in an educational institution (for example, "Antiplagiat" - Russian software for detecting text reuse)
4.3.	Availability and effectiveness of rules and regulations for admission, transfer of students from other educational institutions, recognition of qualifications, periods of study and prior learning
4.4.	Balance of enrollment and graduation rates (retention, dropouts)
4.5.	Systematic work to support students' progression
4.6.	Availability of student information and support in project and research work, academic mobility programmes, students' participation in academic mobility. <i>*For postgraduate programmes indicate availability of training or doing research work in other national or international HEIs/research institutes and within joint research projects</i>
Additional criterion for postgraduate programmes	
4.7.	Sufficiency and stability of funding of educational programmes (availability of financial support provided to postgraduate students from grants, contracts, scientific/engineering programmes, etc. for academic mobility and research)

Recommendations for the educational institution

Providing the conditions and rendering the support necessary for students to make progress in their academic careers is in the best interests of individual students, programmes, institutions and systems. It is vital to have relevant admission, recognition and completion procedures, particularly when students are mobile within and across higher education systems.

The educational institution should regularly carry out career guidance aimed at cooperation with students, graduates of schools, and professional educational institutions, contributing to their conscious choice of a field of study. After admission, student initiation should include induction to the educational institution and study programmes; social and psychological adaptation of first-year students should be in place.

It is important that admission policies, processes, and criteria (including employer-sponsored education) are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner; the demand for the study programmes is analysed; the competitive environment is evaluated; regular support of students' academic progress and the integrity of the student body is provided; social and psychological support throughout training is in place.

The educational institution should ensure students' involvement in projects, research and in-bound and out-bound mobility programmes. The educational institution should enable postgraduate students to study or do research at other national and foreign universities or research institutions; to participate in joint research projects.

All stakeholders adhere to the following academic integrity principles:

- documents on academic integrity are available (regulations/rules/code of academic integrity);
- contribution to the enhancement of the quality and theory of academic, research, and other works; methods to evaluate works are in place at the educational institution (for example, "Antiplagiat" - Russian software for detecting text reuse).

Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, secondary vocational education qualifications, periods of study, and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components for ensuring the students' academic progress while promoting mobility.

Appropriate recognition procedures rely on:

- cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies, and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country.
- Graduation represents the culmination of the students' period of study. Educational institutions should provide students with a document on education in compliance with the requirements of national legislation.

Standard 5. Teaching staff

Institutions should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff which help ensure sufficient qualification and competency of their teachers.

Table 5 – Criteria with regard to Standard 5

№	Subject of evaluation
Basic criteria for higher education, secondary vocational education, postgraduate programmes	
5.1.	Availability and compliance with clear, transparent and objective criteria of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - recruitment of the members of the teaching staff from Russia and/or abroad, appointment to a position, promotion, dismissal; - dismissal of the members of the teaching staff as a result of a failure to comply with professional competence requirements.
5.2.	Compliance with professional competence requirements, relevance of specialisms, degrees and titles and /or practical experience to the profile of the study programmes
5.3.	Use of best national and international practices as well as current tendencies in teaching <i>*For postgraduate programmes, indicate the availability of schools of thought at a HEI.</i>
5.4.	Availability of a mentoring /counseling / support system that takes into account the needs of different groups of students
5.5.	Research activity of the teaching staff, implementation of research results in the academic process <i>*For postgraduate programmes, indicate the organization of research supervision and consultancy for postgraduates</i>

Nº	Subject of evaluation
5.6.	Employing visiting lecturers from other national and foreign educational/industrial/research institutions <i>*For secondary vocational education programmes indicate the involvement of part-time teachers in the delivery of specialized courses (modules, workshops, training sessions) and employed full time in top managerial positions in industrial enterprises.</i> <i>**For postgraduate programmes indicate the involvement of the leading specialists from research institutes, design bureaus and other research organizations in delivering lectures and practical classes, providing consultancy and supervision of students' research</i>
5.7.	Participation of teachers in joint international projects, internships abroad, academic mobility programmes <i>*For postgraduate programmes indicate the research achievements of supervisors</i>
5.8.	A system of financial and non-financial incentives for teachers
5.9.	A system for career development and professional advancement for teachers <i>*For secondary vocational education programmes, indicate availability of teachers and practitioners who have been trained in the real sector of the economy in line with the courses taught and the training programme</i>
Additional criterion for secondary vocational education	
5.10.	Availability of staff members with current expert certificates in demonstration examinations
Additional criterion for postgraduate programmes	
5.11.	Publication activity of teachers involved in the delivery of postgraduate programmes (Hirsch Index, number of publications in peer-reviewed national and international journals, as well as journals included in the List of peer-reviewed journals approved by the Higher Attestation Commission)
5.12.	Involvement of research advisors in the work of Dissertation councils, acting as official opponents of dissertations or as peer-reviewers to evaluate a manuscript's quality and suitability for publication in national and international journals.

Recommendations for the educational institution

The teacher's role is essential in creating a high-quality student experience and enabling the acquisition of knowledge, competences and skills. The diversifying student population and stronger focus on learning outcomes require student-centred learning and teaching approach and the role of the teacher is, therefore, also changing (cf. Standard 3).

Higher education institutions have primary responsibility for the quality of their staff and for providing them with a supportive environment that allows them to carry out their work effectively. Educational institutions should:

- develop and implement clear, transparent and fair processes for staff recruitment, appointment for a position, dismissal;
- offer opportunities for career growth and promote the professional development of the teaching staff taking into consideration the results of peer and teacher assessment surveys; the teaching staff of the secondary vocational educational institutions should be encouraged to become certified examiners of the demonstration examination,
- encourage scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research;

encourage the members of the teaching staff involved in the delivery of postgraduate programmes indicate their research achievements (grant amounts, research activity, student involvement in the work of research groups);

- encourage innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies;
- encourage the academic mobility of teachers (internships, project work, visiting-lecturing).

Standard 6. Learning resources

Educational institutions should ensure adequate, readily accessible and fit for purpose learning resources and student support services.

Table 6 – Criteria with regard to Standard 6

Nº	Subject of evaluation
Basic criteria for higher education, secondary vocational education, postgraduate programmes	
6.1.	Provision of the study programme with material and technical resources (modern tools, equipment, computers, classrooms, laboratories, art studios, student theatres, small innovative enterprises, research simulation grounds, co-working spaces, etc.) <i>*For postgraduate programmes indicate availability of research laboratories, e-databases, etc.</i>
6.2.	Availability of internship opportunities, well-equipped facilities and qualified supervisors. <i>*For secondary vocational education programmes indicate availability of workshop rooms, training grounds, multifunctional centres of hands-on career-focused qualifications</i>
6.3.	Availability of up-to-date library and information resources including those for independent study and research work; availability of e-library, author's textbooks, methodological materials, and e-learning resources
Additional criterion for secondary vocational education	
6.4.	Availability of material and technical resources necessary for conducting contests and championships of different levels (championship "Professionals", national championship of high technologies). Availability of a Centre for a Demonstration Examination
Additional criterion for postgraduate programmes	
6.5.	Availability of research environment in an educational institution: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Own dissertation councils and / or agreements with other HEIs on defense of theses at their dissertation councils – availability of peer-reviewed journals and / or agreements with other publishers on the publication of research results

Recommendations for the educational institution

For the purpose of creating a good higher education experience, institutions provide a range of resources to assist student learning. These vary from physical and academic to human support (tutors, counsellors, and advisors).

An educational institution should provide:

- the necessary material and technical resources (modern tools, equipment, computers, classrooms, laboratories, creative studios, student theatres, small innovative enterprises, scientific simulation grounds, etc.), as well as co-working spaces;
- specialised grounds/facilities for practical training with state-of-the-art equipment and highly qualified supervisors; for secondary vocational education, there should be training workshops, training grounds, multifunctional centres of applied qualifications, and Centers for Demonstration Examinations.

The needs of a diverse student population (such as mature, part-time, employed, and international students as well as students with disabilities), and the shift towards student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning, and providing learning resources and student support. Support activities and facilities may be organised in a variety of ways depending on the institutional context.

In accordance with the federal state requirements for the structure of postgraduate programmes, conditions of their implementation, terms of delivery depending on the format of education, teaching methods, and special requirements of certain students, the educational institution should provide the following:

- individual access to the electronic information and educational environment;
- access to research infrastructure in accordance with the postgraduate programme and individual work plan;
- access to educational and methodological materials, electronic resources, a library, information and reference systems, and professional databases, the composition of which is documented in the relevant postgraduate programme and individual work plan.

In delivering support services, the role of support and administrative staff is crucial, and therefore they need to be qualified and have opportunities to develop their competences.

Standard 7. Collection, analysis and use of information for managing the study programmes and public information

Educational institutions should ensure that they collect, analyze and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities. Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.

Table 7 – Criteria with regard to Standard 7

№	Subject of evaluation
Basic criteria for higher education, secondary vocational education, postgraduate programmes	
7.1.	The educational institution should have in place a unified effective IT system in order to collect and analyze information and ensure its effectiveness for the study programmes to be properly managed
7.2.	Involvement of students and members of the teaching staff in collecting and analyzing information for proper management of study programmes; providing access to information related to organizational issues of the educational process

Nº	Subject of evaluation
7.3.	Effective use of the official website of the HEI, publication on the website and in mass media of complete and reliable information about educational programmes, achievements, including objective data on graduates' employment and labour market demand
7.4.	Content and adequacy of translation of the English version of the website/webpage of the structural unit
7.5.	Availability of a feedback mechanism for stakeholders (students, teachers, employers, line ministries and departments) on the university website and other sources
7.6.	Integration in the environment, interaction of the educational institution with major employers, different professional associations and other national and international organizations on industry-specific, regional, national and international levels
Additional criterion for secondary vocational education	
7.7.	Availability of documents with information from employers/representatives of large companies, on the quality of graduates

Recommendations for the educational institution

Reliable data is crucial for evaluating the effectiveness of their work and making recommendations for improving educational activities. Educational institutions should have procedures for collecting and analysing information about their activities and educational programmes, and use the information obtained in the work of an internal quality assurance system.

The information gathered depends, to some extent, on the type and mission of the institution. The following are of interest:

- Profile of the student population;
- Student progression, achievements, drop-out rate, and graduation;
- Students' satisfaction with their programmes;
- Learning resources and student support;
- Graduates' employment;
- Key performance indicators of a HEI.

Various methods of collecting information may be used. It is important that students and the teaching staff are involved in providing and analyzing information and planning follow-up activities.

Information on institutions' activities is useful for prospective and current students as well as for graduates, other stakeholders (mainly employers) and the public (parents of prospective students).

Therefore, institutions provide information about their activities, including, the intended learning outcomes, qualifications awarded, teaching, learning and assessment methods used, pass rates and learning opportunities available to students as well as data on graduate employment.

Standard 8. On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes

Educational institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes, employ feedback mechanisms (surveying, interviewing, questioning students, key employers) in order to assure the achievement of their goals and meeting the needs of students and society. The results of these processes should lead to a continuous enhancement of study programmes. The information about the measures undertaken and planned should be available to all stakeholders. The study programmes should undergo external quality assurance procedures.

Table 8 – Criteria with regard to Standard 8

№	Subject of evaluation
Basic criteria for higher education, secondary vocational education, postgraduate programmes	
8.1.	Documented procedures of monitoring and periodic review of study programmes should be in place
8.2.	Study programmes should undergo regular external review procedures
8.3.	Availability of follow-up as a result of external review of study programmes and consideration of the results of previous external reviews when conducting subsequent evaluation procedures
8.4.	Availability of results of independent assessment of study programmes (best-edu.ru, programme rankings, academic achievements of students and members of the teaching staff, achievement of study programmes)
Additional criterion for secondary vocational education	
8.5.	Availability of documents (certificates) confirming that the quality of educational programmes meets the requirements of the national industrial enterprises

Recommendations for the educational institution

Regular monitoring, review and revision of study programmes aim to ensure that the provision remains appropriate and to create a supportive and effective learning environment for students.

These include the evaluation of:

- the content of the programmes in the light of the latest research thus ensuring that the programmes are up to date;
- changing needs of society;
- students' workload, progression and assessment of the quality of student and graduate training;
- effectiveness of procedures for student assessment;
- student expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme;
- learning environment and support services and their fitness for purpose.

Programmes are reviewed and revised regularly with the involvement of students and other stakeholders (employers, employer associations, line ministries and departments – key stakeholders in employment). The information collected is analyzed and the programmes are adapted to ensure that they are up-to-date. Revised programmes are published.

External quality assurance procedures allow stakeholders to evaluate the effectiveness of internal quality assurance processes. They accelerate the development and create environment for the new opportunities. They also provide objective information to the public about the quality of the HEI's activities.

Educational institutions should regularly participate in external quality assurance procedures that take into account the requirements of the national legislation. Depending on the context external quality assurance can take different forms and be implemented at different levels (programme, faculty or educational institution).

Quality assurance is a continuous process that does not end with receiving external feedback, writing a report, or follow-up procedures taking place in an educational institution. HEIs should strive to ensure that the progress achieved in the previous external quality assurance procedure is taken into account when preparing for the next quality assurance procedure.

Standard 9. Quality assurance of education (online/distance learning)

Educational institutions should guarantee the quality of education (when changing to an online/distance format) and have appropriate digital resources to support the educational process.

Table 9 – Criteria with regard to Standard 9

Nº	Subject of evaluation
Basic criteria for higher education, secondary vocational education, postgraduate programmes	
9.1.	Availability of facilities (equipment) in an educational institution necessary to deliver study programmes via e-learning/distance learning technologies
9.2.	Availability of technical infrastructure for e-learning (access to e-learning environment, sufficient e-library resources, digital security)
9.3.	Use of electronic/ distance or blended learning technologies in accordance with the objectives of the study programmes, goals of evaluating students' achievements and due consideration of students' capabilities and needs
9.4.	Systematic work meant to support (record) the educational process and students' academic performance when using e-learning and / or blended learning approaches
9.5.	Academic and technological support for teachers and students to obtain the necessary digital competencies when delivering or mastering programmes in a distance format

Recommendations for the educational institution

The educational institutions should create the necessary conditions for study programme delivery in an online/distance format. The e-learning environment includes e-learning information resources, e-learning educational resources, information and telecommunication technologies, and appropriate technological facilities that enable students to complete study programmes to the full regardless of their location.

The educational institution should employ a variety of digital services to support the process, including:

- availability of programmes partially or completely delivered as e-learning or distance learning methods;
- availability of technical infrastructure to compile students' portfolios, availability of personal accounts
- availability of technical infrastructure to ensure the educational process, digital technologies for progress monitoring (testing, proctoring, storing papers, etc.).
- availability of digital services to support teachers (digital signature, digital kit for educational programme design, etc.).

The educational institution is accountable to its students for the quality of education, regardless of whether the online course of another educational organisation is used in the educational programme delivery or not. In order to ensure the quality of the educational service the HEI provides organisational, educational, methodological, and other relevant support to the student all through the online course. The HEI also monitors the knowledge mastered and carries out interim assessment. If a student is not satisfied with the quality of an online course, the HEI is obliged to make up for the shortcomings as part of student support.

In case the HEI shifts to a distance format of study programmes delivery, teachers are required to comply with the curriculum (student workload, number of contact hours, and students' independent work). The tools used for communication between a teacher and students in distance learning should meet the needs and capabilities of both: message exchange via email and messengers, use of online conference systems in workshops, and the electronic educational environment of the university (Learning Management System).

3.5 The scale of assessment parameters of a study programme (cluster of programmes)

Table 10 indicates the key aspects to be assessed against the NCPA Standards for public accreditation and makes it possible for the Panel members to give their own mark for each standard.

The scale of assessment parameters is based on a four grade evaluation of the study programme (compliance with the standards):

1 Full compliance. The External Review Panel members consider the study programmes under review to be fully compliant with the requirements with regard to a particular criterion (standard).

2 Substantial compliance. The External Review Panel members consider the study programme under review to be substantially compliant with the requirements with regard to a particular criterion (standard).

3 Partial compliance. The External Review Panel members consider that with regard to a particular criterion (standard) the compliance has been achieved, but the level of compliance is not high enough

4 Non-compliance. The External Review Panel members consider that the study programme under review fails to comply with the NCPA accreditation requirements. Activities are carried out at a low or poor level of quality, there are a lot of deficits and problem areas.

Table 10 The scale of assessment parameters of a study programme

№ п/п	Standards	Assessment of study programmes			
		Full compliance	Substantial compliance	Partial compliance (needs improvement)	Non-compliance
1.	Policy (goals, development strategy) and quality assurance procedures of study programmes				
2.	Educational programmes				
3.	Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment				
4.	Student admission, support of academic achievements and graduation				
5.	Teaching staff				
6.	Learning resources				
7.	Collection, analysis and use of information for managing the study programmes and public information				
8.	On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes				
9.	Quality assurance of education (online/distance learning)				

3.6 Preparation of an oral presentation

The goal of the External Review Panel is exhaustive evaluation of the programmes and development of an agreed Final Report on the results of external evaluation.

The process of preparation of the Final Report on the results of external evaluation includes the following stages:

1. Individual review, filling in the assessment tables, commenting on compliance of the study programme with NCPA's standards and criteria.
2. General discussion, agreement of the experts' opinion and drafting of the Final Report on external review.

Summarizing of the external review results is conducted at the internal session of the External Review Panel. During the session the Panel members should summarize expert opinions, analyze the results of the review and work out collegiate opinion on every section of the scale of assessment parameters of the study programme (Table 10).

3. Oral presentation of the results of the external expert review of a study programme.

The Review Panel Chair prepares an oral presentation on the basis of the general opinion of all the review Panel members.

The oral presentation should include the key conclusions of the External Review Panel, merits of the study programmes, areas for improvement and general recommendations.

The following rules are to be observed while preparing the oral presentation, which should:

- be delivered in a positive, supportive and constructive manner;
- contain clear short presentation of the key issues;
- indicate both strengths and weaknesses of the programmes(s) under review;
- be focused on the key statements necessary for effective implementation of the study programme(s);
- suggest alternative ways to address the problems discovered.

The Panel's recommendations to the National Accreditation Board are highly confidential.

4. FINAL REPORT ON THE RESULTS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

The main outcome of the review process is the report, which is also the basic document for accreditation decision-making by the National Accreditation Board.

The draft report is discussed at the final meeting of the External Review Panel. The Chair summarizes comments of the Panel members. On the basis of the conclusions presented in reference tables the deputy Chair prepares the draft Report on the results of the external review of the study programme (cluster of programmes), which should include evaluation according to every standard with recommendations.

The conclusion of the External Review Panel is provided strictly on the basis of compliance of the study programme (cluster of programmes) with the standards of public accreditation, which are developed by NCPA. After the Deputy Chair of the External Review Panel submits the Final Report to NCPA, the coordinator mails the Report to the educational institution for correction of factual errors. After the factual errors are removed the final version of the Report is signed by the Chair of the External Review Panel.

The Final Report on the external review of the study programmes is one of the documents which NCPA submits to the National Accreditation Board for deciding on public accreditation of the study programmes.

4.1 Recommended structure and format of the Report

It is recommended that the Final Report on the external review should be structured as follows.

Introduction

1 Context and main stages of the review

- 1.1 Composition of the Review Panel
- 1.2 Purposes and objectives of the review
- 1.3 Stages of the review
 - 1.3.1 Self-evaluation
 - 1.3.2 Site visit
 - 1.3.3 Final report

2 Description of the study programmes under review

3 Findings

- 3.1 Standard 1. Policy (goals, development strategy) and quality assurance procedures of study programmes
- 3.2 Standard 2. Educational programmes
- 3.3 Standard 3. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment
- 3.4 Standard 4. Student admission, support of academic achievements and graduation
- 3.5 Standard 5. Teaching staff
- 3.6 Standard 6. Learning resources
- 3.7 Standard 7. Collection, analysis and use of information for managing the study programmes and public information
- 3.8 Standard 8. On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes
- 3.9 Standard 9. Quality assurance of education (online/distance learning)

4 Recommendations for improvement

5 Conclusion of the External Review Panel

Annexes (the site visit programme, lists of participants, etc.).

4.2 Content of the External Review Report

The Final Report should contain four main sections:

- Executive summary of the review process;
- Findings regarding the compliance of the study programmes reviewed with each of the NCPA Standards;
- Recommendations on the improvement of the quality of the study programmes;
- The Panel's conclusion.

The External Review panel is not expected to pass judgment on accreditation or denial of accreditation of the programmes under review.

The conclusion of the Review Panel on the outcomes of the external review of the study programmes may be formulated in the following ways:

"In the light of the documentary and oral evidence considered by it, the Review Panel is satisfied that, in the performance of its functions, [study programme] is fully compliant with the NCPA Standards and Criteria for public accreditation. The Panel therefore recommends to the NCPA Accreditation Board that [name of the study programme] should be granted public accreditation for the period of six years".

OR

"In the light of the documentary and oral evidence considered by it, the Panel considers that, in the performance of its functions, [study programme] is substantially compliant with the NCPA Standards and Criteria for public accreditation.

The standard(s) where full compliance has not been achieved is (are):

- ***;
- ***,»

Revealed weaknesses or inconsistencies are nonessential with regard to the programme content or structure, but must be corrected to ensure the quality of the study programme. The study programme must take adequate measures in order to achieve full compliance with the aforementioned standards(s).

The Review Panel therefore recommends to the NCPA Accreditation Board that [name of programme] should be granted public accreditation for the time period up to 6 years".

OR

"In the light of the documentary and oral evidence considered by it, the Review Panel is of the opinion that, in the performance of its functions, [study programme] is partially compliant in its content and structure with regard to the following NCPA Standard(s) and Criteria for public accreditation.

The standard(s) where study programme has partial compliance is (are):

- ***;
- ***,»

The members of the External Review Panel should give a clear explanation of the opinion of "partial compliance" as well as define recommendations for the study programme to achieve full compliance with the aforementioned standards(s).

In the opinion of the Review Panel, the study programmes can be granted accreditation for a reduced term. When the term expires the educational institution has the right to submit the report on corrective measures in accordance with the recommendations of the External Review Panel, based on which the National Accreditation Board during its next session may make a decision on prolonging the term of Accreditation.

OR

"In the light of the documentary and oral evidence considered by it, the Review Panel is of the opinion that, in the performance of its functions, [study programme] has fundamental deficits which further revision cannot correct and thus cannot be accredited". In case of "noncompliance" of the study programme the members of the External Review Panel should give a clear explanation of the opinion of "noncompliance" as well as define recommendations/measures for the study programme to achieve full compliance with the aforementioned standards(s).

GLOSSARY

NCPA	The National Centre for Public Accreditation (Yoshkar-Ola, Russia)
External review	External evaluation of a study programme aimed at the assessment of the programme's conformity to the NCPA Standards and Criteria for Public Accreditation
External Review Pane	Approved by NCPA team of external reviewers responsible for the evaluation of a study programme's (programmes') conformity to the NCPA Standards and Criteria for Public Accreditation, as well as for working out recommendations for the accreditation decision-making
Quality of education	Complex characteristics of education covering the compliance of learning outcomes, educational processes and institutional systems with the current goals and needs of the society, the state and the individual
Qualification	The level of knowledge, skills and competencies characterizing a person's readiness to accomplish specific professional tasks.
Cluster of programmes	A group of related study programmes (secondary vocational, bachelor's, specialist's, master's, postgraduate), the external review of which can be conducted by one External Review Panel
Competency	Dynamic combination of specifications (relating to knowledge and its usage, skills, abilities, values and personal qualities), which describes the results of the study process, something that is necessary to a HEI graduate for efficient professional activity and personal development, which he/she has to acquire and demonstrate
Field of training	Totality of study programmes for bachelors, masters, specialists of various profiles, which are integrated on the basis of similarity of fundamental training
National Accreditation Board	A collegiate body of NCPA that publicly considers the issues related to accreditation and makes decisions on accreditation of study programmes.
Regulatory and legal framework of the procedure of public accreditation	Federal Law" On Education in the Russian Federation " dated 29.12.2012 No. 273. Conditions for organization and implementation of educational activity in education (The order of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation of 1 June, 2013 No. 499). Requirements for content of education programmes (approved by the order of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation of 18.06.1997 No. 1221). Documents developed by NCPA: Regulations for public accreditation; Indicators and criteria of public accreditation; Guidelines for self-evaluation of educational programmes; Guidelines for external review of educational programmes
Educational institution	Non-profit organization which performs licensed educational activity as the main activity type in compliance with its statutory functions.
Study (educational) programme	Organizational and methodological document that structures the content and scope of knowledge, forms of organization of the educational process, sequence and timing of the academic courses and modules, tools to evaluate students' progress, assessment, expected learning outcomes, development of competencies leading to an academic degree
Public accreditation	Recognition of an educational organization's activity level compliable with criteria and requirements of Russian, foreign and international organizations. The order of conducting public accreditation, forms and methods of evaluation, rights granted to an accredited organization, which implements educational activity, are determined by a non-state organization, which conducts public accreditation.

Self-evaluation report	Written document, which describes the degree of compliance of the study programmes with NCPA's standards and criteria for public accreditation. The basis for evaluation procedure of the educational programmes by an External Review Panel
Public accreditation of study programmes	Recognition of the quality and level of training of graduates who have completed the educational programme as meeting the requirements of professional standards, the requirements of the labor market for specialists, workers and employees of the relevant profile
Self-evaluation procedure of an education programme	Self-analysis of study programmes with regard to NCPA's standards and criteria
Certificate of accreditation	Document proving positive decision of the NCPA's Accreditation Board on public accreditation of study programmes
Student-oriented training / education	Fundamental principle of Bologna reforms in higher education, anticipating shift of emphasis of educational process from teaching (as the main role of teaching staff in knowledge "translation") to learning (as an active educational activity of students)
Level of education	Complete cycle of education, specified by a determined single total of requirements
Curriculum	Document, which determines the list, labor intensity, succession and distribution of academic subjects, courses, disciplines (modules), internship, other types of educational activity and, unless otherwise established by the Federal Law, forms of intermediate attestation of students Educational institution

CODE OF ETHICS FOR MEMBERS OF EXTERNAL REVIEW PANELS

This code sets forth the basic rules of professional conduct to be followed by external experts in the process of external reviews of study programmes.

External reviewers shall carry out their evaluation activities in accordance with Guidelines for External Reviews of Study Programmes developed by the National Centre for Public Accreditation (NCPA) for conducting the public accreditation procedure.

External reviewers are expected to have a sufficient level of competence for evaluation of study programme(s), be specially trained and certified. External reviewers of study programmes are required to adhere to the following high ethic standards: professionalism (professional competence), honesty, impartiality and objectivity.

1. Professional competence

Experts are professionals in the corresponding fields of study; they are responsible for carrying out the evaluation of study programme(s) at the high level against the NCPA standards and criteria.

Experts should show respect in establishing relations with other expert reviewers and the staff of the educational institution under accreditation. They should avoid using expressions and statements that might express disrespect towards honor and dignity of other experts and representatives of the institution under review.

2. Conflict of interest policy

Before being appointed as Review Panel members, experts will be required to notify the National Centre for Public Accreditation (NCPA) of existence of any circumstances which could result in a conflict of interest.

Circumstances leading to the conflict of interest may be the following:

- Present or former employment in the Institution delivering the study programme(s) under review
- Provision of consulting services regarding accreditation of the study programme(s) under review
- Former or actual engagement in negotiations concerning possible employment in the Institution delivering the study programme(s) under review
- Studying at the Institution delivering the study programme(s) under review
- Financial relationships with the Institution delivering the study programme(s) under review.

Experts are required to notify NCPA as soon as possible of any changes or emergence of conflicting interests in addition to already disclosed. If experts are unsure as to whether an interest should be disclosed.

During the review process of the study programme(s) the Review Panel members should voluntarily avoid any meetings /decisions which could lead to a conflict of interest. Panel members shall notify NCPA of any discrepancies between their personal interests and the interests of public accreditation of the study programme(s) under review, as the discrepancies could result in affecting the integrity of the external review procedure.

Panel members shall not take any money or other rewards from the institution under review which can affect the evaluation results.

Experts shall not exceed his/her powers, conferred by NCPA.

Panel members and NCPA sign a non-conflict-of interest agreement prior to the beginning of public accreditation procedure and submit it to NCPA.

3. Working Principles of an External Review Panel

Panel members should not refer to their personal work experience as the best practice. The external review implies teamwork, thus reaching an agreement on the review results with all the panel members. A student is a full member of the panel of equal status to the other members. Each member of the panel actively contributes to the work and proves their specific viewpoint and expertise.

The external review implies the use of complementary expertise and achievements of experts employed in various fields (academic, professional), in order to fairly evaluate the quality of the educational programmes.

Experts should be able to adapt to various groups of stakeholders and conditions in an educational institution; be flexible and open. It is important to be able to understand their own and stakeholders' motives; analyse and anticipate possible developments of discussion; acquire a solid understanding of the information obtained during the review procedure. It is also important to be able to foster a friendly but professional atmosphere during the meetings, manage emotions and prevent conflicts.

During international accreditation, it is necessary to take into account the cultural conditions and mindset of foreign experts – panel members; follow moral and ethical principles, standards and rules of international cooperation.

When involving interpreters, their work should be acknowledged and appreciated. Experts should be well-aware of the work of an interpreter and adjust their communication with stakeholders accordingly. If any online interviews take place, foreign experts should be able to follow the interviews with an accurate and complete translation.

Except in emergency situations, no mobile phones are to be used by experts during interviews.

Before the site-visit experts will thoroughly assess the self-evaluation report and study the additional material available on the website of the educational institution. In addition to studying the self-evaluation report and supplementary documents, the external review involves the use of a variety of expert methods including interviews, surveys, visiting classes; clarifying and satisfying experts' requests; using the relevant analytical tools that ensure independent analysis of the tendencies in higher education, evaluating the current situation and ways for the development of study programmes.

4. Confidentiality

Confidentiality is one of the key principles of NCPA activities. The information and documentation submitted to NCPA is confidential and should be used only in the process of public accreditation of (an) study programme(s).

Expert reviewers assume obligations of providing no access to the submitted information. The information can't be made public without permission of the institution under review and NCPA.

The working documents completed by experts are considered NCPA internal documentation and shall be kept confidential. The contents of the documents are NCPA intellectual property.

Any assessment or expression of expert opinions contained in the working documents is not to be communicated to representatives of the Institution under review.