

**THE MINISTRY OF
EDUCATION AND
TRAINING**

No. 04/2016/TT-BGDĐT

**THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM
Independence - Freedom - Happiness**

Hanoi, March 14, 2016

CIRCULAR

ON QUALITY ASSESSMENT STANDARDS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Pursuant to the Education Law dated June 14, 2005; the Law on Amending several provisions of the Education Law dated November 25, 2009;

Pursuant to the University Education Law dated June 18, 2012;

Pursuant to the Government's Decree No. 36/2012/ND-CP dated April 18, 2012 prescribing functions, duties and powers and organizational structure of Ministries and Ministry-level bodies;

Pursuant to the Government's Decree No. 32/2008/ND-CP dated March 19, 2008 setting forth regulations on functions, duties and powers and organizational structure of the Ministry of Education and Training;

Pursuant to the Government's Decree No. 141/2013/ND-CP dated October 24, 2013 specifying and guiding the implementation of several Articles of the University Education Law;

Pursuant to the Government's Decree No. 75/2006/ND-CP dated August 2, 2006 specifying and guiding the implementation of several Articles of the Education Law; the Government's Decree No. 31/2011/ND-CP dated May 11, 2011 providing for amendments to several Articles of the Government's Decree No. 75/2006/ND-CP dated August 2, 2006 specifying and guiding the implementation of several Articles of the Education Law; the Government's Decree No. 07/2013/ND-CP dated January 9, 2013 providing for amendments to Point b Clause 13 Article 1 of the Decree No. 31/2011/ND-CP dated May 11, 2011 amending several Articles of the Government's Decree No. 75/2006/ND-CP dated August 2, 2006 specifying and guiding the implementation of several Articles of the Education Law;

After considering the Director of Educational Quality Testing and Inspection Department;

The Minister of Education and Training hereby adopts this Circular providing for quality assessment standards for undergraduate-level education programs.

Article 1. Issued together herewith is the Regulation on quality assessment standards for higher education programs.

Article 2. This Circular shall enter into force from April 29, 2016.

Article 3. The Minister to the Office, Director of the Educational Quality Testing and Inspection, Heads of relevant subsidiaries of the Ministry of Education and Training, Chairpersons of centrally-affiliated cities and provinces, Heads of bodies in charge of administration of post-secondary institutions, Heads of institutions providing higher education programs, and Directors of educational quality assessment organizations, shall be responsible for implementing this Circular./.

**PP. MINISTER
DEPUTY MINISTER**

Bui Van Ga

REGULATION

ON QUALITY ASSESSMENT STANDARDS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS
(Annexed to the Circular No. 04/2016/TT-BGDĐT of the Minister of Education and Training)

Chapter I

GENERAL PROVISIONS

Article 1. Application scope and subjects

1. This Instrument sets forth regulations on quality assessment standards for education programs at the undergraduate, master and doctoral level (hereinafter referred to as higher education levels).
2. This Instrument shall apply to universities, academies, colleges and scientific research institutes authorized to provide doctoral-level education, foreign-invested higher education institutions (hereinafter referred to as higher education institution) providing education programs at higher education levels within the territory of Vietnam as well as other relevant organizations or individuals.

Article 2. Definitions

For the purpose of this Instrument, terms used herein shall be construed as follows:

1. *Education program* designed for a specific level includes objectives and requirements relating to knowledge, skills and learners' behaviors or attitudes to be achieved upon graduation; program contents, methodologies and activities; technical and physical facilities, institutional structure, functions, duties and academic activities of the educational institutions entrusted with the conduct of prescribed fields of study.

2. *Curriculum* in a level-specific education program includes general and specific objectives and graduation requirements for both a whole field of study and courses; education contents, assessment methodologies and time frame in each field of study and course.

3. *Education program quality* refers to any fulfillment of general, specific objectives and graduation requirements set out in a level-specific education program, conformity with all of legal requirements referred to in the University Education Law and National Knowledge Framework, and satisfaction of human resource needs of local areas

4. *Quality assessment standards for higher education programs* refer to the number of requirements of contents and conditions that an education program must meet to qualify for an accredited one for its conformity with approved education quality standards.

5. *Quality assessment criteria for higher education programs* refers to the number of requirements and conditions that an education program must meet in terms of a specific aspect of each standard.

6. *Contrasting and comparing* refers to a combination of contrasting and comparing a higher education institution or education program with a set of educational quality assessment standards or with another designated higher education institution or education program respectively.

7. *Assessment of higher education programs* refers to data collection and processing, giving of opinions based on assessment standards for all of the activities related to an education program in a higher education institution including, inter alia, its objectives and graduation requirements; program description; its curriculum structure and contents; learning and teaching approaches; assessment of students' learning outcomes; staff of lecturers or academics; education-related employees; students and supports given to students; education-related facilities or equipment; improvement of post-graduation quality and outcomes.

Article 3. Purposes of adopting quality assessment standards for higher education programs

1. Higher education institutions shall rely on such standards to assess activities relating to education programs on their own initiative to continuously improve their education quality and to address practical conditions of education quality of specific education programs to competent authorities and society.

2. Education quality assessment organizations shall utilize such standards to assess and grant or deny granting accreditation of conformity with education quality standards for education programs.

3. Other organizations or individuals shall, based on such standards, give their opinions, assess and participate in public consultations on education programs designed by higher education institutions in which they are interested.

Article 4. Assessment scale

1. Assessment of each criterion in each standard shall be subject to 7-level scale, including:

- a) Level 1: Absolutely noncompliant. Immediate corrective actions should be taken;
- b) Level 2: Noncompliant. Corrective actions need to be taken;
- c) Level 3: Not fully compliant. Minor corrective actions should be taken to become compliant;
- d) Level 4: Compliant;
- dd) Level 5: More compliant than expected;
- e) Level 6: Well compliant;
- g) Level 7: Perfectly compliant.

2. Any criteria that fall into level 1 through level 3 are considered “Not Satisfied” while they are deemed “Satisfied” if falling into level 4 through level 7.

Chapter II

QUALITY ASSESSMENT STANDARDS FOR EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Article 5. Standard 1: Objectives and graduation requirements

1. Objectives of an education program shall be clearly defined and align with a higher education institution’s missions and visions as well as conform to higher education objectives provided in the University Education Law.
2. Graduation requirements of an education program shall be clearly determined and cover all common and particular requirements that students must achieve upon completion thereof.
3. Graduation requirements must have the effect of reflecting requirements of relevant parties, regularly reviewed, adjusted and made available to the public.

Article 6. Standard 2: Program summary

1. This summary must provide sufficient and updated information
2. The course outline must give sufficient and updated information.

3. The program summary and course outline must be made easily accessible to the public and parties involved.

Article 7. Standard 3: Curriculum structure and contents

1. A program curriculum must be designed on the basis of graduation requirements.
2. Contribution of each program course to achievement of graduation requirements must be explicit.
3. Teaching curriculum must have the logical structure and process with updated and integrative contents.

Article 8. Standard 4: Teaching and learning approaches

1. Educational philosophies or objectives must be clearly declared and widely communicated to relevant parties.
2. Teaching and learning activities must be designed to meet graduation requirements.
3. Teaching and learning activities must promote skill training and enhance learning abilities during student's lifetime.

Article 9. Standard 5: Assessment of students' learning outcomes

1. Assessment of students' learning outcomes must be subject to levels in which specific graduation requirements are met.
2. Regulations on assessment of students' learning outcomes (including, inter alia, time length, methodologies, criteria, weight factors, feedback-giving mechanism and related contents) must be easily understood and made known to students.
3. Methodologies of learning outcome assessment must be diversified and ensure worthiness, reliability and fairness.
4. Assessment results must be subject to timely feedbacks in order for students to improve their learning efforts.
5. Students must be able to gain easy access to the procedures for complaint about their learning outcomes.

Article 10. Standard 6: Staff of lecturers and academics

1. Planning of staff of lecturers and academics (including attraction, admission, appointment, arrangement and employment contract termination and grant of permission for retirement) are implemented to meet needs for training, scientific research and community support activities.

2. Student/ lecturer rate and workload of lecturers and academics shall be measured and monitored as a basis for increased quality of training, scientific research and community support activities.
3. Lecturers and academics recruitment and selection criteria (including moral standards and academic qualification) for the purpose of appointment and work transfer must be defined and available communicated to the public.
4. Capacity of staff of lecturers and academics must be subject to determination and assessment.
5. Needs for professional training and development for staff of lecturers and academics must be defined and necessary activities must be implemented to meet such needs.
6. Managerial activities based on performance of lecturers and academics (including grant of reward and recognition) must be effected to create a driving force and provide assistance towards training and scientific research and community support activities.
7. Forms and quantity of research projects of lecturers and academics must be established, monitored, and subject to contrasting and comparing procedures to improve their quality.

Article 11. Standard 7: Employees

1. Planning of employees (those who are working for libraries, laboratory facilities, information technology systems and other auxiliary services) are effected to meet needs for training, scientific research and community support activities.
2. Recruitment, selection, appointment and transfer procedures must be defined and made available to the public.
3. Employee qualification must be subject to determination and assessment.
4. Needs for professional training and development for employees must be defined and necessary activities must be implemented to meet such needs.
5. Managerial activities based on performance of employees (including grant of reward and recognition) must be effected to create a driving force and provide assistance towards training and scientific research and community support activities.

Article 12. Standard 8: Students and supports given to students

1. Student admission policy must be clearly defined, made available to the public and kept updated.
2. Student admission criteria and methods must be expressly understood and assessed.

3. An appropriate monitoring system must be in place to monitor students' learning and school activity progress, study outcomes and workloads.
4. Learning advisory and consulting, extra-curriculum, competition activities and auxiliary services must be accessible to students to improve their learning performance and increase post-graduation employment opportunities.
5. Psychological and social environment and facility landscape must facilitate students' training, research activities and relaxation.

Article 13. Standard 9: Facilities and equipment

1. A system of work, study and functional rooms must be provided with equipment suitable for training and research activities.
2. Libraries and learning materials must be sufficient and up to date to assist training and research activities.
3. Laboratories, practice rooms and equipment must be relevant and up to date for training and research activities.
4. The information technology system (including online learning facilities) must be relevant and up to date for training and research activities.
5. Environmental, health and safety standards must be determined and effected by taking into consideration handicapped students' special needs.

Article 14. Standard 10: Quality improvement

1. Feedbacks and needs of parties concerned must be used as a basis for designing and developing education programs.
2. Design and development of education programs must be effected, assessed and improved.
3. Learning and teaching process and learning outcome assessment must be reviewed and assessed on a regular basis in order to ensure compatibility and conformity with graduation requirements.
4. Scientific research results must be utilized to improve learning and teaching performance.
5. Quality of auxiliary services and all conveniences, such as libraries, laboratory rooms, information technology systems and other necessary services, must be assessed and improved.
6. The feedback mechanism of parties involved must be systematic and subject to assessment and improvement.

Article 15. Standard 11: Student outcomes

1. Dropout and graduation rate must be determined, monitored and subject to contrasting and comparing procedures to improve education quality.
2. Average time limits for graduation must be determined, monitored and subject to contrasting and comparing procedures to improve education quality.
3. Post-graduation employment rate must be determined, monitored and subject to contrasting and comparing procedures to improve education quality.
4. Forms and quantity of researches conducted by students must be established, monitored, and subject to contrast and comparison requirements to improve their quality.
5. Satisfactoriness levels of parties involved must be determined, monitored and subject to contrasting and monitoring procedures for education quality improvement.

Chapter III

IMPLEMENTATION

Article 16. The Educational Quality Testing and Inspection Department

The Educational Quality Testing and Inspection Department shall provide guidance on application of assessment standards and instructions on self-assessment and external assessment practices in order for higher education institutions and education quality assessment entities to implement them in a consistent manner.

Article 17. Authorities in charge of directly managing higher education institutions

Authorities in charge of directly managing higher education institutions shall show these institutions the way to decide on assessment methodologies for respective education programs in accordance with Clause 2 Article 18 hereof; provide higher education institutions with expeditious and advantageous conditions to design their education programs that seek to meet education quality standards over periods of time.

Article 18. Higher education institutions

1. Higher education institutions must take into consideration their practical conditions to set up the plan to create education programs that meet education quality standards over periods of time and take necessary measures to successfully execute such plan.
2. For specific education programs, one or some of the following alternative assessment procedure(s) is/are conducted at higher education institutions' choice in accordance with:

- a) the standards adopted by regional or international prestigious organizations specializing in education quality assessment and inspection and those that have qualified for the List of international education quality inspection organizations accredited in Vietnam, announced by the Ministry of Education and Training;
- b) the quality assessment standards for specific education programs adopted by the Minister of Education and Training;
- c) the standards that hereby enter into force.

Article 19. Education quality inspection organizations

Education quality assessment organizations shall consult this Regulation to assess and accredit any education programs of higher education institutions that meet stated education quality standards./.

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