

THE POLISH SYSTEM OF ACCREDITATION IN TERTIARY EDUCATION

Case study

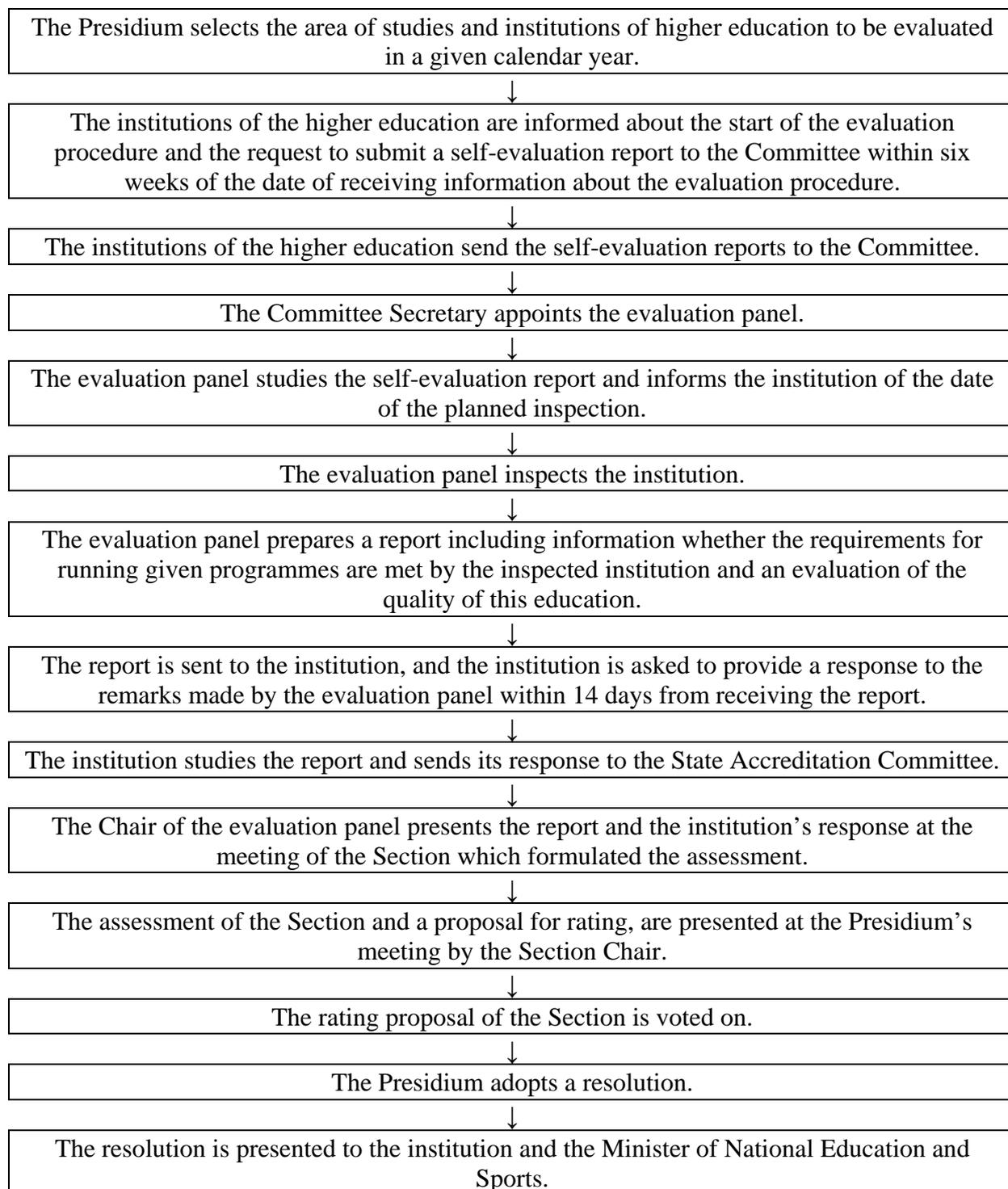
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- 1) The Polish State Accreditation Committee is the only statutory institution covering the whole system of tertiary education in Poland that works towards the evaluation quality of education and whose evaluation and resolutions are legally binding.
- 2) Evaluation of degree programmes made by the State Accreditation Committee is obligatory and in case of a negative rating entails certain legal consequences. In such a case, the Minister of National Education and Sports takes a decision either to revoke or to suspend the right to offer programmes in the negatively voted field or level of study.
- 3) The main tasks of the Committee are the following:
 - a) evaluating the quality of education as well as carrying out control of compliance with the requirements for offering degree programmes in all Polish institutions of tertiary education,
 - b) granting the right to establish and offer study programmes different from those specified in the regulations of the Minister of National Education and Sports,
 - c) preparing evaluation of all applications to:
 - establish an institution of tertiary education,
 - establish a basic or external unit of an institution,
 - establish new degree programmes in existing institutions.
- 4) The evaluation of quality of education is performed by evaluation panels composed of the members of individual Section of the Committee and experts. The evaluation panel, consisting of five members, is appointed by the Secretary of the Committee in consultation with the Chair of a given Section (the Committee is divided into ten thematic Sections).
- 5) The evaluation procedure consists of a number of stages (cf. diagram 1). This is mostly due to the fact that the consequences of an evaluation are of a paramount importance for the inspected institutions (e.g. there are also financial consequences). The first stage of the evaluation procedure is the submission of a self-evaluation report by a school which is subject to evaluation.
- 6) During the inspection on site of the school the information from the report is compared with the actual state of affairs. The evaluation panel members meet with the school authorities, faculty authorities, as well as lecturers and students and audit some classes. Meeting with the institutions' authorities and representatives of the academic community enable better understanding of the functioning of a particular institution as well as its future development. Inspected schools can share their doubts with the evaluation panel members, and reflect on some problematic issues together.

- 7) During the panel's inspection the following issues are investigated:
- the academic staff, including both the basic staff being precondition for existence of a given school or a programme, as well as extra staff,
 - academic achievements of the staff,
 - competence of the staff to teach given courses,
 - curricula and study programmes,
 - quality of theses (including both those at the lycenciate as well as master's level),
 - the scholarly activity of the inspected organizational unit,
 - cooperation between schools at the national and international level,
 - students' affairs,
 - teaching facilities, students' living conditions and recreation facilities,
 - legal aspects of education in the inspected area of studies.
- 8) Detailed reports prepared by evaluation panels are valuable source of information for the evaluated institutions. After the inspected schools get acquainted with these reports, they express their own opinions, and present their stance. Subsequently the report of the evaluation panel and the institution's response are analyzed by the appropriate Section of the Committee. This comprehensive procedure enables the Section to gain insights into all conditions influencing the quality of education provided in the inspected institution and thus to propose an objective rating, which ends the evaluation procedure.
- 9) The Section chairperson presents the rating proposal of the Section, along with the justification, to the Committee's Presidium which confirms the awarded rating by voting and adopts a resolution on awarding the rating to inspected unit. The resolution is presented to the inspected unit and to the Minister of National Education and Sports. If the rating awarded by the Committee applies to an institution supervised by another minister the resolution is also presented to the minister in charge of the institution.

Diagram No. 1

STAGES OF THE EDUCATION QUALITY EVALUATION PROCEDURE



Source: study prepared on the basis of the Statutes of the State Accreditation Committee of 11th January 2002.

Diagram No. 2

RATING SCALE USED BY THE STATE ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE

