



DUALMON

Strengthening capacities for the
implementation of dual education
in Montenegro Higher Education



Co-funded by the
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5.3.2 Second external evaluation report

External evaluation REPORT of Dual Higher Education (DHE) programmes based on ESG Standards



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Introduction

The implementation of dual higher education (DHE) programs in Montenegro represents a critical milestone in aligning academic instruction with the demands of the labor market and European higher education standards. Dual education, as a model, emphasizes the integration of theoretical knowledge with practical application, fostering a dynamic partnership between higher education institutions (HEIs), employers, and students. This approach is particularly relevant in Montenegro's context, as it aims to bridge skill gaps, enhance employability, and contribute to the country's socio-economic development.

This report provides an external evaluation of Montenegro's dual higher education framework, conducted in accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). The evaluation focuses on assessing the effectiveness, challenges, and sustainability of the proposed legal framework for DHE. Key aspects under review include compliance with European standards, governance structures, quality assurance mechanisms, stakeholder engagement, and the operationalization of dual education programs across institutions.

The findings and recommendations outlined in this report are intended to guide policymakers, educational leaders, and industry stakeholders in refining the legal and operational frameworks for DHE. By addressing identified challenges—such as resource constraints, variable stakeholder participation, and governance fragmentation—Montenegro can strengthen its higher education system and enhance its alignment with European and global standards.

This evaluation also highlights the broader strategic implications of integrating DHE into Montenegro's higher education landscape. With a focus on innovation, collaboration, and capacity-building, the proposed framework holds significant potential to transform education and contribute to a more competitive, inclusive, and sustainable labor market. The report underscores the importance of sustained commitment from all stakeholders in realizing the vision of a robust dual education system that prepares students for the challenges of a rapidly evolving world.

Evaluation of the Proposed Legal Framework for Dual Higher Education in Montenegro

Introduction

The implementation of dual higher education (DHE) in Montenegro represents a significant step toward bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, aligning with European standards and the labor market's needs. This evaluation assesses the proposed legal framework and its suitability for establishing and sustaining DHE in Montenegro. Key aspects include compliance with European higher education standards, adaptability for stakeholders, and the framework's capacity to address practical challenges in implementation.

1. Legal basis and alignment with European standards

The proposed legal framework emphasizes alignment with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for higher education, reflecting Montenegro's ambition to modernize its education system. The incorporation of dual education as a distinct model into the Law on higher education ensures the recognition of practical training alongside academic learning. This alignment positions Montenegro's higher education system as competitive within the European higher education area.

However, further clarity is required in defining responsibilities among stakeholders, such as the state, higher education institutions (HEIs), and employers. Comprehensive guidelines for quality assurance, accreditation, and monitoring are outlined but need stronger operational integration.

2. Key Features of the Framework

The legal framework identifies the following critical elements for DHE:

- **Student status and rights:** clear definitions for the dual student status, ensuring access to rights equivalent to traditional students.
- **Institution-employer collaboration:** establishing contracts between HEIs and employers, specifying roles, responsibilities, and financial arrangements.
- **Competence-based education:** a focus on practical skills development through regulated internships and work placements.

Strengths include the integration of practical training into curricula and incentives for employers to participate in DHE programs. However, challenges persist, such as varying levels of commitment from employers and the lack of a unified approach across institutions.

3. Challenges and limitations

The framework faces several obstacles:

- **Fragmented governance:** Montenegro's decentralized higher education governance structure can complicate uniform implementation across HEIs.

- **Resource constraints:** financial and infrastructural limitations may hinder the effective delivery of dual programs, especially in less developed regions.
- **Stakeholder engagement:** while companies are incentivized, ensuring sustained commitment and effective mentorship remains challenging

Addressing these challenges will require targeted capacity-building measures, enhanced communication strategies, and ongoing stakeholder engagement.

4. Recommendations for improvement

To strengthen the legal framework, the following steps are recommended:

1. **Standardized guidelines:** develop comprehensive operational manuals for HEIs and companies to ensure consistent implementation of DHE.
2. **Enhanced quality assurance:** establish robust monitoring and evaluation systems that incorporate student and employer feedback.
3. **Incentives for employers:** provide financial and tax incentives to employers who actively participate in DHE programs.
4. **Capacity building:** invest in training programs for faculty and employers to improve mentorship quality and program delivery.
5. **Regional support:** address resource disparities by allocating additional funding and support to underdeveloped areas.

5. Strategic implications for sustainability

The framework's sustainability depends on effective integration with Montenegro's broader educational strategies. Continued government support and alignment with labor market trends will be essential. Furthermore, fostering a culture of collaboration among HEIs, employers, and policymakers will ensure the long-term success of DHE programs.

Conclusion

The proposed legal framework for dual higher education in Montenegro lays a solid foundation for integrating practical skills training with academic learning. While promising, its success hinges on addressing challenges related to governance, resources, and stakeholder collaboration. With strategic enhancements and sustained commitment, this framework can significantly enhance Montenegro's higher education landscape, preparing students for a dynamic and competitive job market.



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Areas of short-cycle programme evaluation

1. Operation of the higher education institution
2. Human Resources
3. Students
4. Material Resources
5. International Quality Assurance Control and Study Programmes Delivery

Standards on the operation of the higher education institution

Standard 1

The higher education institution shall successfully fulfil its mission in the Montenegro and international higher education area. By achieving organizational and implementation objectives, it provides a quality of higher education activity and its development.

If this concerns the first re-accreditation, the mission, vision, and strategy of the higher education institution shall demonstrate that the obligations of the founder are continued.

Assessed shall be:

- a) *the consistency of strategic planning with the mission, national and European guidelines;*
- b) *feasibility and comprehensiveness of strategic planning;*
- c) *adequacy of the assessment method of the fulfilment of strategic planning.*

Findings
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The alignment of the dual higher education model (DHEM) with Montenegro's strategic educational goals is evident in the plans and pilot projects implemented across faculties, such as the Faculty of Economics, Electrical Engineering, Maritime Studies, and Tourism and Hotel Management. 2. The strategic planning of DHEM integrates European higher education standards, emphasizing practical training to meet the labor market's demands while fostering collaboration between universities and employers. 3. Feedback mechanisms such as surveys with students and employers have demonstrated general satisfaction but also revealed areas for improvement, particularly in aligning learning outcomes with real-world tasks.
Strengths
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strategic alignment: the mission and vision of the DHEM pilots align with Montenegro's higher education strategy, emphasizing employability and practical skill-building. 2. Collaboration with the industry: partnerships with companies enhance the practical relevance of education, providing students with on-the-job training and opportunities for direct employment. 3. Flexible implementation: faculties have tailored dual models to specific industries, ensuring the feasibility of pilot projects across disciplines. 4. Enhanced student employability: practical training modules improve students' chances of finding employment in competitive fields such as tourism, maritime industries, and ICT.
Opportunities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Curriculum development: greater involvement of employers in curriculum design can ensure alignment between academic programs and industry needs. 2. Promotion of DHEM: increasing awareness among companies and students about the benefits of dual education can expand participation and support.



3. **Longer internships:** extending the internship duration could allow students to acquire more comprehensive skills and better meet company expectations.
4. **Financial incentives:** introducing financial support or tax incentives for employers could enhance their commitment to dual education programs.

Inconsistencies

1. **Strategic planning vs. implementation:** while strategic goals align with European and national guidelines, operational inconsistencies exist, such as variability in the depth of employer engagement across sectors.
2. **Assessment methods:** the frameworks for evaluating the fulfillment of strategic goals are not standardized across faculties, leading to differences in quality assurance.
3. **Learning outcomes vs. industry needs:** there is partial alignment between academic learning outcomes and practical tasks expected by employers, highlighting the need for better integration of industry feedback in program design.
4. **Stakeholder participation:** limited awareness and participation among some companies and students indicate gaps in communication and promotion strategies.



Standard 2

The internal organization of a higher education institution shall ensure the participation of higher education teachers and staff, scientific staff and non-educational staff, students and other stakeholders in the management and development of the activity of a higher education institution.

Assessed shall be the representation of stakeholders in the bodies of higher education institutions and the exercise of their rights and duties.

Findings
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Faculties participating in the DUALMON project have implemented governance models that encourage stakeholder representation, including students, academic staff, and employers, in decision-making processes. 2. Students actively contribute through dual education projects, providing feedback that influences curriculum design and practical training standards. 3. While faculty governance structures ensure representation, there is variability in the extent of involvement and influence across institutions and stakeholder groups.
Strengths
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inclusive representation: governance models include representatives from academia, industry, and students, ensuring a multi-perspective approach to institutional development. 2. Student participation: students are actively involved in pilot projects and feedback processes, directly influencing the quality and relevance of the programs. 3. Industry collaboration: employers are engaged in the dual education model, contributing to curriculum relevance and providing hands-on training opportunities. 4. Collaborative structures: regular communication between faculty, students, and employers supports the effective management and improvement of dual education initiatives.
Opportunities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enhanced stakeholder roles: expanding the role of employers in governance, such as advisory boards or curriculum committees, can strengthen the alignment between education and industry needs. 2. Student leadership development: encouraging students to take on leadership roles within governance structures can enhance their understanding of institutional management and policy-making. 3. Digital platforms for feedback: implementing digital tools for real-time feedback and governance participation could increase engagement among all stakeholder groups. 4. Broader community engagement: involving non-educational staff and community representatives can bring diverse perspectives into institutional development discussions.
Inconsistencies

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Key Action 2: Capacity Building in the field of Higher Education



1. **Uneven stakeholder engagement:** levels of stakeholder participation in governance vary significantly across institutions, with some relying more heavily on academic staff than on students or external stakeholders.
2. **Limited employer influence:** while employers provide input on practical training, their role in governance and strategic decision-making remains underdeveloped.
3. **Representation gaps:** certain groups, such as non-educational staff, are underrepresented in governance structures, limiting their contributions to institutional development.
4. **Inconsistent feedback utilization:** although feedback mechanisms exist, not all institutions systematically incorporate stakeholder input into decision-making processes.

Standard 3

Practical training of students in a work environment, if it is part of the education activity, shall be well organized and implemented as such. There shall be resources available for its implementation.

Assessed shall be the following:

- a) *systemic regulation of the practical training of students, and of its implementation;*
- b) *satisfaction of the participants in the practical training.*

Findings
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Practical training in the DUALMON project is systematically integrated into academic curricula, with structured guidelines for students, mentors, and companies across all participating faculties. 2. Pilot projects have shown high satisfaction levels among students and employers, indicating that practical training aligns with expectations and delivers valuable skills. 3. While resources for practical training are available, including equipment and mentorship, challenges such as duration of internships and mentor engagement remain.
Strengths
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Structured implementation: clear guidelines and contracts ensure the systemic organization of practical training, defining roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders. 2. Employer engagement: strong collaboration with companies allows students to gain practical experience directly relevant to their fields of study. 3. High satisfaction levels: surveys from students and employers reveal that the majority are satisfied with the training's relevance and impact on skill development. 4. Access to resources: equipment purchased through the DUALMON project has enhanced the practical training environment, ensuring students have access to modern tools and technology.
Opportunities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Extended internships: increasing the duration of internships can allow students to gain deeper insights and more advanced skills in their respective fields. 2. Enhanced mentor training: providing additional training for mentors in companies could improve the quality of guidance and supervision offered to students. 3. Broader industry participation: expanding partnerships with a more diverse range of companies could increase training opportunities for students across various sectors. 4. Digital management tools: utilizing digital platforms to coordinate and monitor practical training programs can improve organization and streamline communication.
Inconsistencies



1. **Variable quality of training:** the quality of practical training experiences varies depending on the company and mentor, with some students receiving more comprehensive guidance than others.
2. **Inadequate duration:** the current length of internships in some faculties is insufficient for students to fully master complex tasks.
3. **Employer resource constraints:** some companies report a lack of time and resources to train students effectively, which affects the overall training quality.
4. **Uneven feedback mechanisms:** not all faculties have standardized feedback systems to evaluate and improve the practical training experience across stakeholders.

Standard 4

The internal quality system shall enable the conclusion of the circle of quality on all areas of operation of the higher education institution.

Assessed shall be the following:

- a) *understanding the meaning and the role of an internal quality assurance system;*
- b) *self-evaluation report for the last concluded self-evaluation period, measures based on the self-evaluation in the period since the previous accreditation, and a plan which contains improvements for the following self-evaluation period;*
- c) *how the internal quality assurance system enables and promotes the development, connecting and an update of the educational, scientific, research or artistic activity and the impact of this activity on the environment.*

Findings
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The internal quality assurance systems across participating institutions in the DUALMON project demonstrate a basic understanding of quality management, particularly in educational activities. However, the integration of these systems with research and their environmental impact is less pronounced. 2. Self-evaluation processes are conducted systematically, but the depth of analysis and the implementation of resulting measures vary across institutions. 3. Quality assurance frameworks focus on improving student learning outcomes, program relevance, and stakeholder satisfaction, with limited emphasis on fostering broader connections to scientific, research, and community activities.
Strengths
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Commitment to quality: higher education institutions show a strong commitment to maintaining and improving quality through self-evaluation and feedback mechanisms. 2. Self-evaluation practices: self-evaluation reports provide actionable insights, addressing gaps identified in previous evaluations and proposing improvements for upcoming periods. 3. Educational relevance: the internal quality systems prioritize aligning educational activities with labor market demands, ensuring the relevance and effectiveness of dual education programs. 4. Stakeholder involvement: feedback from students, employers, and faculty is incorporated into quality assurance processes, fostering an inclusive approach to continuous improvement.
Opportunities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enhanced research integration: strengthening the connection between educational and research activities can increase the relevance of academic programs and their societal impact.



2. **Community impact assessment:** developing metrics to assess the impact of institutional activities on the local and broader community could expand the scope of quality assurance.
3. **Quality assurance training:** providing targeted training for staff on quality assurance concepts can deepen understanding and improve implementation across institutions.
4. **Standardized tools:** introducing standardized tools and platforms for quality assurance can enhance consistency and efficiency in monitoring and evaluation processes.

Inconsistencies

1. **Variability in implementation:** the effectiveness of internal quality assurance systems differs significantly among faculties, with some focusing heavily on educational quality while neglecting research and community engagement.
2. **Limited long-term planning:** while immediate measures are often implemented based on self-evaluation reports, long-term quality improvement plans are not consistently developed or followed.
3. **Integration gaps:** there is insufficient integration of quality assurance systems across educational, research, and environmental impact activities, limiting the potential for holistic institutional improvement.
4. **Stakeholder feedback utilization:** despite collecting feedback from various stakeholders, its application in shaping quality assurance practices is inconsistent, reducing the potential for meaningful improvements.

Standard 5

The higher education institution shall monitor the needs for knowledge and employment needs in the environment. It shall provide information regarding the employment possibilities in the fields suitable for the competences or the learning outcomes of graduates.

Assessed shall be the following:

- a) *participation of the higher education institution with the environment or employers, and their graduates;*
- b) *development of job centres, graduate clubs or other forms of organization.*

Findings
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The DUALMON project effectively fosters collaboration between higher education institutions (HEIs) and employers, aligning graduate competencies with labor market demands. This is particularly evident in the structured practical training programs and active employer involvement in curriculum development. 2. Some HEIs have established job centers and alumni organizations, providing students with resources to explore career opportunities and connect with employers. 3. There is variability in the extent of partnerships across institutions, with some engaging extensively with industry while others have limited interaction.
Strengths
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strong employer partnerships: the involvement of employers in dual education models strengthens the connection between academic programs and labor market needs, enhancing graduate employability. 2. Job placement support: faculties such as Economics and Tourism have established graduate-focused programs and partnerships with companies that provide clear pathways to employment. 3. Feedback mechanisms: regular surveys and feedback loops from employers and alumni help HEIs stay informed about evolving industry requirements. 4. Practical training relevance: work placements tailored to industry needs ensure that graduates acquire practical skills valued by employers, increasing their job readiness
Opportunities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expansion of career services: strengthening job centers and graduate clubs across all HEIs can provide more comprehensive support for career development and employment. 2. Improved alumni networks: developing robust alumni networks can create long-term benefits, including mentorship opportunities and enhanced industry connections for current students. 3. Sector-specific collaborations: establishing partnerships in underrepresented sectors can diversify opportunities for students and address gaps in regional employment needs.



4. **Employer advisory boards:** forming formal employer advisory boards can provide ongoing input into curriculum development and ensure alignment with labor market trends.

Inconsistencies

1. **Unequal employer engagement:** while some faculties have well-established and strategically developed employer connections, others lack sufficient collaboration, limiting the scope of job-oriented opportunities for students.
2. **Limited outreach for graduate tracking:** few institutions have comprehensive mechanisms to track graduate outcomes, reducing their ability to analyze employment trends and inform program improvements.
3. **Variability in career services:** the availability and quality of job centers and alumni services vary significantly between faculties, creating unequal access to career development resources.
4. **Insufficient promotion of opportunities:** some institutions lack effective platforms to communicate employment opportunities and career guidance to students and alumni.

Standard 6

The higher education institutions shall inform the stakeholders and the public about the study programmes and their activity in a timely manner.

Assessed shall be the approachability, content, reliability, understandability and the accuracy of the information about the activity of the higher education institution, especially the information regarding study programmes, their implementation and the scientific, professional, research or artistic activity from the fields and the disciplines of these programmes.

Findings
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. HEIs involved in the DUALMON project use a variety of channels to communicate with stakeholders, including websites, social media, and informational events, to disseminate details about study programs and activities. 2. The accuracy and reliability of information provided by HEIs are generally high, though some faculties face challenges in ensuring timely updates and comprehensiveness across all communication platforms. 3. Transparency regarding study program structures, implementation, and opportunities, such as dual education internships, has improved significantly under the project.
Strengths
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Multi-channel communication: HEIs leverage diverse platforms, including digital tools and in-person events, to ensure broad access to information for stakeholders. 2. Detailed program information: study program details, including curricula, learning outcomes, and practical training opportunities, are well-documented and accessible to students and employers. 3. Active stakeholder engagement: regular informational sessions and outreach activities engage stakeholders, promoting understanding and trust in the programs offered. 4. Alignment with industry needs: communication efforts emphasize the relevance of study programs to labor market demands, enhancing their appeal to prospective students and employers.
Opportunities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Centralized information portals: developing centralized online portals for program information and updates can streamline access and improve user experience. 2. Real-time updates: Implementing tools for real-time updates on course availability, program changes, and upcoming events can enhance the reliability of information. 3. Targeted outreach campaigns: tailored communication strategies for specific stakeholder groups, such as employers and prospective students, can improve engagement and participation. 4. Enhanced visual communication: incorporating infographics and interactive content into digital platforms can make complex information more understandable for diverse audiences.



Inconsistencies

1. **Variability in content depth:** the depth and comprehensiveness of information provided about study programs vary across faculties, with some offering limited details on specific aspects such as practical training or research opportunities.
2. **Timeliness of updates:** some HEIs struggle to update their information promptly, leading to outdated details on websites and other platforms.
3. **Limited accessibility for non-traditional stakeholders:** information is not always tailored to meet the needs of non-traditional stakeholders, such as part-time students or international applicants.
4. **Unequal communication practices:** the approachability and understandability of information differ across faculties, creating inconsistencies in stakeholder experiences.

Standards on the Human Resources

Standard 7

Higher education teachers and staff, and scientific staff shall be provided for a quality performance of the educational, research and other work.

Assessed shall be the following:

- a) *provision of educational and professional development of higher education teachers and co-workers since the previous accreditation;*
- b) *scientific, professional, research or artistic achievements of higher education teachers and scientific staff;*
- c) *criteria of the higher education institution for appointment to titles and fields for appointment;*
- d) *types of employment of higher education teachers and higher education staff.*

Findings
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The HEIs involved in the DUALMON project provide opportunities for professional and educational development for teachers and staff, though the extent and accessibility of these opportunities vary. 2. HEIs have established criteria for academic appointments, ensuring a baseline of qualifications for teaching and research positions, but the criteria and fields for appointment are not uniformly stringent across institutions. 3. The project has promoted scientific, professional, and research outputs through collaboration with industry, though the emphasis remains predominantly on practical training and teaching.
Strengths
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Professional development: training programs for academic and administrative staff improve the delivery of dual education and support innovative teaching practices. 2. Collaborative research: partnerships with companies as part of dual education have facilitated applied research opportunities for academic staff, particularly in fields like tourism, maritime studies, and ICT. 3. Standardized appointment criteria: defined procedures and criteria for academic appointments ensure the recruitment of qualified and competent educators. 4. Flexible employment models: diverse employment types, including full-time, part-time, and adjunct positions, provide HEIs with flexibility to meet programmatic needs while maintaining quality.
Opportunities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased investment in research: allocating more resources toward research activities can enhance the academic reputation of HEIs and improve their contributions to innovation. 2. Expanded development programs: offering more frequent and diverse professional development opportunities can help staff adapt to evolving educational and technological demands.



3. **International collaboration:** building partnerships with international institutions can provide staff with exposure to global best practices and enhance their academic profiles.
4. **Mentorship systems:** establishing mentorship programs for junior staff can improve knowledge transfer and enhance their teaching and research capabilities.

Inconsistencies

1. **Uneven development opportunities:** access to professional development varies significantly between faculties, with some offering comprehensive programs and others providing minimal support.
2. **Limited research output:** while collaboration with industry has increased, research outputs remain secondary to teaching activities, limiting the academic impact of HEIs.
3. **Inconsistent appointment criteria:** the stringency and transparency of criteria for academic appointments differ across institutions, leading to variability in faculty qualifications.
4. **Staffing imbalances:** some faculties experience challenges in balancing full-time and part-time staff, which can affect the continuity and quality of education.

Standard 8

Professional-technical and administrative staff shall be provided (hereinafter: non-educational staff) for efficient help and counselling.

Assessed shall be the following:

- a) *type and suitability of the help and counselling to students and other stakeholders;*
- b) *number, work area and education structure of non-educational staff;*
- c) *education and training of non-educational staff.*

Findings
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. HEIs participating in the DUALMON project employ non-educational staff to provide support and counselling for students and stakeholders, with varying levels of effectiveness depending on the institution. 2. The number of non-educational staff and their educational qualifications generally align with institutional needs, but some faculties face shortages in specific roles, such as career counselling and technical support. 3. Professional development and training opportunities for non-educational staff are available but are inconsistently implemented across institutions.
Strengths
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Comprehensive student support: non-educational staff provide a range of services, including administrative assistance, career counselling, and technical support for students, ensuring smoother navigation of academic and practical requirements. 2. Qualified workforce: most HEIs maintain a well-qualified non-educational workforce, with clear delineation of roles and responsibilities to meet the needs of students and other stakeholders. 3. Administrative efficiency: administrative staff play a vital role in coordinating dual education programs, managing logistics, and ensuring compliance with institutional policies. 4. Feedback mechanisms: surveys and stakeholder feedback mechanisms help monitor and improve the quality of support provided by non-educational staff.
Opportunities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Targeted training programs: expanding training programs for non-educational staff, particularly in areas such as student counselling, digital tools, and diversity management, can enhance service quality. 2. Enhanced counselling services: increasing the availability of specialized counselling staff, such as career advisors and mental health professionals, can better address student needs. 3. Technology integration: leveraging technology to streamline administrative processes can improve efficiency and allow non-educational staff to focus on personalized support.



4. **Workforce expansion:** addressing staff shortages in specific areas, such as technical support and counselling, can improve overall institutional effectiveness.

Inconsistencies

1. **Uneven availability of services:** The quality and availability of non-educational support services vary significantly across faculties, leaving some students and stakeholders underserved.
2. **Inconsistent training opportunities:** not all non-educational staff have access to regular professional development, limiting their ability to stay updated on best practices and emerging challenges.
3. **Staffing gaps:** some institutions lack sufficient non-educational staff in critical areas, such as career counselling and technical support, impacting service delivery.
4. **Limited stakeholder awareness:** students and other stakeholders are sometimes unaware of the full range of available support services, reducing their utilization.

Standards on Students

Standard 9

The higher education institution shall provide the students with adequate help and counselling.

Assessed shall be the following:

- a) *the consideration of the diversity and needs of students in the establishment and determination of the content of counselling or help;*
- b) *timely and efficient notification of students;*
- c) *monitoring of the satisfaction of students with the services;*
- d) *help with finding internships*

Findings
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. HEIs participating in the DUALMON project provide counselling and support services tailored to student needs, with a focus on practical training and career guidance. 2. Systems for notifying students about available counselling and help services are in place but vary in efficiency and accessibility across faculties. 3. Regular feedback is collected from students regarding their satisfaction with counselling and support services, but the incorporation of this feedback into service improvements is inconsistent. 4. Assistance in finding internships is a strong focus, particularly in the dual education programs, where companies are actively involved in providing work-based learning opportunities.
Strengths
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tailored support services: HEIs consider student diversity and needs in designing counselling programs, including career guidance and academic support. 2. Internship placement assistance: faculties have established strong connections with industry partners, enabling efficient placement of students in internships aligned with their study programs and career goals. 3. Feedback mechanisms: surveys and feedback sessions help gauge student satisfaction with support services, enabling ongoing evaluation and adjustments. 4. Proactive communication: many faculties use multiple channels to keep students informed about available counselling services, internships, and other opportunities.
Opportunities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enhanced communication tools: developing centralized online portals or mobile applications for timely updates about counselling and internship opportunities can improve accessibility. 2. Expanded internship networks: increasing collaboration with more diverse industry sectors can provide students with a broader range of internship options. 3. Specialized counselling services: Introducing specialized counselling for mental health, academic challenges, and career transitions can address specific student needs more effectively.



4. **Regular satisfaction monitoring:** standardizing the collection and analysis of student feedback across all faculties can provide valuable insights for improving counselling services.

Inconsistencies

1. **Uneven service quality:** the quality and accessibility of counselling and internship placement services vary significantly across institutions and faculties.
2. **Limited awareness:** some students are unaware of the full range of available support services, reducing their utilization.
3. **Feedback utilization gaps:** although feedback is collected, its application to enhance services is not consistently evident across institutions.
4. **Internship placement challenges:** in some cases, limited internship opportunities or mismatches between student skills and placement demands create challenges for effective placements.

Standard 10

Students shall have appropriate conditions for a quality of study, of scientific, professional, research or artistic work and extracurricular activities.

Assessed shall be the following:

- a) *implementation of the study and its conditions according to the needs and expectations of students;*
- b) *enabling suitable professional, artistic and research work of students;*
- c) *conditions for extracurricular activity;*
- d) *enabling quality internship placements.*

Findings
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. HEIs involved in the DUALMON project have established conditions that cater to students' academic, research, and professional needs, with an emphasis on dual education and practical training. 2. Facilities and resources for extracurricular activities vary widely across faculties, with some offering robust support while others have limited options. 3. Internship opportunities provided through partnerships with industry align well with the expectations of students and employers, enhancing practical skills and employability.
Strengths
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tailored study conditions: programs are designed to meet the expectations of students, combining theoretical knowledge with practical application in alignment with industry demands. 2. Support for research and professional work: HEIs offer access to modern equipment, mentorship, and opportunities for research and artistic work, particularly in fields like ICT, tourism, and maritime studies. 3. Extracurricular opportunities: some institutions provide clubs, events, and additional activities that foster social, cultural, and professional development outside of the classroom. 4. High-quality internship placements: robust partnerships with a wide range of companies ensure that students gain relevant and meaningful experience during internships.
Opportunities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improved extracurricular facilities: expanding facilities and resources for extracurricular activities can enrich the student experience and support holistic development. 2. Research participation: encouraging more students to participate in research projects can enhance their academic profiles and career prospects. 3. Streamlined internship matching: utilizing digital platforms for matching students with internship opportunities can ensure better alignment with their skills and career goals.



4. **Interdisciplinary collaboration:** promoting cross-departmental projects and activities can provide students with broader exposure and diverse learning experiences.

Inconsistencies

1. **Uneven resource distribution:** access to research facilities, equipment, and extracurricular opportunities varies across faculties, limiting the quality of the student experience in some areas.
2. **Limited outreach for extracurricular activities:** not all institutions adequately promote or support extracurricular opportunities, leading to underutilization of available options.
3. **Internship quality variability:** while many internships meet high standards, some placements lack sufficient alignment with students' academic and career objectives.
4. **Inconsistent integration of research:** opportunities for students to engage in research or artistic work are not uniformly accessible across programs and faculties.



Standard 11

The higher education institution shall protect students' rights.

Assessed shall be the following:

- a) *operation of the bodies of the higher education institution in this area;*
- b) *mechanisms for the recognition and prevention of discrimination of vulnerable groups of students and discrimination based on personal circumstances and beliefs of students;*
- c) *participation of student representatives in the bodies of the institution with other students.*

Findings
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. HEIs in the DUALMON project have established mechanisms to safeguard student rights, including student representation in institutional bodies and support for diverse student needs. 2. Efforts to prevent discrimination and ensure inclusivity for vulnerable groups are evident, though implementation and enforcement vary across faculties. 3. Student representatives actively participate in decision-making bodies, providing a voice for the student community, though their influence can differ depending on institutional culture and policies.
Strengths
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student representation: HEIs ensure student participation in governance, enabling representation in institutional bodies and decision-making processes. 2. Anti-discrimination policies: policies and mechanisms are in place to prevent discrimination and protect vulnerable groups, reflecting a commitment to equity and inclusivity. 3. Supportive governance: institutional bodies address student grievances and ensure fair treatment, fostering trust and accountability within the student community. 4. Inclusive culture: programs and initiatives promote respect for diversity, personal circumstances, and beliefs among students, contributing to a supportive academic environment.
Opportunities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enhanced training: providing targeted training for faculty, staff, and student representatives on anti-discrimination practices can strengthen enforcement and awareness. 2. Improved accessibility: expanding resources and accommodations for vulnerable groups, including students with disabilities, can further enhance inclusivity. 3. Digital grievance platforms: implementing digital tools for reporting and resolving grievances can increase transparency and accessibility for all students. 4. Expanded student engagement: encouraging greater participation of students in governance and decision-making can improve institutional responsiveness to student needs.



Inconsistencies

1. **Variable policy implementation:** the enforcement of anti-discrimination policies and student rights varies across institutions, leading to uneven levels of protection.
2. **Limited awareness:** not all students are fully aware of their rights or the mechanisms available for addressing grievances, reducing their ability to seek redress.
3. **Insufficient representation:** in some institutions, student representatives face challenges in effectively influencing decision-making due to limited support or authority.
4. **Gaps in inclusivity:** efforts to accommodate vulnerable groups are not consistently comprehensive, with some students still facing barriers to full participation in academic and extracurricular activities.



Standard 12

Students participate in the assessment and the update of content and the implementation of the higher education institution activity.

Assessed shall be the following:

- a) *participation of students in the drafting of the mission, strategic guidelines, self-evaluation of the higher education institution and study programmes as well as their transformation;*
- b) *methods of ensuring participation in the self-evaluation and update of the activity.*

Findings
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students actively participate in institutional processes, such as providing feedback on study programs, strategic guidelines, and self-evaluation efforts, particularly through surveys and consultation sessions. 2. Mechanisms for incorporating student input into institutional decision-making, such as focus groups and representative committees, are in place but vary in their effectiveness across institutions. 3. While students are engaged in providing feedback on study program content, their involvement in higher-level strategic decisions, such as drafting the mission or transforming study programs, is less consistent.
Strengths
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Structured feedback mechanisms: institutions utilize tools such as surveys, interviews, and discussion groups to collect student input on academic content and institutional activities. 2. Representative bodies: student representatives participate in committees and governance bodies, enabling their input in shaping institutional policies and updates. 3. Focus on continuous improvement: feedback from students is used to identify areas for improvement in study programs and institutional activities, fostering a culture of responsiveness and adaptability. 4. Integration into self-evaluation: students are involved in self-evaluation processes, ensuring their perspectives are considered in institutional assessments.
Opportunities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expanded involvement in strategy: increasing student participation in drafting strategic documents, such as the institutional mission and long-term guidelines, can enhance their influence in shaping institutional direction. 2. Digital platforms for engagement: leveraging online tools to collect real-time feedback from students can enhance participation and streamline communication. 3. Capacity-building for representatives: training programs for student representatives can improve their ability to effectively contribute to governance and decision-making.



4. **Broader consultation practices:** involving a more diverse range of students in feedback processes can ensure representation of various perspectives, including those from underrepresented groups.

Inconsistencies

1. **Uneven participation:** student involvement in self-evaluation and institutional updates varies across faculties, with some offering limited opportunities for engagement.
2. **Limited influence in strategy:** while students participate in program updates, their role in higher-level strategic planning and transformation of institutional activities is less pronounced.
3. **Feedback utilization gaps:** institutions do not consistently demonstrate how student feedback influences tangible changes in academic or institutional activities, leading to perceptions of token participation.
4. **Inadequate communication of outcomes:** students are not always informed about the outcomes of their contributions, which can undermine their motivation to engage in feedback processes.



Standards on the Material Resources

Standard 14

The institution shall provide suitable premises for the implementation of the higher education activity.

The premises shall be assessed upon the consideration of the educational, scientific, professional, research or artistic activity, study programme proposals, human resources and the anticipated number of students enrolled.

Findings
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. HEIs in the DUALMON project have made significant investments in infrastructure to support their educational, research, and professional activities, with premises generally aligning with the needs of students and staff. 2. Facilities are designed to accommodate the specific requirements of study programs, particularly those involving dual education models, including laboratories and collaborative workspaces. 3. While some faculties have modernized facilities, others face challenges in providing adequate premises due to space limitations or outdated infrastructure.
Strengths
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Specialized facilities: institutions provide well-equipped laboratories, lecture halls, and workspaces tailored to the needs of specific study programs, such as maritime studies, ICT, and tourism. 2. Capacity alignment: premises are generally adequate to accommodate the anticipated number of students, ensuring a conducive learning environment. 3. Dual education support: infrastructure enhancements, such as the installation of industry-specific equipment, support the practical training components of dual education models. 4. Accessibility: many institutions prioritize accessibility, ensuring that premises are suitable for diverse student populations, including those with disabilities.
Opportunities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Infrastructure modernization: upgrading older facilities can improve the quality of educational and research activities and meet the evolving needs of study programs. 2. Sustainability initiatives: implementing environmentally friendly practices in campus design and maintenance can enhance the long-term usability of premises. 3. Flexible spaces: designing multipurpose spaces that can be adapted for various activities, such as research, collaboration, and extracurricular events, can optimize space utilization. 4. Digital integration: equipping premises with advanced digital tools and connectivity can enhance the delivery of modern, hybrid, or online education models.



Inconsistencies

1. **Variable facility quality:** there are disparities in the quality and modernity of facilities across faculties, with some lacking sufficient space or updated infrastructure.
2. **Resource allocation gaps:** limited funding or uneven distribution of resources affects the ability of some institutions to maintain or improve their premises.
3. **Insufficient space for growth:** in some faculties, premises are stretched thin due to increasing enrollment or the introduction of new programs without corresponding expansion in infrastructure.
4. **Inconsistent accessibility:** while many premises are accessible, some institutions still face challenges in ensuring full accessibility for students with disabilities.

This evaluation underscores the need for consistent investment in infrastructure to support the comprehensive implementation of higher education activities. Addressing inconsistencies and leveraging opportunities can ensure that premises are fully equipped to meet the educational, scientific, and professional needs of institutions and their stakeholders.



Standard 15

The institution shall provide the suitable technical, technological and other equipment for the execution of the higher education activity.

The equipment shall be assessed upon the consideration of the educational, scientific, professional, research or artistic activity, study programme proposals, anticipated manner of their implementation (e-study, remote study...), human resources and the anticipated number of students enrolled.

Findings
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. HEIs participating in the DUALMON project have invested in technical and technological equipment tailored to the needs of their educational and research activities. Equipment ranges from laboratory tools to advanced ICT infrastructure. 2. The equipment supports both traditional and innovative teaching methods, including hybrid and remote learning models, but its adequacy varies between faculties. 3. While significant progress has been made in upgrading equipment, some institutions still face challenges in aligning their technical resources with growing enrollment and program diversification.
Strengths
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Modern equipment acquisition: faculties have procured state-of-the-art tools and devices to support specific study programs, particularly those with practical training components, such as dual education. 2. Hybrid learning support: many institutions have equipped classrooms with digital tools and platforms to facilitate remote and e-learning, ensuring accessibility for a wider student population. 3. Alignment with study programs: the equipment provided aligns well with the academic and professional requirements of various programs, ensuring relevance and applicability for students. 4. Specialized facilities: technical resources such as simulation labs and industry-standard software enhance the practical and research capabilities of faculties.
Opportunities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Digital transformation: expanding the integration of cutting-edge technologies, such as artificial intelligence tools, virtual labs, and high-speed connectivity, can further improve the quality of education and research. 2. Resource sharing: establishing centralized resource hubs or shared labs across faculties can maximize the utilization of high-cost equipment. 3. Upgraded remote learning tools: enhancing tools and platforms for remote and hybrid learning can better serve students unable to attend in-person sessions. 4. Long-term maintenance plans: developing comprehensive maintenance and upgrade schedules can ensure the sustainability and functionality of technical and technological resources.



Inconsistencies

1. **Uneven equipment distribution:** disparities in the quality and availability of equipment across faculties result in unequal learning and research opportunities for students.
2. **Outdated resources:** some faculties rely on outdated equipment that does not meet current educational and industry standards, limiting the effectiveness of their programs.
3. **Limited remote learning capabilities:** While some institutions have embraced hybrid learning, others lack sufficient infrastructure to fully support remote education.
4. **Inadequate funding:** resource constraints in certain institutions hinder their ability to procure and maintain the necessary equipment to accommodate growing enrollment and program demands.

Standard 16

Suitable adjustments shall be provided for students with various forms of disability.

Assessed shall be the adjustments of the premises and the equipment as well as communication and information accessibility.

Findings
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. HEIs in the DUALMON project demonstrate varying degrees of commitment to providing adjustments for students with disabilities. While some institutions have made significant progress, others lag behind in accessibility. 2. Physical premises have been adjusted in many faculties to accommodate mobility impairments, but accessibility for other types of disabilities (e.g., sensory or cognitive) is less consistent. 3. Communication and information accessibility, including the use of assistive technologies and alternative formats, is improving but remains uneven across institutions.
Strengths
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Physical accessibility improvements: many institutions have installed ramps, elevators, and accessible restrooms to enhance the physical accessibility of their premises. 2. Technological support: digital tools and assistive technologies, such as screen readers and captioning systems, are being adopted in some faculties to aid students with disabilities. 3. Inclusive communication practices: efforts are being made to ensure that communication materials, such as announcements and course materials, are available in accessible formats. 4. Dedicated support services: some institutions provide specific counselling and support services for students with disabilities, ensuring their needs are addressed effectively.
Opportunities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Comprehensive accessibility plans: developing and implementing institution-wide accessibility strategies can address gaps and ensure consistent support for students with disabilities. 2. Enhanced training for staff: providing training for faculty and administrative staff on disability awareness and inclusive teaching practices can improve the overall learning environment. 3. Advanced assistive technologies: investing in cutting-edge assistive technologies, such as adaptive learning platforms, can enhance accessibility and inclusion. 4. Community partnerships: collaborating with organizations specializing in disability support can provide additional resources and expertise for institutional improvements.



Inconsistencies

1. **Uneven premises adjustments:** while some faculties have fully accessible premises, others still lack basic adjustments, such as ramps or accessible seating.
2. **Limited support for non-physical disabilities:** adjustments for students with sensory, cognitive, or learning disabilities are underdeveloped in many institutions.
3. **Inconsistent communication accessibility:** not all institutions provide information in accessible formats, creating barriers for students with visual or hearing impairments.
4. **Awareness gaps:** faculty and staff awareness of disability needs and inclusive practices varies widely, impacting the effectiveness of support measures.

Standards 17

Adequate and stable financial resources shall be provided for the implementation and further development of the higher education activity.

Assessed shall be the financial plan for the following accreditation period or for the period for which an agreement has been concluded with the competent ministry, and the successfulness in meeting the financial plans in the last four years.

Findings
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. HEIs in the DUALMON project demonstrate varying levels of financial stability, with funding coming from a mix of governmental support, project-based funding (e.g., Erasmus+), and partnerships with industry. 2. Financial plans for the upcoming accreditation period generally align with the strategic goals of institutions, emphasizing the continuation and enhancement of dual education programs. 3. Success in meeting financial plans over the past four years has been mixed, with some institutions experiencing challenges due to fluctuating enrollment, economic constraints, or dependency on project-based funding.
Strengths
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Diverse funding sources: HEIs leverage a combination of government funding, international projects, and private sector contributions to support their operations and development. 2. Strategic financial planning: institutions involved in the DUALMON project have developed detailed financial plans that align with their strategic goals, including infrastructure improvements and program expansions. 3. Project-based support: participation in international projects such as Erasmus+ provides additional financial resources to support innovative initiatives, including dual education models. 4. Effective use of resources: many institutions have demonstrated efficiency in utilizing available financial resources to improve educational and infrastructural capacities.
Opportunities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Long-term financial strategies: developing more robust long-term financial strategies can ensure stability beyond project-based funding periods. 2. Diversified income streams: exploring additional funding sources, such as alumni donations, endowments, or public-private partnerships, can reduce reliance on government or project funding. 3. Enhanced financial monitoring: implementing advanced financial management systems can improve transparency and the ability to respond to financial challenges proactively. 4. Increased investment in research: allocating more resources to research activities can attract additional funding opportunities, including grants and industry collaborations.

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Key Action 2: Capacity Building in the field of Higher Education



Inconsistencies

1. **Unequal financial stability:** financial health varies significantly among institutions, with some relying heavily on temporary project funding that may not sustain long-term goals.
2. **Limited flexibility:** budget constraints and rigid financial planning in some faculties limit their ability to adapt to unforeseen challenges or opportunities.
3. **Underfunded strategic goals:** some strategic goals, such as expanding dual education programs or upgrading infrastructure, remain underfunded despite being included in financial plans.
4. **Dependency on external funding:** over-reliance on international projects and short-term funding can pose risks to the sustainability of initiatives like dual education.



Standard 18

The library of the higher education institution shall have suitable study, professional and scientific literature and shall provide quality library services.

Assessed shall be the following:

- a) *suitability of the study, professional and scientific literature;*
- b) *the library stock, availability of the material, information bibliographic support and access to databases;*
- c) *professional assistance by library employees;*
- d) *development of the library activity.*

Findings
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Libraries at HEIs participating in the DUALMON project generally provide access to a range of study, professional, and scientific literature, though the breadth and depth of their collections vary. 2. Access to electronic databases and bibliographic tools has been expanded in some institutions, offering students and staff opportunities for advanced research and academic development. 3. Professional assistance by library staff is available but varies in quality and consistency across faculties, affecting the overall library experience. 4. Efforts to modernize library services and facilities are underway but are unevenly implemented across institutions.
Strengths
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Diverse resources: many libraries offer a mix of physical and digital resources, including specialized collections aligned with the study programs and research activities of their institutions. 2. Access to databases: institutions provide access to international databases, enabling students and staff to engage in high-quality academic and scientific research. 3. Library staff support: professional librarians provide bibliographic assistance, helping users locate and utilize resources effectively. 4. Modernization efforts: some libraries are investing in digital tools and platforms to improve accessibility and user experience, particularly for remote or hybrid learning models.
Opportunities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expansion of digital resources: increasing subscriptions to e-books, journals, and research databases can enhance the availability of cutting-edge resources for students and faculty. 2. Professional development for staff: training programs for library staff can improve the quality of user support and keep them updated on new tools and techniques. 3. Collaborative networks: establishing interlibrary loan systems and consortia with other institutions can expand access to diverse resources at a lower cost.



4. **User-centered innovations:** implementing user-friendly library systems, such as mobile apps and personalized recommendation tools, can enhance the library experience.

Inconsistencies

1. **Uneven resource availability:** some libraries lack sufficient collections in certain fields, limiting access to necessary study and research materials for students and faculty.
2. **Variable database access:** not all institutions provide equal access to high-quality electronic resources and databases, creating disparities in research opportunities.
3. **Inconsistent staff support:** the quality and availability of professional assistance vary, with some libraries offering limited support for advanced research needs.
4. **Underdeveloped library facilities:** Infrastructure and technology in some libraries are outdated, reducing their ability to meet modern academic and research demands.



Standards on the International Quality Assurance Control and Study Programmes

Delivery

Standard 19

The higher education institution shall evaluate and update the content, composition and implementation of the study programme.

Assessed shall be the following:

- a) *whether the self-evaluation of a study programme enables its development and update by keeping its actuality and creating a quality of the educational environment;*
- b) *methods and procedures of collecting information or proposals for the transformation of a study programme and its analyses;*
- c) *appropriateness of informing the stakeholders on achieving the planned tasks or the findings and results of the self-evaluation of a study programme.*

Findings
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. HEIs involved in the DUALMON project regularly conduct self-evaluations of study programs, focusing on maintaining their relevance and quality through updates based on stakeholder feedback. 2. Various methods are employed to collect data and proposals for updating study programs, including surveys, focus groups, and consultations with students, faculty, and employers. 3. Institutions provide updates to stakeholders on changes and outcomes of self-evaluations, but the frequency and comprehensiveness of these communications vary across faculties.
Strengths
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continuous improvement: self-evaluation processes enable study programs to remain aligned with academic advancements, industry trends, and labor market needs. 2. Stakeholder engagement: methods such as employer feedback, alumni input, and student surveys contribute to the transformation of study programs and ensure their relevance. 3. Transparency: many institutions share the results of self-evaluations and updates with stakeholders, demonstrating accountability and responsiveness to feedback. 4. Collaborative development: involvement of academic staff and external stakeholders in program updates ensures diverse perspectives in decision-making processes.
Opportunities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enhanced feedback mechanisms: expanding the use of digital tools for real-time feedback collection can improve the efficiency and scope of data gathering for program updates. 2. Integration of emerging trends: regularly incorporating advancements in technology, research, and industry practices can keep study programs competitive and forward-looking.



3. **Improved communication strategies:** standardizing the communication of self-evaluation results to stakeholders can ensure that all groups are well-informed about program updates and changes.
4. **Interdisciplinary approaches:** promoting cross-disciplinary collaborations can diversify and enrich study program offerings, catering to evolving student and industry demands.

Inconsistencies

1. **Variable quality of self-evaluations:** the depth and effectiveness of self-evaluation processes differ across faculties, affecting the consistency of program updates.
2. **Inconsistent feedback utilization:** some institutions struggle to systematically incorporate feedback from stakeholders into program development, reducing the impact of their input.
3. **Limited stakeholder awareness:** not all stakeholders are adequately informed about the outcomes of self-evaluations, leading to gaps in transparency and trust.
4. **Uneven alignment with market needs:** while many programs adapt well to industry requirements, some lag in integrating emerging skills and competencies demanded by the labor market.

This evaluation highlights the importance of rigorous self-evaluation processes and proactive stakeholder engagement in maintaining the quality and relevance of study programs. Addressing inconsistencies and leveraging opportunities can ensure that study programs remain dynamic, inclusive, and aligned with academic and industry standards.