



Action plan for quality assurance development in the higher education system of Republic of Srpska, BiH



**Co-funded by
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Action plan for quality assurance development in HE system of Republic of Srpska, BiH is one of the deliverables of the project ‘Supporting European QA Agencies in meeting the ESG II’, reference number 101061461 - SEQA-ESG2-ERASMUS-EDU-2021-EHEA-IBA

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Republic of Srpska, BiH, Banja Luka, 2024

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1. Introduction

Following the Peer counselling visit held on 5th May 2023, AHERS appointed the team for the development of the action plan in accordance with the recommendations given by experts at the time of the Peer counselling visits. The team is comprised of representatives from the Agency for Higher Education of Republic of Srpska (hereinafter: AHERS), Ministry of scientific - technological development and higher education (hereinafter: Ministry) and two biggest universities in Republic of Srpska, University of Banja Luka and University of East Sarajevo.

Each member of the team was given a task with reference to reflecting on certain parts of the action plan.

The reference documents for writing the action plan were:

- Law on Higher Education of Republic of Srpska (RS Official Gazette no. 67/20) ¹
- Law on Agency for Higher Education of Republic of Srpska (RS Official Gazette nr. 42/24)²
- Rulebook on internal quality assurance of the Agency for Higher Education of the Republic of Srpska
- Rulebook on Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programs³
- Rulebook on Amendments and Additions to the Rulebook on Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programs⁴
- Rulebook on Initial Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programs ⁵
- Rulebook on Recognition of Foreign Higher Education Qualifications⁶
- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015)
- Standards for Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions in Republic of Srpska⁷
- Standards for Accreditation of Study Programs of First and Second Cycle of Education in Republic of Srpska⁸
- Standards for Initial Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programs⁹
- Rulebook on Determining the Fees for the Services Provided by the AHERS and on the Method of Income Distribution ¹⁰
- Rulebook on Additions to the Rulebook on Determining the Fees for the Services Provided by the AHERS and on the Method of Income Distribution ¹¹

¹ [https://www.avors.org/images/propisi/the law on higher education.pdf](https://www.avors.org/images/propisi/the%20law%20on%20higher%20education.pdf)

² [https://www.avors.org/images/propisi/The law on Agency for higher education of Republic of Srpska.pdf](https://www.avors.org/images/propisi/The%20law%20on%20Agency%20for%20higher%20education%20of%20Republic%20of%20Srpska.pdf)

³ [https://www.avors.org/images/propisi/Pravilnik o akreditaciji visokoskolskih ustanova i studijskih programa.pdf](https://www.avors.org/images/propisi/Pravilnik%20o%20akreditaciji%20visokoskolskih%20ustanova%20i%20studijskih%20programa.pdf)

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[https://www.avors.org/images/propisi/Pravilnik o izmjenama i dopunama Pravilnika o akreditaciji visokoskolskih ustanova i studijskih programa.pdf](https://www.avors.org/images/propisi/Pravilnik%20o%20izmjenama%20i%20dopunama%20Pravilnika%20o%20akreditaciji%20visokoskolskih%20ustanova%20i%20studijskih%20programa.pdf)

⁵ [https://www.avors.org/images/propisi/pravilnik o pocetnoj akreditaciji.pdf](https://www.avors.org/images/propisi/pravilnik%20o%20pocetnoj%20akreditaciji.pdf)

⁶ [https://www.avors.org/images/propisi/Pravilnik o postupku proznavanja strane visokoskolske kvalifikacije 23.pdf](https://www.avors.org/images/propisi/Pravilnik%20o%20postupku%20proznavanja%20strane%20visokoskolske%20kvalifikacije%2023.pdf)

⁷ [https://www.avors.org/images/propisi/Standards for accreditation of higher education institutions.pdf](https://www.avors.org/images/propisi/Standards%20for%20accreditation%20of%20higher%20education%20institutions.pdf)

⁸ [https://www.avors.org/images/propisi/Standards for accreditation of study programs first and second cycle of studies.pdf](https://www.avors.org/images/propisi/Standards%20for%20accreditation%20of%20study%20programs%20first%20and%20second%20cycle%20of%20studies.pdf)

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<https://www.avors.org/attachments/article/118/%D0%A1%D0%A2%D0%90%D0%9D%D0%94%D0%90%D0%A0%D0%94%D0%98%20%D0%97%D0%90%20%D0%9F%D0%9E%D0%A7%D0%95%D0%A2%D0%9D%D0%A3%20%D0%90%D0%9A%D0%A0%D0%95%D0%94%D0%98%D0%A2%D0%90%D0%A6%D0%98%D0%88%D0%A3%20%D0%92%D0%98%D0%A1%D0%9E%D0%9A%D0%9E%D0%A8%D0%9A%D0%9E%D0%9B%D0%A1%D0%9A%D0%98%D0%A5%20%D0%A3%D0%A1%D0%A2%D0%90%D0%9D%D0%9E%D0%92%D0%90%20%D0%98%20%D0%A1%D0%A2%D0%A3%D0%94%D0%98%D0%88%D0%A1%D0%9A%D0%98%D0%A5%20%D0%9F%D0%A0%D0%9E%D0%93%D0%A0%D0%90%D0%9CA.pdf>

¹⁰ [https://www.avors.org/images/propisi/Pravilnik o odredjivanju visine naknada AVORS.pdf](https://www.avors.org/images/propisi/Pravilnik%20o%20odredjivanju%20visine%20naknada%20AVORS.pdf)

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[https://www.avors.org/images/propisi/121Pravilnik o dopunama Pravilnika o odredjivanju visine naknada za pruzanje usluga iz nadležnosti Agencije za visoko obrazovanje Republike Srpske.pdf](https://www.avors.org/images/propisi/121Pravilnik%20o%20dopunama%20Pravilnika%20o%20odredjivanju%20visine%20naknada%20za%20pruzanje%20usluga%20iz%20nadležnosti%20Agencije%20za%20visoko%20obrazovanje%20Republike%20Srpske.pdf)

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- Rulebook on Amendments and Additions to the Rulebook on Determining the Fees for the Services Provided by the AHERS and on the Method of Income Distribution¹²

The Action plan shall be used for the purpose of aligning the higher education system with the ESG requirements and good practices of the quality assurance agencies, ENQA members, operating in the EHEA. It is in line with the Strategy for the Development of Science and Technology, Higher Education and Information Society in the Republic of Srpska for the period 2023-2029¹³. Main priority is to have an effective quality assurance system in higher education and recognition of foreign qualifications systems in place. Measures for assuring the realisation of this priority refer to improving the quality of higher education and more efficient management of the higher education system thus influencing the quality of workforce potential in the Republic of Srpska. Accreditation, quality improvement and subsequent modernisation of study programs contribute to the higher level of meeting standards and criteria, better harmonization between the study programs and needs of the labour market, according to capacities of HEIs. This action plan represents set of measures leading to constant monitoring of the implementation of standards and guidelines.

Since there are numerous of stakeholders in the higher education system of the Republic of Srpska, the action plan shall serve the Ministry as a basis for improving the legislation, AHERS as a frame of action towards meeting the ESG requirements and achieving ENQA membership as well as an initial step for having yearly action plans that shall aim for constant improvements, this level of compliance being the bottom threshold.

The action plan shall indirectly, through the joint effort of the Ministry and AHERS on their part, serve and be beneficial for HEIs, and subsequently and most importantly students and their families.

¹²

[https://www.avors.org/images/propisi/121Pravilnik o dopunama Pravilnika o odredjivanju visine naknada za pruzanje usluga iz nadleznosti Agencije za visoko obrazovanje Republike Srpske.pdf](https://www.avors.org/images/propisi/121Pravilnik_o_dopunama_Pravilnika_o_odredjivanju_visine_naknada_za_pruzanje_usluga_iz_nadleznosti_Agencije_za_visoko_obrazovanje_Republike_Srpske.pdf)

¹³<https://vladars.rs/sr-SP->

[Cyrl/Vlada/Ministarstva/mnk/Documents/%D0%A1%D1%82%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%B3%D0%B8%D1%98%D0%B0_%D0%9C%D0%9D%D0%A0%D0%92%D0%9E%D0%98%D0%94_%D0%9A%D0%9E%D0%9D%D0%90%D0%A7%D0%90%D0%9D_270923_%D0%9D%D0%94.pdf](https://vladars.rs/sr-SP-Cyrl/Vlada/Ministarstva/mnk/Documents/%D0%A1%D1%82%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%B3%D0%B8%D1%98%D0%B0_%D0%9C%D0%9D%D0%A0%D0%92%D0%9E%D0%98%D0%94_%D0%9A%D0%9E%D0%9D%D0%90%D0%A7%D0%90%D0%9D_270923_%D0%9D%D0%94.pdf)

2. Country's higher education system

The economic development of the Republic of Srpska is closely related to the development of highly qualified staff, which is why education is constantly being adjusted and harmonized with the requirements of modern society. The process of reforms in the field of high education in the Republic of Srpska began with the signing of the Bologna Declaration in 2003 with the formal restructuring of studies into a three-cycle model of study and the modernization of study programs in line with the needs of the economy.

The Higher education system in Republic of Srpska is regulated by the Law on Higher Education and the Law on Agency for Higher Education of Republic of Srpska (previously Law on Quality Assurance in Higher Education of Republic of Srpska). Higher education follows after a four-year secondary school education that leads to an internationally recognized degree of higher education. Higher education institutions are universities and colleges, which can be public or private. University is a higher education institution that combines educational work, scientific research, and professional and artistic work, as well as projects of importance for the business community, as three components of the process of higher education. According to the law, a university implements at least ten different academic study programs from at least four fields of education and organizes academic studies in all three cycles. A university may also organise vocational studies of the first and second cycles. Member institutions of a university may be faculties, art academies and scientific research institutes. Member institutions do not have the status of a legal entity. It is important to emphasize that, according to the Law on Higher Education, higher education institution is non-profit organization performing its activities as public service in accordance with the law on public service institutions and all the income made in the course of performing higher education is used solely for development and improvement of higher education activities.

Classes at high education institutions are organized in three cycles: undergraduate, which is evaluated with at least 180 or up to 240 points (ECTS), then the second cycle leading to the academic title of master with 300 ECTS points, and doctoral studies with 360 ECST points after which the title of Doctor of Science is acquired. Exceptions are medical faculties that last 12 semesters until the title of medical doctor.

There are 18 higher education institutions listed in the Register of Higher Education Institutions of Republika Srpska – 9 universities and 9 colleges. Out of this number, there are two public universities and two public colleges whereas all others are private.

The main institutions and bodies in the higher education system of Republic of Srpska, besides the higher education institutions, are the Ministry, AHERS, the Council for Higher Education of Republic of Srpska (hereinafter: Council), Rectors Conference of Republic of Srpska and Academy of Arts and Science of Republic of Srpska. It is important to emphasize that the Council acts as an independent, academic, professional, and counselling body. The main competencies of the Council are: monitoring the development of the education system in the Republic of Srpska and the level of its harmonisation with European and international standards. The specific competencies are listed in the Law on higher education of Republic of Srpska.

The following table shows some data about the system in the Republic of Srpska, referring to the number of higher education institutions and number of students and changing trends in the period from 2018-2023.

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1. УПИСАНИ СТУДЕНТИ ENROLLED STUDENTS

1.1. БРОЈ УСТАНОВА ВИСОКОГ ОБРАЗОВАЊА, АКАДЕМСКЕ 2018/2019–2021/2022. ГОДИНЕ
NUMBER OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS, ACADEMIC YEARS 2018/2019–2021/2022

	Број установа ²⁾ Number of Institutions ²⁾	Високе школе Schools of higher education	Универзитети / Universities ³⁾			
			број универзитета number of universities	организационе јединице organisational units		
				факултети faculties	академије academies	теолошки факултети ⁴⁾ theological faculties ⁴⁾
2018/2019	21	12	9	93	5	2
2019/2020	20	11	9	93	5	2
2020/2021	20	11	9	93	5	2
2021/2022	19	10	9	92	5	2

1.2. БРОЈ УСТАНОВА ВИСОКОГ ОБРАЗОВАЊА У АКАДЕМСКОЈ 2022/2023. ГОДИНИ
NUMBER OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2022/2023

	Број високошколских установа ²⁾ Number of higher education institutions ²⁾	Високе школе Schools of higher education		Универзитети / Universities ³⁾								
				број установа number of institutions	број одјељења ван сједишта number of departments outside the headquarters	број установа number of institutions	чланице organisational units					
							факултети faculties		теолошки факултети ⁴⁾ theological faculties ⁴⁾		академије academies	
							број установа number of institutions	број одјељења ван сједишта number of departments outside the headquarters	број установа number of institutions	број одјељења ван сједишта number of departments outside the headquarters	број установа number of institutions	број одјељења ван сједишта number of departments outside the headquarters
2022/2023	18	9	1	9	69	24	1	1	4	1		

1.3. УПИСАНИ СТУДЕНТИ ПО ПОЛУ, АКАДЕМСКЕ 2018/2019–2022/2023. ГОДИНЕ
ENROLLED STUDENTS BY SEX AND MODE OF STUDYING, ACADEMIC YEARS 2018/2019–2022/2023

	Студенти уписани на Students enrolled in											
	укупно total		први циклус студија first cycle of study		магистарске студије master of science studies		други циклус студија second cycle studies				докторанди/ трећи циклус студија doctoral candidates/ third cycle studies	
							мастер студије master studies		специјалистичке студије specialist studies			
	свега all	женски female	свега all	женски female	свега all	женски female	свега all	женски female	свега all	женски female	свега all	женски female
2018/2019	31 443	18 143	29 006	16 771	14	8	2 144	1 207	160	94	119	63
2019/2020	29 440	17 253	26 980	15 878	16	4	2 109	1 179	170	98	165	94
2020/2021	28 523	16 689	25 735	15 058	4	1	2 430	1 394	170	131	184	105
2021/2022	27 583	16 553	24 807	14 855	1	-	2 334	1 419	156	112	285	167
2022/2023	26 774	16 292	24 267	14 789	-	-	2 201	1 325	71	44	235	134

The data in the tables are from the Republic of Srpska Institute of Statistics for the period from 2018 to 2023.

3. Quality assurance of higher education in the country

3.1 Legal framework

The Law on Higher Education of Republic of Srpska regulates aims and principles of higher education in the Republic of Srpska, levels and sorts of higher education, founding, organization and operation of higher education institutions, general principles in the area of quality assurance in higher education, educational, scientific research and art operations of higher education institutions, rights and liabilities of academic staff and students, bodies in the area of higher education, financing higher education institutions, as well as other issues significant for performing higher education.

The Law on Quality Assurance in Higher Education (RS Official Gazette no. 67/20 and 16/23) regulated the quality assurance in higher education, processes of initial accreditation, accreditation, thematic evaluation and independent periodical external evaluation of internal quality assurance system, status, operations, organizations and financing of the Agency for Higher Education. It was succeeded by the Law on the Agency for Higher Education of Republic of Srpska (hereinafter: the Law). According to the Law, the Agency is competent for:

- improvement and alignment of the system of higher education of the Republic with the international and European system of higher education,
- development of the quality assurance system of higher education in accordance with the Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European area of higher education,
- initial accreditation, accreditation and thematic evaluation of higher education institutions and study programs-keeping the Register of accredited higher education institutions and study programs,
- recognition of foreign higher education qualifications for the purpose of general access to the labour market development and application of the qualification framework of the Republic and connection with the European framework of qualifications,
- adoption of standards for initial accreditation and standards for accreditation of higher education institutions and study programs,
- participation in the development, monitoring and implementation of strategies and general acts in the field of science and higher education,
- collects and processes data on the higher education system and other systems in connection with higher education,
- encourages scientific research work of all interested parties in the field of quality assurance,
- cooperation with international organizations, bodies and institutions responsible for higher education and quality assurance,
- representing the Republic of Srpska at international conferences, gatherings, in international organizations, networks, bodies and associations within its jurisdiction,
- participation in the realization of projects within its jurisdiction financed by international financial organizations,
- providing information through the media and other forms of information about its work,
- perform other tasks in accordance with the Law, regulations in the field of higher education and the Statute.

Besides the Steering Board, which is the governing body of the AHERS, and the director of the AHERS, there are expert and advisory bodies of the AHERS: Accreditation Council and Appeals and Complaints Committee. Competences and tasks of the Steering Committee are detailed in the [Law](#) .

The Accreditation Council is an expert and advisory body of the AHERS, which controls compliance of external evaluation procedures with standards, criteria and general acts of the AHERS. The structure, number of members, method of election and mandate of the Accreditation Council are regulated by the Statute of the AHERS. The Accreditation Council reviews reports on external evaluation, issues an opinion on compliance or non-compliance of the external evaluation procedure with standards, criteria and the law which is submitted to the AHERS and taken into account when the AHERS issues a decision on accreditation. Also, the Accreditation Council makes a selection and proposes to the AHERS the final proposal of the panel of experts based on preliminary proposal of the accreditation coordinator and final proposal of panel of reviewers (in initial accreditation) which is then appointed by the AHERS director. When it comes to the work of AHERS, the Accreditation Council considers and proposes acts related to the establishment of an internal system quality assurance of the Agency and makes recommendations for improving the work of the AHERS.

Appeals and Complaints Committee is an expert and advisory body of the AHERS that considers and issues an opinion on complaints and appeals from higher education institutions, in accordance with this law, the Statute and other Acts of the AHERS. The Steering Board makes the final decision on the appeal and complaint based on the opinion of the Committee for Appeals and Complaints. The structure, number of members, method of election and mandate of the members of the Appeals and Complaints Committee are prescribed by the Statute of the Agency.

Organisational independence of the Agency is regulated by the Law on Higher Education of Republic of Srpska and the Law. Article 6 of the Law stipulates the status of AHERS as an independent legal entity that aligns its activities with European Standards and Guidelines and international practice in the area of quality assurance in higher education. Article 44 of the Law stipulates that the AHERS submits an annual work report to the National Assembly of the Republika Srpska no later than June 30 of the current year for the previous year. This provision aims to achieve the highest possible level of independence in the AHERS work, which are requirements arising from the Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). AHERS director is appointed by the National Assembly of Republic of Srpska on a five-year mandate with the possibility of one re-appointment. AHERS director passes decisions on accreditation based on the opinion of expert panels after the conducted external evaluation process hence the operational independence taking into account the opinion of the Accreditation Council. Independence is also assured by the AHERS Accreditation council which approves all final reports by the expert panels thus confirming the alignment of the external evaluation processes with Standards for HEIs and Standards for study programs, Rulebook on accreditation of HEIs and study programs and subsequently ESG and the Law.

Legal acts of the Agency produced in accordance with the Law:

- Statute of the Agency
- Rulebook on initial accreditation of higher education institutions and study programs
- Rulebook on accreditation of higher education institutions and study programs
- Rulebook on keeping the Register of accredited higher education institutions and study programs
- Rulebook on thematic evaluations
- Rulebook on the procedure of recognizing the foreign higher education qualification
- Rulebook on Agency's internal quality assurance system
- Rulebook on determining the fees for the services provided by the Agency and the distribution of funds
- Standards for initial accreditation of higher education institutions and study programs
- Standards for accreditation of higher education institutions

- Standards on accreditation of study programs, as well as a number of general operational rulebooks and acts.

The new Law on Agency for Higher Education of Republic of Srpska¹⁴ was recently adopted by National Assembly and entered into force in on the 25th May 2024.

The need arose for more precise and detailed regulation of certain provisions of the law and the definition of the Agency's expanded competences in the area of development and application of the qualifications framework of the Republic of Srpska and connection with the European qualifications framework.

Provisions related to internal quality assurance have been specified, more precisely, which will help higher education institutions in establishing and improving this system. It is regulated that higher education institutions establish offices for quality assurance and quality improvement, and that they carry out the self-evaluation process periodically, at least once every two years.

The provisions in which cases the initial accreditation of the study program is carried out have been specified, as this was not sufficiently specified in the previous legislative framework and caused confusion and different interpretations.

The foreseen possibility of implementing the initial accreditation of modules on the existing study program, which is particularly significant in terms of the needs of higher education institutions for innovating study programs by adding new orientations. That procedure will be carried out according to abbreviated procedures, and will be regulated by the Rulebook on Initial Accreditation.

The novelty is also in specifying the reference values for the accreditation of the joint study. It is stipulated that the initial accreditation of joint studies is carried out in relation to the standards prescribed by the European approach to ensuring the quality of joint studies, which are an integral part of the Standards for initial accreditation.

Provisions have also been specified specifying the deadline for submitting an application for accreditation, namely one year before the expiration of the accreditation validity period, or no later than 18 months before the expiration of the accreditation period if the accreditation was preceded by a letter of expectation.

Provisions related to the stages of the accreditation procedure have been specified and supplemented in such a way that accreditation is carried out in four stages (instead of the previous three), that is, the stage of follow-up activities is also included, and this is especially important in the context of ESG requirements.

Provisions related to the procedure in cases where facts are established during the procedure that can significantly affect the outcome of the procedure have been specified. Also, considering that in some cases, for justified reasons, the accreditation procedures do not manage to be completed by the validity period of the institution's accreditation, the accreditation status is regulated in such situations so that the recognition of diplomas and the participation of higher education institutions in international organizations and projects would not be called into question.

It is prescribed that, if the accreditation procedure is not completed for justified reasons by the expiration of the validity of the accreditation, the Agency issues a decision extending the period of validity of the accreditation until the end of the procedure, and no longer than 18 months from the expiration of the validity of the accreditation.

¹⁴ https://www.avors.org/images/propisi/The_law_on_Agency_for_higher_education_of_Republic_of_Srpska.pdf

The new competence of the Agency in the field of development and implementation of the qualifications framework of the Republic of Srpska and the connection with the European qualifications framework was prescribed. It is prescribed that the Agency performs this competence in accordance with the regulations governing the area of the qualifications framework.

The reasons for passing the Law on the Agency for Higher Education of the Republic of Srpska also refer to the additional strengthening of the position of the Agency in terms of recognition and recognition of the higher education system of the Republic of Srpska in the European higher education area. The efforts of the Ministry and the AHERS are aimed at acquiring full membership of the Agency in the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the European Register for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (EQAR), which maintains a database of member agencies' reports (DEQAR).

Membership in ENQA and EQAR is to be proven by the Agency's external evaluation procedure, and the first procedure conducted in 2017 resulted in the Agency's associate membership in ENQA.

The third part of the Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) refers to quality assurance agencies and the most important requirement relates to the establishment of a clear legal basis for the Agency, which is recognized by the competent public authorities. The next key requirement of the standard is to ensure the autonomy and independence of the work of the Agency, which has full responsibility for its work and decision-making.

In order to verify the fulfillment of the above and other ESG requirements, after reaching full membership, the Agency is subject to external evaluation by ENQA every five years. Considering the importance of gaining full membership, the Agency participates in the project Support to quality assurance agencies in achieving fulfillment of ESG requirements (SEQA-ESG 2). During the duration of the project, it will be possible to apply for full membership in ENQA, and it is necessary to provide prerequisites for the recognition of the Agency in the European area of higher education.

At the meeting held as part of the project on December 5, 2023, with the president of ENQA, the director of EQAR and experts from the European Higher Education Area, recommendations were made for further harmonizing the work of the Agency with ESG, which were also implemented in the Law.

3.2 Stakeholder engagement

The stakeholders are involved in all bodies of the Agency as following:

- Steering Board of the AHERS (representatives of the academic community, representative of the labour market and representative of the students),
- Accreditation Council (representatives of the academic community both national and international and representative of the students),
- Appeals and Complaints Committee (representatives of the academic community and representative of students),
- panels of experts (representatives of the academic community both national and international, representative of the labour market and representative of the students).

The key groups of stakeholders involved are: students, national and international academic staff, non-academic staff, representatives of the local community, labour market, alumni, etc. There are number of forms used for the inclusion of associates and stakeholders in the work of the AHERS. At the beginning of AHERS work there was an Accreditation Forum as an expert body on behalf of the academic community, that was comprised of 21 members of the academia, but now it has spread to the involvement of many more stakeholders ranging from Student union of Republic of Srpska, Council for Higher Education of

Republic of Srpska, Ministry, Accreditation Council, Rector's Conference of Republic of Srpska as well as Academia of Arts and Science. Hence, the knowledge and competences of these experts is formally an AHERS' resource. Procedures, standards and methodology acts have been passed in consultations with stakeholders and their active involvement through the internal quality assurance improvement mechanisms, i.e. meetings with various stakeholders within the higher education system of Republika Srpska, questionnaires etc. SWOT analysis is composed through the process of consultations of AVORS staff with immediate stakeholders. The AHERS self-evaluation process also includes all key stakeholder groups in the higher education institution and especially: students, academic and non-academic staff, stakeholders, such as representatives of the local community, labour market, alumni, etc.

Stakeholders' contribution is significant through lists of experts and lists of reviewers that participate in external evaluation processes.

The challenges to be addressed in this area are the bigger involvement of stakeholders as well as the continuous awareness raising on the importance of building quality culture what remains to be an issue.

3.3 National/agency criteria in external quality assurance

The criteria used in the external QA activities of the AHERS are Standards for Accreditation of HEIs and Standards for Accreditation of Study Programs of First and Second Cycle. These standards are aligned with ESG and the BiH criteria for accreditation of HEIs and study programs. Since BiH criteria for accreditation of higher education institutions and criteria for accreditation of study programs of first and second cycle of studies were not detailed enough in terms of guiding experts through the specific requirements of the higher education system in Republic of Srpska, AHERS has developed two sets of standards, aligned with both, ESG and BiH criteria, plus additional set of Standards for initial accreditation aligned with legal requirements for initial accreditation of HEIs and study programs.

ESG Standards	Standards for Initial Accreditation	Standards for Accreditation of HEI's	Standards for Accreditation of Study Programs (First and Second Cycle)
<p>I.1 Policy for quality assurance</p> <p><i>Institutions should have a policy for QA that is made public and forms part of their strategic management.</i></p> <p><i>Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.</i></p>	<p>STANDARD I. Goals and basic tasks of a higher education institution</p> <p><i>The reasons for establishing a higher education institution are aligned with the Network of Higher Education Institutions and other strategic documents in the field of higher education, the needs and the priorities of the development of society, by improving the qualification structure, the development of the profession and science, and the existence of conditions for higher education. The higher education institution has adopted basic goals and tasks in accordance with the goals of higher education established by law.</i></p>	<p>STANDARD I: Quality assurance policy</p> <p><i>The higher education institution has established goals that are in accordance with the goals of higher education established by law.</i></p> <p><i>The higher education institution plans and controls the results of all forms of educational, scientific, artistic, research and professional activities within its operations.</i></p> <p><i>The higher education institution has an organizational structure and management system that ensure the achievement of the goals of the higher education institution.</i></p>	<p>STANDARD I: Quality assurance policy of study programs</p> <p><i>Ensuring and controlling the quality of the study program is carried out regularly and systematically through self-evaluation and external quality control.</i></p>

ESG Standards	Standards for Initial Accreditation	Standards for Accreditation of HEI's	Standards for Accreditation of Study Programs (First and Second Cycle)
	<p>STANDARD 2. Internal mechanisms for quality assurance</p> <p>The higher education institution adopts a quality assurance strategy that contains the basic elements of the internal quality assurance system.</p> <p>STANDARD 3. Organization of a higher education institution</p> <p>The founder of a higher education institution has temporary authorities that enable the execution of the necessary activities necessary for obtaining a decision on initial accreditation. The organizational structure and management system ensure the achievement of the goals and tasks of the higher education institution.</p>	<p>The higher education institution adopts and implements a quality assurance strategy in its work.</p>	
<p>1.2 Design and approval of programmes</p> <p>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, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework</p>	<p>STANDARD 4. Studies</p> <p>The activity of higher education is achieved through academic and professional studies. Academic study qualifies students for work in science, art and higher education, in the real and public sector, and for the development and application of scientific, artistic and professional achievements. Professional studies provide students with an appropriate level of knowledge and skills that enable them to perform professional occupations and equip them for direct involvement in the work process.</p> <p>The content of qualifications and diplomas of certain types and levels of study correspond to the character and goals of the study programs. The description of the qualifications of each study program must be precisely defined and correspond to a certain level of the European Qualifications Framework</p>	<p>STANDARD 2: Developing and approving the program</p> <p>The study programs of the higher education institution are in accordance with the basic tasks and goals and serve their fulfillment. The content of qualifications and diplomas of certain types and levels of study correspond to the character and goals of the study programs. The description of the qualifications of each study program must be precisely defined and correspond to a certain level of the European Qualifications Framework. The higher education institution systematically and effectively plans, implements, monitors, evaluates and improves the quality of study programs.</p>	<p>STANDARD 2: Creation and adoption of study programs</p> <p>The higher education institution has established procedures for the creation and adoption of study programs that include students and all stakeholders. The study program has clearly defined goals and purpose with elements established by law. By mastering the study program, the student acquires competencies that are the function of quality performance of professional, scientific and artistic activities.</p> <p>The study program contains all the elements necessary for the implementation of the teaching process.</p> <p>The study program has clearly defined goals, purpose and role in the educational system.</p> <p>The curriculum of the study program contains the list and structure of compulsory and</p>

ESG Standards	Standards for Initial Accreditation	Standards for Accreditation of HEI's	Standards for Accreditation of Study Programs (First and Second Cycle)
for Qualifications of the EHEA.	<p>(EQF). The study programs of the higher education institution are in accordance with the basic tasks and goals and serve their fulfillment.</p> <p>STANDARD 5. Scientific research and artistic work</p> <p>A higher education institution that provides academic studies has organized and planned scientific research and artistic work.</p>		<p>optional courses and modules and their description.</p> <p>By mastering the study program, the student acquires general and course-specific abilities, which are the function of quality performance of professional, scientific and artistic activities. The description of the qualification resulting from the study program must correspond to a certain level of the European Qualifications Framework and be related to the qualification standards.</p>
<p>1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment</p> <p>Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.</p>	<p>STANDARD 8. Students</p> <p>The higher education institution determines the conditions for student enrolment, in accordance with the basic tasks of the higher education institution.</p> <p>The higher education institution provides the necessary conditions for students to successfully master the study programs.</p>	<p>STANDARD 3: Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment</p> <p>A higher education institution encourages and provides student-centred learning, teaching and assessment.</p>	<p>STANDARD 3. Student-centered learning, teaching and assessment</p> <p>A higher education institution encourages and provides student-centred learning, teaching and assessment.</p> <p>STANDARD 10. Mobility of academic staff and students</p> <p>The study program promotes and improves the mobility of academic staff and students.</p>
<p>1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification</p> <p>Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student "life cycle".</p>	<p>STANDARD 8. Students</p> <p>The higher education institution determines the conditions for student enrolment, in accordance with the basic tasks of the higher education institution.</p> <p>The higher education institution provides the necessary conditions for students to successfully master the study programs.</p>	<p>STANDARD 4: Enrollment and advancement of students, recognition and certification</p> <p>In accordance with the basic tasks, the higher education institution determines the conditions for student enrolment and provides the students with the necessary conditions for successfully mastering the study programs.</p>	<p>STANDARD 4. Enrollment and advancement of students, recognition and certification</p> <p>Enrolment of students in the study program is carried out in accordance with the law and clear and transparent criteria that include checks of knowledge, aptitudes and abilities of candidates and success in previous schooling, and in accordance with social needs and resources provided for the implementation of the program. Grading of students is</p>

ESG Standards	Standards for Initial Accreditation	Standards for Accreditation of HEI's	Standards for Accreditation of Study Programs (First and Second Cycle)
			<p>done by continuous monitoring of students' work.</p> <p>The higher education institution, in accordance with social needs and its resources, enrolls students in the appropriate study program on the basis of success in previous schooling and verification of their knowledge, aptitudes and abilities. The enrolment competition is publicly announced on the institution's website and in the media.</p> <p>Grading of students is done by continuous monitoring of students' work and on the basis of points gained in fulfilling pre-examination obligations and taking exams.</p>
<p>1.5 Teaching staff</p> <p>Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.</p>	<p>STANDARD 6. Academic staff</p> <p>The higher education institution provides the necessary number of competent teachers and associates for quality delivery of study programs.</p>	<p>STANDARD 5: Teaching staff</p> <p>The higher education institution employs a sufficient number of teachers and associates who enable the fulfillment of the institution's goals with their scientific, artistic and teaching activities. The teaching staff competently realizes the study programs. Teachers have an obligation to improve their teaching, scientific and artistic competences.</p> <p>A higher education institution that provides academic studies has organized scientific-research and artistic work.</p>	<p>STANDARD 5. Human resources</p> <p>Teaching staff with the necessary scientific, artistic and professional qualifications are provided for the realization of the study program.</p>
<p>1.6 Learning resources and student support</p> <p>Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources</p>	<p>STANDARD 11. Financial security of work</p> <p>The higher education institution provides sufficient financial resources for work, as well as for the continuation and completion of studies in the event of the institution's closure or termination of a specific study program.</p>	<p>STANDARD 6: Learning resources and student support</p> <p>The higher education institution has non-teaching staff who, with their expert and professional work, ensure the successful implementation of the study programs and goals of the institution.</p>	<p>STANDARD 6. Resources and financing</p> <p>Appropriate human, spatial, technical-technological, library and other resources appropriate to the nature of the study program and the expected number of students are provided for the execution of the study program.</p>

ESG Standards	Standards for Initial Accreditation	Standards for Accreditation of HEI's	Standards for Accreditation of Study Programs (First and Second Cycle)
<p>and student support are provided.</p>	<p>STANDARD 7. Non-academic staff</p> <p>The higher education institution provides non-academic staff who, with their expert and professional work, ensure the successful implementation of study programs, as well as the basic tasks and goals of the higher education institution.</p> <p>STANDARD 9. Space and equipment</p> <p>The higher education institution provides the space and equipment necessary for quality performance of all forms of teaching. Standards of space and equipment are determined by field of education.</p> <p>STANDARD 10. Library, textbooks and information support</p> <p>The higher education institution has a suitable library supplied with the necessary textbooks for teaching and information resources and services that it uses in order to fulfil basic tasks.</p>	<p>The higher education institution provides the space and equipment necessary for quality performance of all forms of teaching. Standards of space and equipment are determined by field of education.</p> <p>The higher education institution has a suitable library supplied with the necessary textbooks for teaching and IT resources and services that it uses in order to fulfil basic tasks.</p> <p>The sources of funding of the higher education institution are sufficient to ensure quality teaching at least for the duration of the study program.</p>	
<p>1.7 Information management</p> <p>Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.</p>		<p>STANDARD 7: Information Management</p> <p>The higher education institution regularly collects and analyzes data on students and academic staff in order to improve the teaching process, scientific-research and artistic work and contribute to the development of society.</p>	<p>STANDARD 7. Management of information about study programs</p> <p>The higher education institution regularly collects and processes information on all aspects of study programs.</p>
<p>1.8 Public information</p> <p>Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date</p>		<p>STANDARD 8: Informing the public (KB&H Criterion 8)</p> <p>The higher education institution publishes complete, precise, clear and accessible information about its work intended for students, potential students and other interested parties.</p>	<p>STANDARD 8. Informing the public about study programs</p> <p>The higher education institution objectively and timely informs the public with updated information about all aspects of the study programs.</p>

ESG Standards	Standards for Initial Accreditation	Standards for Accreditation of HEI's	Standards for Accreditation of Study Programs (First and Second Cycle)
and readily accessible.			
<p>1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes</p> <p>Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.</p>		<p>STANDARD 9: Continuous monitoring and periodic revision of the program</p> <p>The higher education institution regularly monitors and develops its study programs.</p>	<p>STANDARD 9. Continuous monitoring, periodic evaluation and revision of study programs</p> <p>Procedures have been established for periodic evaluation, improvement and restructuring of study programs that include the opinions of students and other interested parties. Compliance with contemporary world trends and the state of the profession, science and art in the appropriate educational-scientific, or artistic-educational field is taken into account and comparability with similar programs at foreign higher education institutions, especially within the European Higher Education Area.</p>
<p>1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance</p> <p>Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.</p>		<p>STANDARD 10: Periodic external quality assurance</p> <p>Higher education institutions should periodically undergo the procedure of external quality assurance.</p>	<p>STANDARD 9. Continuous monitoring, periodic evaluation and revision of study programs</p> <p>Procedures have been established for periodic evaluation, improvement and restructuring of study programs that include the opinions of students and other interested parties. Compliance with contemporary world trends and the state of the profession, science and art in the appropriate educational-scientific, or artistic-educational field is taken into account and comparability with similar programs at foreign higher education institutions, especially within the European Higher Education Area.</p>

When it comes to implementation of the standards in external evaluation processes, the challenge is to have all the standards' requirements checked for compliance, by the panels of experts, although the higher education institutions find it easier to conduct the self-evaluation process due to the standards' requirements being very specific and detailed. The reflection of HEI or a study program against all requirements are more specific and detailed and that is clearly an improvement. On the other hand, in the process of external evaluation it shall be very difficult to check all requirements due to the lack of time the experts have to analyse the documentation and especially rather short on-site visits.

3.4 QA activities and their methodologies

External quality assurance includes evaluation and quality assessment of the subject of evaluation, which is based on objective and clear standards that are harmonized with European and international standards for quality assurance in higher education, this law and regulations in higher education area. External evaluation procedures can be: 1) initial accreditation, 2) accreditation, 3) thematic evaluation. The subject of external evaluation can be: 1) higher education institutions, 2) member of the university, 3) study programs.

Standards applied in external evaluation procedures are: Standards for Initial Accreditation, Standards for Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions, Standards for Accreditation of study programs of the first and second cycle of studies. All three sets of standards are harmonized with ESG and recommendations of competent institutions in the Republic of Srpska and BiH. The standards for accreditation of higher education are aligned with the general criteria for accreditation of higher education institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The standards for the accreditation of study programs are harmonized with the general criteria for the accreditation of study programs of the first and second cycle of studies in Bosnia and Herzegovina. All three sets of standards contain guidelines and quality indicators that enable objective and transparent internal and external evaluation.

Pursuant to the Law, the quality assurance system in higher education includes internal and external quality assurance, and is implemented through: 1) self-evaluation, 2) external evaluation, 3) passing a decision on accreditation, 4) follow-up activities.

According to the Law on the Agency for Higher Education, the Agency is competent for:

- 1) improvement and harmonization of the system of higher education of the Republic with international and European system of higher education,
- 2) development of the quality assurance system of higher education in accordance with Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European area of high education,
- 3) initial accreditation, accreditation and thematic evaluation of higher education institutions and study programs,
- 4) maintaining the Register of Accredited Higher Education Institutions and institutions and study programs,
- 5) recognition of foreign higher education qualifications for general purposes of access to the labour market,
- 6) development and implementation of the qualification framework of the Republic and its connection with European framework of qualifications,
- 7) adoption of standards for initial accreditation and standards for accreditation of higher education institutions and study programs,
- 8) participation in the development, monitoring and implementation of strategies and general acts in the area of science and higher education,

- 9) collection and processing of data on the higher education system and other systems associated to higher education,
- 10) encouraging the scientific research work of all interested parties in areas of higher education,
- 11) cooperation with international organizations, bodies and institutions competent for higher education and quality assurance,
- 12) representing the Republic at international conferences, gatherings, etc. to international organizations, networks, bodies and associations within its own jurisdiction,
- 13) participation in the realization of projects under its jurisdiction financed by international financial organizations,
- 14) providing information through the media and other forms of information about one's own work in,
- 15) performance of other tasks in accordance with this law, regulations in the field of higher education and the Statute.

Initial accreditation is a procedure that determines whether a higher education institution and/or study program meets the requirements of the Standard for Initial Accreditation and for the purpose of issuing license for the operation. The subject of initial accreditation are: higher education institutions and study programs. The initial accreditation of a higher education institution is carried out in the case: establishment of a new institution, status changes of the institution and change of seat and/or name of the institution. The initial accreditation of the study program is carried out in the case of: introduction of a new study program at a higher education institution, changes in the name of the study program, changes to the qualification that is acquired upon completion of the study program, changes in the field of education to which the study program belongs, changes in the form of teaching, changes in the place of studies, changes in the institutions participating in the implementation of the joint study, significant changes and additions to the study program that are prescribed by the Instruction for changing study programs for the purpose of harmonizing them with achievements in science and art. Instruction is passed by the AHERS Steering Board.

The procedure for **initial accreditation** is as follows:

In accordance with the regulations governing higher education, the Ministry submits to the AHERS a complete request for external evaluation for the purpose of initial accreditation, with documentation and a previously obtained positive opinion of the Council for Higher Education of Republic of Srpska on the social justification of establishing a higher education institution, i.e. a new study program/orientation. The initial accreditation procedure is carried out within 90 days from the date of receipt of the request which can be further extended for a maximum of another 60 days if reasonably justified. External evaluation for initial accreditation or accreditation of a higher education institution and study programs is conducted by a Panel of Reviewers for External Evaluation for the Purpose of Initial Accreditation (hereinafter: Panel of reviewers). The Director of the Agency shall appoint a Panel of Reviewers from List of reviewers in accordance with the law. The list of reviewers is formed and adopted by the Steering Board of the Agency in accordance with the criteria for the selection of academic staff, representatives of labour market and students. On the basis of the documentation of the higher education institution, i.e. the study program and the visit to the higher education institution, the Panel of Reviewers prepares a report on the initial accreditation of the higher education institution, i.e. the study program/orientation in the existing study program, with an expert opinion containing an assessment of the fulfillment of the requirements of the standard and a detailed explanation of the assessment. The report of the Panel of reviewers is submitted to the Ministry by the AHERS with the recommendation to: 1) issue a work permit to a higher education institution, i.e. conducting study program/major or 2) rejects the request of the higher education institution for the issuance of a work permit, i.e. conducting study program/major. Upon

receipt of the report of the Commission of Reviewers from Paragraph 1 of this Article and the recommendations from Paragraph 2 of this Article, the Ministry may request the Agency to submit an additional explanation, i.e. supplement the report of the Panel.

Accreditation is a procedure that determines whether a higher education institution and/or study programs meets the Standards for the Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and/or the Standards for the Accreditation of Study Programs of the First and Second Cycle of Studies (hereinafter Standards for HEIs and Standards for Study Programs). The study program accreditation models are: review, cluster accreditation and individual accreditation. Peer review accreditation of the study program is carried out as part of the accreditation procedure of the higher education institution after the expert opinions of the reviewers on the study program have been obtained. Cluster accreditation of study programs or individual accreditation is carried out according to the same procedure as the accreditation of a higher education institution. Accreditation of study programs can be carried out within the accreditation procedure of a higher education institution and/or as a separate procedure. The accreditation procedure of a higher education institution must be carried out every five years. (2) The higher education institution is obliged to accredit the study programs of the first and second cycle of studies for which it has a work permit. External evaluation for the purpose of accreditation of study programs takes place according to the annual plan of accreditation of study programs adopted by the AHERS.

The higher education institution submits an application for accreditation to the Agency no later than one year before the expiration of the valid accreditation. As an exception to paragraph 1 of this article, if the accreditation was preceded by a letter of expectation, the higher education institution submits a request for accreditation to the Agency no later than 18 months before the expiration of the valid accreditation. With the request for accreditation, the higher education institution submits documentation that is prepared in accordance with the guidelines for the preparation of documentation for accreditation prescribed by the regulation on accreditation of higher education institutions and study programs. The agency, ex officio, obtains evidence from the competent authorities establishing the facts essential for the implementation of the external evaluation procedure for the purpose of accreditation and the adoption of decisions on the accreditation of higher education institutions and study programs. External evaluation for the purpose of accreditation is carried out by the Panel of Experts. The Agency determines the final proposal for the composition of the Panel of Experts, which is submitted to the Agency for the Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance (hereinafter: HEA) for appointment, in accordance with the Framework law on higher education in BiH.

If the study program is accredited according to the review model, the director of the Agency appoints reviewers to provide expert opinions on the study program, from the AHERS List of reviewers. Reviewers The Panel of Experts prepares a report on external evaluation for the purpose of accreditation of the higher education institution/study program based on the documentation of the higher education institution/study program and the visit to the higher education institution. In the report on external evaluation for the purpose of accreditation of the higher education institution/study program, the Panel of Experts gives an opinion and recommendation on the accreditation of the higher education institution and/or study programs to AHERS. The opinion of the Panel of Experts is submitted to the HEA for the purpose of issuing a recommendation on accreditation in accordance with the Framework law on higher education in BiH based on the opinion of Panel of experts. Director of the Agency passes one of the following decisions: a decision on accreditation, a letter of expectation to the higher education institution or decision on the rejection of the request for accreditation. The higher education institution may appeal to the Steering Board of the Agency within 15 days from the date of receipt of the decision. The Steering Board decides on the appeal based on the received opinion of the Appeals and Complaints Committee.

The decision of the Steering Board is final, and an administrative dispute may be initiated against it. When the decision is final, the competent authority prohibits the work of higher education institution or the study program, in accordance with the law. The decision on accreditation is submitted to the HEA for registration in the Register of accredited higher education institutions in BiH, in accordance with the Framework law on higher education in BiH.

The letter of expectation refers to the nonconformities and the associated set of recommendations and the deadlines for improvements which cannot be longer than one year. Upon the receipt of the letter of expectation, and no later than within three months from the date of receipt, the higher education institution is obliged to submit to the Agency a plan of actions for improvements according to nonconformities listed. If the higher education institution fails to submit a plan for improvements within the deadline referred to above, the director of the Agency shall issue a decision rejecting the request for accreditation. A letter of expectation can be issued only once during the same external evaluation process.

Thematic evaluation is an extraordinary procedure for checking the quality of a higher education institution, study program or its individual parts. Thematic evaluation ex officio is carried out by the Agency on the basis of the decision of the Accreditation Council, and it can also be carried out on the elaborated proposal of the Ministry, the higher education institution and the student representative body of the higher education institution and the Students Union of the Republika Srpska. Thematic evaluation is carried out by reviewers who are appointed from the List of Reviewers from Article 30, Paragraph 3 of this Law. Depending on the outcome of the thematic evaluation procedure, the Agency may initiate an extraordinary accreditation procedure. The higher education institution is obliged to submit a request for extraordinary accreditation within 90 days from the date of delivery of the notification on the obligation to carry out the extraordinary accreditation procedure that resulted from the thematic evaluation. If the higher education institution does not submit a request for extraordinary accreditation within the deadline, the Agency revokes the decision on accreditation and informs the competent authority in order to prohibit the work of higher education institution/study program.

Since the Article 6 of the Law stipulates the status of AHERS as an independent legal entity that aligns its activities with ESG and international practice in the area of quality assurance in higher education, the Rulebook on accreditation regulates four stages of external evaluation: self-evaluation, external evaluation with the on-site visit, reporting and passing decision on accreditation and follow up activities.

The self-evaluation process is obligatory for higher education institutions and study programs and legally regulated to be conducted at least once in two years. It is one of the preconditions for the accreditation process.

External evaluation is conducted in accordance with the publicly available Rulebook on accreditation of HEIs and study programs. The external evaluation includes the on site visit conducted by panel of experts comprised of experts from four categories: representative of BiH academic community, representative of international academic community, representative of labour market and representative of students.

Reports on external evaluation are drafted after the on site visit and they comprise the experts' assessment based on submitted documentation prior to the on-site visit complemented by experts' findings during the on site visit. The draft report contains strengths, weaknesses and recommendations for improvement. The final marks are a matter of consent of experts panel members. The HEI receives the final draft of the report, without marks and the outcome, for factual corrections. After the panel of experts reviews the factual corrections submitted by HEI, the marks and the outcome are inserted back in the report thus making the final draft which is then sent to the Accreditation council for its perusal in terms of compliance with the Rulebook and standards (aligned with ESG and BiH criteria legal acts and the Law. Upon the Accreditation council approval, the report is finalised, signed by experts, published on the Agency web site and sent to the institution. The final report is sent to HEA, requesting the recommendation on

accreditation based on the opinion of Panel of experts, and after receiving it the AHERS director passes decision on accreditation.

Decision on accreditation is then entered into the AHERS Register of accredited HEIs and study programs, sent also to the Ministry to be entered into their register of HEIs and study programs and to HEA to be entered into the BiH register of accredited HEIs and study programs.

Accredited HEIs and study programs report to the AHERS yearly on the progress in fulfilling recommendations for improvement given in the reports. Reports are based on plans that contain activities, personnel in charge for performing those activities and deadlines. AHERS inputs those reports in the AHERS information system and the report on the realisation of recommendations provided by the panel of experts is part of the documentation submitted to the Panel of experts in the next external evaluation process.

In terms of challenges in the external evaluation processes, the challenges faced mostly refer to the unification of the Panels of experts' work, reporting and reflection on standards' requirements. The most important challenge is marking compliance with standards since experts fail to interpret the compliance right in order to fit it into the mark description. Coordinator of the external evaluation process brings this to the Panels of experts' attention through the briefing procedure at the beginning of the external evaluation process. In the phase of finalising the report it is again perused by the Accreditation Council which has a role of assuring the quality of AHERS' procedures.

Follow-up activities

Based on the recommendations given in the final report accredited higher education institution and the AHERS agree on a plan of follow-up activities that includes improvement measures and projects including the deadlines for their implementation. The follow-up activities plan is prepared on the form provided by AHERS. Based on the plan, HEIs produce reports on the implementation of the plan of subsequent activities, again on the form provided by AHERS which are then submitted to the AHERS every year with the aim of monitoring the implementation of the plan. Reports on the implementation of the follow-up activities plan are an integral part of the entrance documentation in the subsequent process of accreditation of the higher education institution and studies program. For the purpose of monitoring the follow-up plans and reports, AHERS has a software module specifically developed for this purpose in the AHERS information system.

Peer review experts

AHERS uses two pools of experts in external evaluation procedures. The first pool of experts/reviewers, held by AHERS, is used for initial accreditation procedures or for reviews of study programs (pool of reviewers), while the second pool of experts, held by HEA, is used by AHERS and competent educational authorities from cantons in another entity and Brcko District, in the process of accreditation.

The pool of experts held by AHERS is open for applications throughout the year, via the Agency's website. Received applications are reviewed by the Steering Board at each session, and updates of the new experts into the pool are adopted. The legal basis for the AHERS list of experts/reviewers is the Law on the Agency for Higher Education of Republic of Srpska and the previous Law on Quality Assurance in the Higher Education System of Republic of Srpska.

There are three categories of experts in the pool of reviewers, experts from the academic community (both national and international), business and practice and students.

The conditions for applying to the pool of reviewers for the academic community are as follows:

- holds an academic rank at accredited HEI,

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- are employed at a higher education or scientific research institution,
- has published works from a narrower scientific field in journals on the Web of Science lists (SCI-E, SSCI, A&HCI and CPCI-S/CPCI-SSH), Scopus, SCIndex (M24 or M51) and/or national magazines of the first category, in the last 5 years and
- has experience in quality assurance in higher education at the national and/or international level.

The criteria for the selection of reviewers from business and practice are that:

- has completed the first cycle of higher education studies with at least 240 ECTS points or the equivalent
- has at least five years of work experience in the required degree.

The criteria for the selection of reviewers from among students are that:

- has an average grade of at least 8 and
- did not renew any study year.

When it comes to criteria for other pool of experts, held by HEA and used by AHERS for accreditation processes, it's a joint List of experts used by all competent educational authorities. This List of experts is also adopted by the AHERS Steering Board, in accordance with the Law on the Agency for Higher Education. , the criteria are as following:

The criteria for selecting experts - representatives of the academic community in Bosnia and Herzegovina and for international experts are:

- a) selection for a scientific-teaching title in a relevant scientific/artistic field, which is awarded by an accredited higher education institution,
- b) experience in teaching-scientific and research work,
- c) knowledge of the English language,
- d) computer skills,
- e) younger than 65 years.

Criteria for the selection of experts - representatives of the labour market:

- a) minimum high vocational education, i.e. level 7 qualification according to "Basics of qualification framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina",
- b) at least five years of work experience, in an activity that belongs to or is related to a certain one the scientific or artistic field for which he is applying,
- c) knowledge of the English language,
- d) computer skills,
- e) younger than 65 years.

The criteria for selecting experts from the category of students are:

- a) a student of the first, second or third cycle of studies at an accredited higher education institution,
- b) minimum grade point average of 8.0 or 3.5,
- c) knowledge of the English language,
- d) computer skills.

The trainings of experts are conducted online for new experts, but also within every specific process of accreditation, one day during the preparation for on-site visit is devoted to training of experts. That's applicable for both pool of experts.

When experts are selected to be appointed to the panel, first criteria for selection are narrow scientific field and expertise of the expert and independence of the expert (no conflict of interests). The experts also cannot be appointed to evaluate the same HEI (or same study program) more than once. If possible, during the selection of panel, the Agency also tries to keep gender balance within the panel of experts.

The conflict of interest is checked against the AHERS Instruction for checking the conflict of interest. Before signing the contract, the reviewers sign a statement on the absence of conflict of interest, form provided by AHERS, in accordance with the Instructions for checking the existence of conflicts of interest. The conflict of interest is checked when the first contact is made with the expert/reviewer, asking them to write an email expressing their will to participate in the external evaluation and that there is no obstacle in terms of conflict of interest. The coordinator usually sends the Instruction for checking the conflict of interest when making first contact with an expert or lists the situations that represent conflict of interest in the first email when contacting a potential panel member.

During the long-term work with experts, numerous challenges were observed, first of all the method of selection of experts by the Agency for the Development of Higher Education, which did not announce public competitions often enough, and experts from certain scientific fields were often unavailable (which led to the formation of additional pool of reviewers by AHERS), and especially in the category of students. The process of registering experts for the public call was discouraging for experts in a certain way by requiring excessive documentation in the application process. These problems were overcome in cooperation with colleagues from HEA, because we worked together on the development of new regulations that regulate this area, and now, as of this year 2024, the public call is announced at least three times a year, applications are online and the application process is simplified. This resulted in the application of more than 450 experts in the first call. We hope that this practice will be continued in order to provide access to experts from all scientific fields, which is of particular importance for the accreditation of study programs.

3.5 Complaints & Appeals

Appeals and Complaints Committee is an expert and advisory body of the Agency that considers and issues an opinion on complaints and appeals from higher education institutions, in accordance with the Law, the Statute and other Acts of the Agency.

As regulated by Law, The Committee for Appeals and Complaints is an independent body of the Agency that deals with appeals and complaints of higher education institutions in processes of accreditation and initial accreditation. The structure, number of members, manner of election and mandate of the members of the Committee for Appeals and Complaints are regulated by the Statute of the Agency. The Committee has three members: two representatives of the RS/BiH academic community, of which at least one expert in the field of law, and one student representative. The members of the Committee are appointed by the Steering Board at the proposal of the Director of the Agency, after of the public competition procedure for members of the Academic Committee community, that is, on the proposal of the Student Union for a student member of the Committee. The mandate of the members of the Committee is four years with the possibility of re-election, except a student who is chosen for a period of one year with the possibility of re-election. A student member of the Committee is a student of the second or third cycle of studies.

The Committee considers complaints of higher education institutions expressed during the duration of the procedure external evaluation and renders an opinion on the merits of the complaint, based on which The Steering Board makes the final decision on the complaint.

If an appeal has been filed against the Agency's decision, the Committee determines whether the appeal is valid, permitted, timely, and declared by an authorized person and renders an opinion on the basis which the Steering Board makes a final decision against which an administrative dispute can be initiated before the competent court. The Committee adopts the Rules of Procedure for its work. The Department for General Affairs performs administrative tasks for the Committee.

In case of higher education institution filing an appeal against the decision on accreditation, it is firstly sent to the Committee for Appeals and Complaints. At its session, Committee for Appeals and Complaints issues an opinion on the appeal and the decision is passed to the Steering Board. The Steering Board decides on the appeal based on the received opinion of the Committee for Appeals and Complaints. The decision of the Steering Board referred to in paragraph 3 of this article is final, and a lawsuit can be filed against it and initiated an administrative dispute.

The committee was established based on the recommendations of the ENQA panel of experts from 2017 and proved to be a useful body in accreditation procedures.

The work of the Committee for Appeals and Complaints has proven itself to be beneficial for the AHERS since the Committee for Appeals and Complaints delivers very professional opinions thus ensuring the integrity of the whole process. Since the work of this body is relatively short (since 2020) , for the time being there have been no specific challenges identified.

3.6 ESG 3.4. Thematic analyses

The Agency's Sector for Accreditation and International Cooperation regularly carries out thematic analyses of external evaluation procedures, in such a way that, as a rule, they coincide with accreditation cycles, in which it surveys all stakeholders (HEIs, experts, etc.) about the quality of the procedures, the methodologies used, with the possibility of suggestions for improvement, on scientific productivity and demographic challenges identified in the higher education system. By conducting thematic analyses of the HE system, which do not directly relate to external evaluation procedures the quality of higher education institutions and the system as a whole is improved. The method of conducting thematic analyses is defined by the Rulebook on Internal Quality Assurance of the Agency.

The perceived challenges in this area relate primarily to insufficient human resources, bearing in mind the small number of employees, and especially the small number of people who are directly involved in external evaluation procedures and have the necessary experience in this area. Therefore, when preparing thematic analyses, primarily those related to the higher education system as a whole, it is necessary to hire external collaborators who are engaged in higher education institutions, to ensure a better quality of systemic analyses, as well as a greater number of analyses.

4. Priority actions

1. Overall alignment of the AHERS operations with ESG

This is an issue and a challenge that has continuously been addressed by AHERS to the best of our knowledge. The progress has been made but many issues remain. One of the biggest is that there are situations in Slovenia and Croatia that the higher education qualifications from Bosnia and Herzegovina, some from Republic of Srpska, are questioned due to compliance of the higher education systems with ESG. The reason listed is that the higher education system could not be trusted since the system has not yet proved its compliance with ESG.

1.	Overall alignment of the AHERS operations with ESG	Preparation for the external evaluation of AHERS	
Objectives		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To have the external review of the AHERS conducted and to achieve compliance with ESG standards to the extent that shall be sufficient for membership in ENQA and EQAR 	
Specific tasks		Responsible(s)	Timeline
1	Analysing AHERS challenges in terms of identifying space for improvements based on the course of SEQA ESG 2 project and previous AHERS external evaluation	All AHERS sectors within their competences	September 2024
2	Taking concrete actions on identified space for improvement, one of them being working with HEA on a chart that shall be presented to experts in the project with the aim of proving cooperation according to the law rather than dependence from each other	Sector accreditation for	September 2024
3	Improving the AHERS information system in terms of calculations related to teaching staff and improved checklists for experts/reviewers.	Sector accreditation for	September 2024
4	Preparation of the latest AHERS self-evaluation report	All AHERS sectors within their competences	June 2025
5	Application towards ENQA	AHERS	As agreed with ENQA review department

Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepared and presented chart of HEA and AHERS competences • Prepared AHERS self-evaluation report • Conditions for applying for external evaluation met
Risks	Mitigation actions
Some unforeseen challenges in the preparation process	Timely actions taken in the respect of providing all needed evidence for proving ESG compliance.

2. Involvement of stakeholders

The challenges to be addressed in this area are the bigger involvement of stakeholders as well as the continuous awareness raising on the importance of building quality culture what remains to be an issue.

2.	Involvement of stakeholders	Increased involvement of stakeholders in quality assurance in higher education of AHERS	
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To raise awareness on the importance of having the quality culture in higher education • To ensure readiness of stakeholders to participate in discussions related to public discussions on legislation, AHERS procedures, standards etc. 		
Specific tasks		Responsible(s)	Timeline
1	Organising events for various stakeholders, primarily representatives of labour market, encouraging them to elaborate on the needs of the labour market	All AHERS sectors within their competences	Constant activity
2	Analysing each of these events in terms of identified needs of labour market and making connections between HEIs and labour market	All AHERS sectors within their competences	Constant activity
3	Organising special events for students with the purpose of their familiarisation with the deficient professions	All AHERS sectors within their competences	Constant activity
4	Analysing effects of actions and making adjustments accordingly	All AHERS sectors within their competences	Constant activity

Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved level of educated and trained stakeholders on the importance of participating in the reforms • Increase in number of students studying for some deficient and sought for professions • Economy on the rise
Risks	Mitigation actions
Lack of interest and willingness to participate in the above described actions	Constant AHERS efforts in encouraging the stakeholders participation through organising a number of forums and events. Inclusion of Chamber of Commerce and Association of Employers of Republic of Srpska in these events

3. Improving Standards' fitness for purpose

Although the self-evaluation process of HEIs and study programs is greatly facilitated by the use of detailed Standards for accreditation of higher education institutions and Standards for accreditation of study programs of first and second cycle of studies, when it comes to implementation of the standards in external evaluation processes, the challenge is to have all the standards' requirements checked for compliance, by the panels of experts, although the higher education institutions find it easier to complete the self-evaluation since the requirements are very specific and detailed. The reflection of HEI or a study program against all requirements are more specific and detailed and that is clearly an improvement. On the other hand, in the process of external evaluation it shall be very difficult to check all requirements due to lack of time the experts have to analyse the documentation and especially rather short on-site visits.

3.	Standards' fitness for purpose	Adaptation of AHERS standards so they are more fit for purpose	
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitation of AHERS standards' implementation in the processes of external evaluation thus providing better alignment with the needs of the higher education system in terms of achieving implementation of good European HE practices and enabling flexibility with the purpose of encompassing good practices into the work of HEIs 		
Specific tasks		Responsible(s)	Timeline
1	Analysing implementation of AHERS standards to provide the flexibility required	Sector for accreditation and Sector for general affairs	June 2025
2	Analysing stakeholders' (primarily those of HEIs and experts' suggestions for improvement)	Sector for accreditation	June 2025

3	Identifying improvements (included chart with stakeholders' responsibilities)	Sector accreditation for	July 2024
4	Improving procedures in accordance with identified improvements	Sector accreditation and Sector for general affairs	September 2025
5	Analysing effects of improvements	Sector accreditation for	December 2025
Outcomes		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback on AHERS standards' implementation and suggestions for improved implementation • Provided feedback from HEIs in terms of self-evaluations • Provided feedback from experts in terms of external evaluation <p>Improvements made accordingly</p>	
Risks		Mitigation actions	
Limited participation of stakeholders, lack of interest to participate in the process and possible lack of effectiveness		Encouraging stakeholders' participation in discussing AHERS standards' implementation and adjusting and tailoring standards to make them fit for listed purposes. Since Panels of experts prepare for the on site visit in the AHERS information system, it is possible to make additional adjustments the AHERS information system in order to make the Panels of experts' preparation more effective.	

4. Enhancing the quality of Panels of experts' performance in external evaluation and reporting

In terms of challenges in the external evaluation processes, the challenges faced mostly refer to the unification of the Panels of experts' work, reporting and reflection on standards' requirements. The most important challenge is marking compliance with standards since experts fail to interpret the compliance right in order to fit it into the mark description.

4.	Enhancing the quality of Panels of experts' performance in external evaluation and reporting	Analysing each external evaluation process to figure out the possible improvements in the conduct of external experts and reviewers
Objectives		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unification of the Panels of experts' conduct in the external evaluation processes in terms of providing evidence for the reporting phase • Unified approach to marking the level of meeting the standards' requirements in the reports

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancing the level of professional conduct and objectiveness in the work of Panels of experts 	
Specific tasks		Responsible(s)	Timeline
1	Improve the experts' and reviewers training in terms of specific requirements of standards	Sector for accreditation and	December 2024
2	Analysing stakeholders' (primarily those of HEIs and experts' suggestions for improvement) related to the work of experts	Sector for accreditation	June 2025
3	Identifying improvements	Sector for accreditation	July 2025
4	Improving procedures for training and reporting in accordance with identified improvements	Sector for accreditation and	September 2025
5	Analysing effects of improvements	Sector for accreditation	December 2025
Outcomes		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of experts/reviewers trainings conducted Number of experts trained Number of external evaluations analysed after introduced enhancements 	
Risks		Mitigation actions	
Limited participation of experts, lack of interest to participate in the training process and thus possible lack of effectiveness		Encouraging experts' participation in training implementation and tailoring training to make them fit for listed purposes. Making training interesting by presenting case studies. Introducing AHERS information system tools for the facilitation of experts' work.	

5. Preparation of thematic analyses

The perceived challenges in this area relate primarily to insufficient human resources, bearing in mind the small number of employees, and especially the small number of people who are directly involved in external evaluation procedures and have the necessary experience in this area. Therefore, when preparing thematic analyses, primarily those related to the higher education system as a whole, it is necessary to hire external collaborators who are engaged in higher education institutions, to ensure a better quality of systemic analyses, as well as a greater number of analyses.

5.	Thematic analyses	Adaptation of AHERS procedures for thematic analyses in terms of detailing the process of selecting the topic	
Objectives		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed thematic analyses procedure that detail the process of identifying topics, stakeholders and purpose of analysis Improvements that are the result of the thematic analysis ensuring they serve their purpose 	
Specific tasks		Responsible(s)	Timeline
1	Analyzing AHERS procedures in terms of detailing the process of selecting the topic of thematic analyses	Sector for accreditation, Sector for initial accreditation and Sector for general affairs	December 2024
2	Identifying improvements i.e. adding the details to the existing procedure	Sector for accreditation and Sector for initial accreditation	December 2024
3	Improving procedures in accordance with identified improvements	Sector for accreditation, Sector for initial accreditation and Sector for general affairs	December 2024
4	Analysing effects of improvements	Sector for accreditation, Sector for initial accreditation and Sector for general affairs	June 2025
Outcomes		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AHERS thematic analysis procedure improved and more detailed thus having a clear understanding of its purpose and effectiveness 	
Risks		Mitigation actions	
Lack of understanding the ESG requirements in this area		Familiarisation with the good practices of ENQA and EQAR listed agencies in the field of thematic analyses thus improving the understanding of this specific standard	

5. Summary table

1. Overall alignment of the AHERS operations with ESG					
no	Priority action		Actors	Timeline	Desired outcome
1.1.	Preparation for the external evaluation of AHERS To have the external review of the AHERS conducted and to achieve compliance with ESG standards to the extent that shall be sufficient for membership in ENQA and EQAR	Analysing AHERS challenges in terms of identifying space for improvements based on the course of SEQA ESG 2 project and previous AHERS external evaluation	All AHERS sectors within their competences	September 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepared and presented chart of HEA and AHERS competences • Prepared AHERS self-evaluation report • Conditions for applying for external evaluation met
1.2.		Taking concrete actions on identified space for improvement, one of them being working with HEA on a chart that shall be presented to experts in the project with the aim of proving cooperation according to the law rather than dependence from each other	Sector for accreditation	September 2024	
1.3.		Improving the AHERS information system in terms of calculations related to teaching staff and improved checklists for experts/reviewers.	Sector for accreditation	September 2024	
1.4.		Preparation of the latest AHERS self-evaluation report	All AHERS sectors within their competences	June 2025	
1.5.		Application towards ENQA	AHERS	As agreed with ENQA review department	

2. Involvement of stakeholders					
no	Priority action		Actors	Timeline	Desired outcome
2.1.	Increased involvement of stakeholders in quality assurance in higher education of	Organising events for various stakeholders, primarily representatives of labour market, encouraging them to elaborate on the needs of the labour market	All AHERS sectors within their competences	Constant activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved level of educated and trained stakeholders on the importance of participating in the reforms • Increase in number of students studying for some deficient and sought for professions • Economy on the rise
2.2.	AHERS in order to raise awareness on the importance of having the quality culture in higher education, to	Analysing each of these events in terms of identified needs of labour market and making connections between HEIs and labour market	All AHERS sectors within their competences	Constant activity	
2.3.	ensure readiness of stakeholders to participate in discussions related to	Organising special events for students with the purpose of their familiarisation with the deficient professions	All AHERS sectors within their competences	Constant activity	
2.4.	public discussions on legislation, AHERS procedures, standards etc.	Analysing effects of actions and making adjustments accordingly	All AHERS sectors within their competences	Constant activity	

3. Improving Standards' fitness for purpose					
no	Priority action		Actors	Timeline	Desired outcome
3.1.	Adaptation of AHERS standards so they are more fit for purpose i.e. facilitation of AHERS standards' implementation in the processes of external evaluation thus providing better alignment with the needs of the higher education system in terms of achieving implementation of good European HE practices and enabling flexibility with the purpose of encompassing good practices into the work of HEIs	Analysing implementation of AHERS standards to provide the flexibility required	Sector for accreditation and Sector for general affairs	June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback on AHERS standards' implementation and suggestions for improved implementation • Provided feedback from HEIs in terms of self-evaluations • Provided feedback from experts in terms of external evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements made accordingly
3.2.		Analysing stakeholders' (primarily those of HEIs and experts' suggestions for improvement)	Sector for accreditation	June 2025	
3.3.		Identifying improvements (included chart with stakeholders' responsibilities)	Sector for accreditation	July 2024	
3.4.		Improving procedures in accordance with identified improvements	Sector for accreditation and Sector for general affairs	September 2025	
3.5.		Analysing effects of improvements	Sector for accreditation	December 2025	

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4. Enhancing the quality of Panels of experts' performance in external evaluation and reporting					
no	Priority action		Actors	Timeline	Desired outcome
4.1.	Analysing each external evaluation process to figure out the possible improvements in the conduct of external experts and reviewers; Unification of the Panels of experts' conduct in the external evaluation processes in terms of providing evidence for the reporting phase; Unified approach to marking the level of meeting the standards' requirements in the reports; Enhancing the level of professional conduct and objectiveness in the work of Panels of experts	Improve the experts' and reviewers training in terms of specific requirements of standards	Sector for accreditation and	December 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of experts/reviewers trainings conducted • Number of experts trained • Number of external evaluations analysed after introduced enhancements
4.2.		Analysing stakeholders' (primarily those of HEIs and experts' suggestions for improvement) related to the work of experts	Sector for accreditation	June 2025	
4.3.		Identifying improvements	Sector for accreditation	July 2025	
4.4.		Improving procedures for training and reporting in accordance with identified improvements	Sector for accreditation and	September 2025	
4.5.		Analysing effects of improvements	Sector for accreditation	December 2025	

5. Preparation of thematic analyses					
no	Priority action		Actors	Timeline	Desired outcome
5.1.	Adaptation of AHERS procedures for thematic analyses in terms of detailing the process of selecting the topic	Analyzing AHERS procedures in terms of detailing the process of selecting the topic of thematic analyses	Sector for accreditation, Sector for initial accreditation and Sector for general affairs	December 2024	AHERS thematic analysis procedure improved and more detailed thus having a clear understanding of its purpose and effectiveness
5.2.		Identifying improvements i.e. adding the details to the existing procedure	Sector for accreditation and Sector for initial accreditation	December 2024	
5.3.		Improving procedures in accordance with identified improvements	Sector for accreditation, Sector for initial accreditation and Sector for general affairs	December 2024	
5.4.		Analysing effects of improvements	Sector for accreditation, Sector for initial accreditation and Sector for general affairs	June 2025	

6. Conclusions

Having in mind that AHERS is periodically improving the process of external evaluation and its procedures according to analyses of stakeholders' evaluation forms, the improvement objectives identified above would fit in the regular cycle of identifying and conducting activities for improvement. This is directly linked to the trends in Republic of Srpska higher education system, providing services that fit the system requirements.

One of the strategic focuses of higher education of Republic of Srpska is improving the attractiveness and capacity in the sector of science, technology, research and development, as well as on securing their greater and more effective influence on the development of Republika Srpska in all relevant areas.

Another strategic focus is improving the attractiveness and high-quality education, as well as ensuring its greater and more effective impact on quality human resources in the Republic of Srpska. Along with improving the attractiveness of high education, special attention should be paid to the following areas for potential improvements: management of the higher education system; constant quality improvement in higher education and international cooperation; creation of research and development youth and facilitating the transition of the economy to Industry 4.0. and green economy; and permanent improving the student standard.

Hence the role of AHERS in the higher education system needs to be further strengthened through the international activities and membership in ENQA and EQAR.