



GUIDE FOR RECOGNITION OF INTERNATIONAL ACCREDITATION AGENCIES

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**TURKISH HIGHER EDUCATION
QUALITY COUNCIL**

FOREWORD

Turkish Higher Education Quality Council (THEQC) is in charge of internal and external quality assurance in Turkish higher education system, the evaluation of quality levels of education, research and social contribution activities as well as administrative services of higher education institutions according to national and international quality standards, and the processes of the recognition, authorization and monitoring of independent external evaluation and accreditation agencies. This guide has been prepared to provide guidance to the aforesaid agencies in the processes of the evaluation of their application for recognition and authorization and in the process of monitoring.

The guide presents detailed information on the methodology followed in the review of national and international agencies' applications for authorization and recognition, the reviewing steps, the employed criteria, the evidence regarding the meeting of the criteria and the decision mechanisms. The review criteria and the expected evidence stated in the guide are based on the internationally recognized implementations (particularly the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area). Additionally, the independent agencies who contribute to external evaluation and accreditation processes of higher education programs are expected to be in close contact and cooperation with the THEQC and to respect academic ethics principles.

We believe that the external evaluation and accreditation processes constitute a significant indicator for quality assurance in higher education system, and hope the guide to contribute to the implementation of independent accreditation agencies and continuous improvement practices of higher education institutions.

Turkish Higher Education Quality Council

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INTRODUCTION

This guide has been prepared as part of the Article 27 titled “Process of recognition and authorization of accreditation agencies” of the Regulation on Higher Education Quality Assurance and the Higher Education Quality Council published in the Official Gazette No. 30604 of 23 November 2018. In this scope, it is aimed to guide the independent external evaluation and accreditation agencies operating in the field of higher education in the preparation, submission and review of the documents to be presented in the process of issuing the Quality Evaluation Registration Certificate, which indicates that the agency is authorized to evaluate the external evaluation and quality assurance process that assesses whether or not the higher education program meets the predetermined academic and field-specific standards in a specific field. The guide also presents detailed information on the review criteria, processes and decision mechanisms formed to evaluate the compliance of the independent agencies’ declared missions, objectives, legislations, written review criteria, processes, implementations, methods and policies with the legislative regulations of the THEQC and the ESG. The guide explains all the criteria on the review of national and international agencies and provides information on the evidence expected for each criterion.

DEFINITIONS

In this guide:

1. Accreditation Agencies System (AAS) means the online system in which accreditation agencies' application, review and monitoring processes are conducted,

10. Agency stands for international independent external evaluation and accreditation agencies,

11. Criteria stands for the minimum standards and principles that the agencies applying for

12. Program stands for the higher education programs subject to accreditation or evaluation activities undertaken by the agencies,

13. Recognition Certificate means the certificate approved by the Council and indicating that international agencies are recognized to evaluate the external evaluation and quality

2. Application Form stands for the form that is prepared by International Accreditation Agency to make application for recognition and that includes evidence that they meet the Criteria For the Recognition of International External Evaluation and Accreditation Agencies,

3. Review Report means the report issued by the Commission after the examination of the agency's application for the Quality Evaluation Registration Certificate,

4. ESG stands for the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area,

5. Objection Assessment Commission stands for the commission formed by the THEQC to assess the objections filed against the Council decisions regarding the authorization or recognition of agencies,

6. Objection Assessment Report means the report issued by the Objection Assessment Commission

7. Commission stands for the THEQC Commission on the Authorization and Recognition of

8. Council stands for the Higher Education Quality Council of Turkey,

9. Institution stands for higher education institutions, agencies, assurance process that assesses whether or not the higher education program meets the authorization or recognition by THEQC are required to meet, External Evaluation and Accreditation Agencies, on the objections filed against the THEQC decisions regarding the authorization or recognition of predetermined academic and field-specific standards in a specific field.

1. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Evaluation criteria are essential principles and standards that must be ensured by the international agencies which have applied for recognition. International agencies must demonstrate their qualifications regarding the recognition process by taking the following criteria into account:

1.1 Quality Assurance Activities

The agency should maintain its quality assurance activities on a regular basis and with the participation of its stakeholders, and must do the quality assurance activities on the following aspects:

- The agency should explicitly define its program accreditation activities in line with its mission and objectives.
- The agency should ensure the representation of its stakeholders in its processes and practices.
- The agency should publish the documents used in the accreditation processes on its official website.
- The agency should publicly announce its accreditation review results.
- The agency should explicitly define its objection review processes.

1.2 Output-Oriented Approach

The agency should prove that it adopts an output-oriented accreditation approach and should manifest this on basis of the following aspect:

- The agency should adopt an output-oriented approach in its accreditation reviews.
- The agency should review learning outcomes, monitoring of student success, assessment and evaluation approaches and opinions of graduates.

1.3 Thematic Analysis

The agency should periodically prepare and publish thematic analysis reports that comprise and analyze general findings of its accreditation reviews. The agency should do this on the basis of the following aspects:

- The agency should periodically analyze the outcomes of its accreditation activities in terms of general approaches, results and impacts and publicly announce its general review reports (thematic analysis reports) that comprise good practice examples and structural problems (legislation, system, human resources etc.).

1.4 Internal Quality Assurance

The agency should have appropriate internal quality assurance processes in order to monitor, assess and ensure the outcomes of its activities and conduct continuous improvement works. The agency should prove that it has appropriate internal quality assurance processes on the basis of the following aspects:

- The agency should explicitly define its quality assurance system and publicly announce its quality policy on its official website.
- The agency should ensure that all the personnel involved in its activities are competent and act in accordance with ethical rules.
- The agency should have internal and external feedback mechanisms that aim continuous improvement within the agency.

1.5 External Evaluation

The agency should undergo external evaluation at least once every five years and prove that it is involved in external evaluation processes on the basis of the following aspects.

- The agency should periodically undergo external evaluation for the review of its policy and activities.
- The agencies that are affiliates/members of international quality assurance networks are deemed to meet this criterion provided that they are subject to external evaluation by these networks.

2. APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications for the recognition of international external evaluation and accreditation agencies are submitted by accreditation agencies.

The application is submitted to the Council electronically or in written form with the agency's letter of intent for recognition and with application form (Annex 2).

In the application file, necessary statements for all Criteria for the Recognition of International External Evaluation and Accreditation Agencies are made and evidence for each criterion is given.

3. REVIEW PROCESS

The reviewing stage of the agencies' applications consists of three steps, namely the pre-review, the preparation of the review report and the decision:

1. Pre-Review: The pre-review of the application file is conducted within **15 days** by the Council staff. The agency is requested to complete the missing documents within 30 days after the pre-review. The applications with missing documents are not reviewed.

2. Preparation of the Review Report: The application file deemed appropriate at the pre-review step is sent to the Commission. The file is examined by the Commission within **30 days** and the review report, including the Commission's opinion, is prepared and submitted to the Council. The Commission employs the related criteria in Part I during the review of the application file. The levels of meeting these criteria are stated in the report. It is stated in the report that the criteria are "met" "met to some extent" or "are not met". The report also comprises recommendations for the criteria that are met to some extent or not met.

3. Decision: The review report is presented to the Council members before a Council meeting. After the presentation of the report, the applications of the agencies are added on the agenda of the Council and a final decision is issued.

4. DECISION PROCESS

The Council is entitled to issue decisions on the applications filed for the recognition of international agencies. The Council issues a final decision after examining the review report written by the Commission. If necessary, the Council can pay an on-site visit to the agency and demand additional evidence.

The Council decides 'recognized' or 'unrecognized' the recognition of international external evaluation and accreditation agencies.

The validity period of the 'Recognition Certificate', which will be granted to the recognized agencies, is **5 years** on condition that they annually submit feedback reports regarding their activities in Turkey.

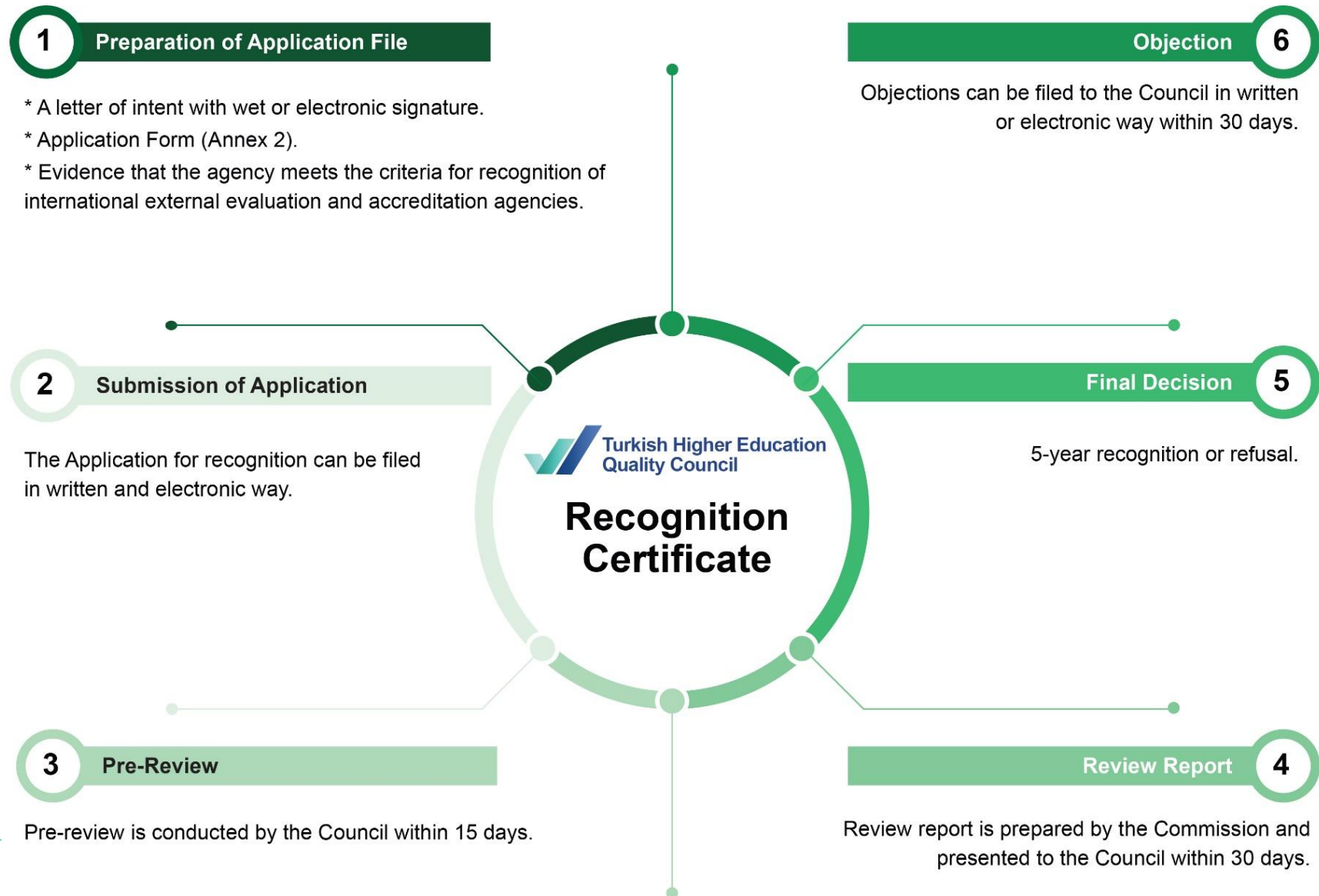
Information on international agencies which have the Recognition Certificate is published on the website of the Council.

4.2 Objections

International organizations should make their objections to the Council in written or electronic form within 30 days following the notification of the decision. In the petition of objection, the standard and the evidence that this standard has been met should be included.

Objections are examined by the Objection Assessment Commission. The Commission submits the Objection Assessment Report, including its opinion on the objection, to the Council. The Council should decide on the objection by taking into account the report in question and this decision shall be notified to the agency.

ANNEX 1: APPLICATION, REVIEW AND DECISION PROCESS FOR INTERNATIONAL ACCREDITATION AGENCIES



ANNEX 2: APPLICATION FORM

A. Information on the External Evaluation and Accreditation Agency

Agency	
Address	
Country	
E-mail	
Website	
Telephone	
Name of contact person	
Title of contact person	
E-mail address of contact person	

Recognition Status	
☐ First application	☐ Application for the extension of recognition period
Application date:	Application date:
	Expiration date of the last recognition:

Programs covered by the agency's accreditation services	
Program Name	☐ Associate Degree ☐ Bachelor's Degree ☐ Graduate Degree
Program Name	☐ Associate Degree ☐ Bachelor's Degree ☐ Graduate Degree
Program Name	☐ Associate Degree ☐ Bachelor's Degree ☐ Graduate Degree

B. Information on the Criteria

Please explain your present situation with regard to each criterion stated below and add required evidence.

CRITERIA	EXPLANATIONS	EXPECTED EVIDENCE
1. Quality assurance activities The agency should maintain its quality assurance activities on a regular basis and with the participation of its stakeholders.	• <i>The agency should explicitly define its program accreditation activities in line with its mission and objectives.</i> • <i>The agency should ensure the representation of its stakeholders in its processes and practices.</i> • <i>The agency should publish the documents used in the accreditation processes on its official website.</i> • <i>The agency should publicly announce its accreditation review results.</i> • <i>The agency should explicitly define its objection review processes.</i>	• <i>Mission and objectives</i> • <i>Criteria and guidelines</i> • <i>Evidence for stakeholder participation</i> • <i>Website</i> • <i>Programs accredited by the agency</i> • <i>Details on fees</i> • <i>Objection processes</i>
Remarks:		

2. Output-oriented approach The agency should prove that it adopts an output-oriented accreditation approach.	• <i>The agency should adopt an output-oriented approach in its accreditation reviews.</i> • <i>The agency should review learning outcomes, monitoring of student success, assessment and evaluation approaches and opinions of graduates.</i>	• <i>Evidence for output-oriented accreditation practices</i>
Remarks:		
3. Thematic analysis The agency should periodically prepare and publish thematic analysis reports that comprise and analyze general findings of its accreditation reviews.	• <i>The agency should periodically analyze the outcomes of its accreditation activities in terms of general approaches, results and impacts and publicly announce its general review reports (thematic analysis reports) that comprise good practice examples and structural problems (legislation, system, human resources etc.).</i>	• <i>Published thematic analysis reports</i>
Remarks:		

4. Internal quality assurance The agency should have appropriate internal quality assurance processes in order to monitor, assess and ensure the outcomes of its activities and conduct continuous improvement works.	• <i>The agency should explicitly define its quality assurance system and publicly announce its quality policy on its official website.</i> • <i>The agency should ensure that all the personnel involved in its activities are competent and act in accordance with ethical rules.</i> • <i>The agency should have internal and external feedback mechanisms that aim continuous improvement within the agency.</i>	• <i>The agency's quality policy</i> • <i>Evidence for the presence of internal quality assurance system within the agency</i> • <i>The agency's ethical rules</i> • <i>Evidence for feedback and improvements within the processes such as the agency's evaluation outcomes, trainings etc.</i>
Remarks:		
5. External evaluation The agency should undergo external evaluation at least once every five years.	• <i>The agency should periodically undergo external evaluation for the review of its policy and activities.</i> • <i>The agencies that are affiliates/members of international quality assurance networks are deemed to meet this criterion provided that they are subject to external evaluation by these networks.</i>	• <i>Information and documents on external evaluation processes</i> • <i>Documents proving affiliation or membership in international quality assurance networks</i>
Remarks:		



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