

LEPL - National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement

Minutes N2 of the meeting with the Coordinating Council of the Center

14 September, 2021

On September 14 of the current year, the second meeting of the Coordination Council of the LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement (hereinafter - the Center) was held. Considering the pandemic in the country, the meeting was held online via the platform Zoom. The meeting was attended by the members of the Coordination Council, Tamar Makharashvili, the Director of the Center, Lasha Margishvili and Kakhaber Eradze, Deputy Directors and the heads and employees of the structural units of the Center.

The Coordination Council meeting was attended by the following members of the Council:

- a) Rusudan Sanadze - Head of the Department of Education Sciences of the Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences at LEPL Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University; Accreditation Expert of Higher Education Programs;
- b) Heli Mattisen - Director of the Estonian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher and Vocational Education (EKKA)
- c) Cay Etzold - International Expert in Higher Education;
- d) Shalva Mekravishvili - Civic education expert within the framework of National Curriculum Development Sub-Program under the program "National Curriculum Implementation and Monitoring" of the Department of the Preschool and General Education Development of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia;
- e) Tea Gulua -UNDP Knowledge Management and Innovation Specialist, Vocational Education Expert;
- f) Maka Abuladze - Representative of the Student Organization of Georgia NNLE, PhD student at the Georgian Technical University - LEPL ;
- g) Kakhaber Tchelidze - Professor of LEPL Tbilisi State Medical University, Head of the Department of Internal Medicine at the University Medical Center of Higher Medical Technologies;
- h) Irma Kurdadze- Professor of Samtskhe-Javakheti State University LEPL;
- i) Natia Jojua-Professor of "European University" Ltd, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine.

The following did not attend the meeting of the Coordination Council:

- a) Zaza Purtseladze - Director of the British Council for the South Caucasus and Georgia - did not attend the Coordination Council meeting.
- b) Maya Shukhoshvili -Head of the Higher Education Division of the Department of Higher Education and Science Development of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia;
- c) Anastasia Kitiashvili - Expert of vocational education;

The meeting of the Coordinating Council started at 12:00 and ended at 13:06. The Council meeting was provided with simultaneous translation.

Agenda of the Council meeting:

12:00 - 12:05 Greetings - Tamar Makharashvili, the Director of National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement;

12:05 - 12:20 LEPL - National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement Information Security Management System Dissemination - Giorgi Gvasalia, Information Security Manager;

12:25 - 13:00 Draft Amendment to the Law of Georgia on Education Quality Improvement - Lasha Margishvili, Deputy Director of the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement

13:00 -Q&A.

According to the agenda, the meeting of the Coordinating Council was opened by Tamar Makharashvili, the Director of the Center who thanked each member of the Council for participating in the meeting, and then briefly reviewed the important issues being worked on, including the processes of authorization of the general education institutions and the transition to cluster accreditation of the higher education programmes. She also focused on the new issues that the Center is starting to work on and the challenges that exist within the processes; The Director of the Center additionally emphasized that both the issues presented at the Council meeting and the decisions made by the Council members are important for the Center.

After the greeting of the Director of the Center, Giorgi Gvasalia, the Information Security Manager of the Center, made a presentation on the scope of the information security management system of the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement according to the agenda. He noted at the beginning of the presentation that the introduction of the information security system in the function of the Center is based on the Government Resolution N312 of April 29, 2014, which defines the critical information list and defines the Center as the 35th unit in this list. This means that the Center has an obligation to enforce information security law. In particular, this law provides the ISO 27001 international standard base and means the provision of *business* performance. The point is that if any organization holds personal information, the processing of which has violated its integrity, or any information has been disseminated, or if this personal data has not been provided to the relevant agencies, this is ultimately a problem. Based on these principles, it was discussed and determined that the Center really possesses the information that is important at the State level and important for the security.

The introduction of ISO 27001 information security was briefly explained by the presenter. He also noted that after discussing the issue with the management of the Center, it was found that all business processes are critically important for the Center, all business processes include personal and critical information and are interconnected. Once these issues have been identified, the Center has an obligation to coordinate the list of business processes with the process coordinating body, the Digital Governance Agency, which is a legal entity of public law under the Ministry of Justice.

After that, Giorgi Gvasalia presented to the members of the Council a document of the dissemination area of the information security management system of the Center, which was forwarded to the Digital Governance Agency. This document includes a general provision and purpose, it presents the organizational arrangement, the business processes that are the carrier of critical information and the information security dissemination area. The Center's Information Security Manager also noted that the document provides a justification for the dissemination area and it is important to determine what type of assets exist in the organization in order to compile the distribution area. An asset is anything that is valuable to an organization, be it information assets, software, hardware, services, people and their knowledge, and so on. In the dissemination area, it is also very important how the assets are controlled. For example, the goals of the organization may change, or the structure may change, for this there is an entry in the law, on the basis of which at the end of each year the management of the Center will review the business processes and make adjustments if necessary.

After the presentation, the question-answer mode was held.

Rusudan Sanadze, the Chairman of the Council asked two questions, the first of which was about the definition of sensitive information, how sensitivity and confidentiality will be regulated over time. The second question was about what measures would be taken in terms of human resources, or how it would be regulated to avoid outflow of the information. In response to the first question, Giorgi Gvasalia explained that information is classified at all stages and if the information is critical for the organization, it does not mean that the same level will be maintained next year for this particular information. Accordingly, the criticality of information is determined periodically. It is necessary to periodically review the criticality index and assign it to the appropriate level. In response to the second question, it was noted that a human is the most valuable asset for the information security, therefore, the greatest source of information leakage is the lack or non-existence of awareness of the human resources. The solution for this is constant training, retraining, simulations. This is what the standard offers to organizations. An example was the recent so-called "phishing" simulation carried out at the Center, which demonstrated well how ready the Center is for a specific critical situation. At the end of the discussion, the Director of the Center added that work on information security should be continued, noting that the relevant coordinating body, after reviewing the business processes of the Center, considered that they are equally important. Consequently, the Center expects even more large-scale and a lot of work in this direction.

The next presentation on the draft amendment to the LAW OF GEORGIA ON EDUCATION QUALITY IMPROVEMENT was made by Lasha Margishvili, Deputy Director of the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement.

Lasha Margishvili noted at the beginning that the changes presented in the presentation have already been discussed with stakeholders, passed through the Ministry, received feedback and are finalized. He also noted that a package of amendments to the updated Accreditation Standards and Procedures will be submitted to the Coordinating Council by the end of autumn.

The first part of the presentation was dedicated to the changes related to the transition to cluster accreditation from 2022. It was noted that the Center wants accreditation to become mandatory for all types and levels of programmes. Introduction of additional regulation regarding medical programmes was also discussed, which involves setting a threshold number of students for a programme

of medical doctors. Accordingly, the Center wants the Accreditation Council to be empowered to do so. The transition to the new system naturally leads to a new understanding of the current terms of accreditation for educational programmes.

At the next stage of the presentation, the main topics that the Center is working on in the field of higher education this year were presented, including - drafting standards and procedures for cluster accreditation, developing additional criteria for evaluating the doctoral programme, piloting cluster accreditation for nine higher education programmes; five sectoral characteristics have been elaborated for the humanities. A Sectoral Council for Medicine was also set up, and a draft document was developed that is fully in line with the new WFME standards. Important steps have been taken towards the development of experts, in particular, new competitions have been announced, and the attestation process has begun.

In terms of cluster accreditation, the concept of cluster accreditation is defined by law. In this regard, it was noted that the recommendations of the international partners were taken into account, including the recommendations of the following members of the Coordinating Council - Cay Etzold *and* Heli Mattisen. The only thing that was later reflected in this process was that the Center initially considered undergraduate, graduate and doctoral programmes in the cluster, and later it was decided to separate the doctoral programmes from others, as additional requirements and criteria arose for the development of doctoral programmes, these programmes will also be evaluated according to different procedures, which means that the involvement of an international expert in the evaluation process of the doctoral programme will become mandatory. Changes will be made regarding the terms of accreditation. In particular, after transitioning to a cluster, all programmes will be granted seven-year accreditation, instead of four years. Also, the conditional accreditation term has been increased and will be three years instead of two years.

Also, according to the proposed changes, the terms of accreditation will be determined by an act of the government or the Minister, which will explain in detail which field the programmes expire when the terms of accreditation expire. Deadlines will be set out for 2022-2028. The position of the Center is that if the programme's accreditation term is reduced by more than two years, its accreditation period should be increased.

However, under the proposed changes, accreditation will be mandatory for all programmes. The Center wants all programmes to be accredited. Mandatory accreditation of programmes will help improve the quality of education. Also, authorized programmes retain their validity and institutions will have the right to implement the programmes until the cluster of those programmes have to go through accreditation.

In the field of medicine programmes, the Center wants more resources to be valued, especially the ratios between students and faculty, between students and patients in clinical teaching. Therefore, the Accreditation Council shall determine the threshold number of students for the institution within the total number of students; This will help to rationally count how much capacity the institution has for the medical programme within a single programme. All the resources that the university has will be taken into account here.

The Center will ensure the involvement of international experts in doctoral programmes, regulated programmes and programmes implemented in one or two institutions. It was explained that the

programmes implemented in one, not two institutions were selected because it is difficult to select a field expert who does not have a conflict of interest with the implementing institution. Therefore, the involvement of an international expert is important for seeing an objective picture.

However, since accreditation becomes mandatory, the 3rd Authorization Standard will be revised and the substantive part of the programme evaluation will depart from this standard. In addition, it is planned to start working on sectoral characteristics in the field of art, as from 2023 they will have to go through cluster accreditation. Consultation meetings will be held, development activities will be offered by the Center to the institutions, active cooperation will be ensured.

The last part of the presentation focused on aspects of the quality development in doctoral programmes, including programme objectives, outcomes, admission to doctoral programmes, programme content, staff, faculty, student support services, and quality assurance.

After the presentations, a question-and-answer session was held. The first speaker was Irma Kurdadze, a member of the Council, who noted the importance of the changes made and especially highlighted the planned changes in the direction of doctoral programmes and asked if changes were planned in relation to joint doctoral programmes. Lasha Margishvili, Deputy Director, replied that in this direction, in the part of concluding the contract, the Center has an opinion to separate the requirements, in particular, what kind the international joint programme should be and what requirements should it meet if it is implemented together with an international partner and what requirements should the programme meet if it is implemented by the local institution. As for the standard, there will be no difference, the purpose, the result content and resources will be the same for everyone.

Shalva Mekravishvili, a member of the Coordinating Council, joined the discussion and made a minor revision to the draft amendment and, in order to clarify, noted that it would be better to make an entry as "granting accreditation" in the part of the decision on accreditation, in response, the Deputy Director, Lasha Margishvili, said that he would additionally discuss this entry with Legal Service of the Center.

The next question was asked by Maka Abuladze regarding the conditional accreditation, why it was increased and what was the basis of the conditional accreditation term and whether the institutions will have the opportunity to apply to the Center ahead of time. Lasha Margishvili explained that since the term of accreditation was increased from 4 to 7 years, the term of conditional accreditation was also increased, which is about the middle of the term of accreditation, the same principle was observed in this case. In practice, the institution needs some time to complete the programme in accordance with the accreditation standard in case of granting conditional accreditation. In practice, there were several cases when 2 years was not enough, and the pandemic deepened the issue, which was the reason for the change. As for early submission, both before and after these changes, institutions can apply to the Center ahead of time for accreditation. However, it should be noted that the assessment risk is on the institution and it can no longer be re-granted conditional accreditation and in case of insufficient substantiation a negative decision will be made. The Director of the Center added that both international and local practices were taken into account during the decisions. Ultimately this is a decision aimed at improving quality.

The voting procedure was carried out at the last stage of the Council meeting.

The members of the Coordinating Council unanimously supported the adoption of the submitted draft document of the dissemination area of information security management system of the Center.

Results of the ballot:

Proponent: 9

Opponent: 0.

The members of the Coordinating Council unanimously supported the adoption of the draft amendment to the LAW OF GEORGIA ON EDUCATION QUALITY IMPROVEMENT.

Results of the ballot:

Proponent: 9

Opponent: 0.

Chairman of the Council:

Rusudan Sanadze - Head of the Department of Education Sciences of the Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences at LEPL Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University; Accreditation Expert of Higher Education Programs;



Secretary of the meeting:

Maka Abuladze - Representative of the Student Organization of Georgia NNLE, PhD student at the Georgian Technical University - LEPL



Annex: 2 presentations:

1. Presentation: LEPL - National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement Information Security Management System Dissemination - Giorgi Gvasalia, Information Security Manager;
2. Presentation: Draft Law Amending the LAW OF GEORGIA ON EDUCATION QUALITY IMPROVEMENT - Lasha Margishvili, Deputy Director of the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement