

INFORMATION NOTE No. 1/2024

PROCEDURES REGARDING THE THIRD CYCLE OF

STUDY PROGRAMME ASSESSMENT

(2023-2028)

At the end of the second cycle of assessment (2017-2022) and after the Institutional Assessment, it is necessary to define a set of guidelines for the assessment and accreditation procedures of the new cycle (2023-2028). Some of these guidelines have already been tested in the last two years, while others result from the changes intended to be introduced in the relationship between the A3ES and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

The reference framework for these guidelines will be based on the progressive evolution of the assessment procedures. As previously announced, it will be conditioned by the institutional assessment results. This means adopting differentiated mechanisms, depending on the robustness of each HEI's internal quality management systems. The following set of standards result from a dialogue with APESP, CCISP, and CRUP, as well as with the ENQA Commission that was recently in Portugal as part of the external assessment of A3ES.

Thus:

STUDY PROGRAMME ASSESSMENT

1. Proposals for new study programmes must be submitted within the **defined deadlines**¹ and must include all the information necessary for their complete assessment;
2. Proposals for accreditation renewal of study programmes in operation (ACEF and PERA) must be submitted within the **defined deadlines**², and must include all the information necessary for their complete assessment;
3. Each new study programme proposal **must remain unchanged** during the assessment and accreditation procedure;
4. The response is an instrument the HEI must use only to **clarify factual errors** included in the Reports of the External Assessment Teams (EATs), so the principle of stability should be guaranteed, both in the proposals for new study programmes and in study programmes in operation. The response cannot include changes that distort the strategy and content of the study programmes under assessment or that, ultimately, amount to a new proposal;
5. The EAT, responsible for the final report, in the event of proposing an accreditation of the study programme with conditions, must **explicitly justify** the proposed conditions. The EAT must do the same when proposing the non-accreditation of the study programmes;
6. in addition to defining the conditions on which the initial accreditation or a renewal of

¹ The period for submission of new study programmes (NCE) runs from February 1st to March 15th.

² The period for submission for accreditation renewal of study programmes in operation (ACEF and PERA) runs from October 15th to December 15th.

- the accreditation of study programmes should depend, the EAT **may also make recommendations**. These should be presented only in cases where the EAT's proposal is for accreditation (or accreditation renewal) of the study programme (with or without conditions);
7. The EAT reports should also be taken as **pedagogical instruments**, leading to the introduction of improvements in the functioning of the study programmes;
 8. As is the case with accreditation decisions, the Management Board's **decisions not to accredit study programmes will be published** on the Agency's website, with the indication of the HEI, the study programme, the response (if any), the EAT's final report, and the respective decision of the Management Board;
 9. The results of the institutional assessment will, in the short term, allow the definition by A3ES of **different levels of procedures**, more or less simplified, which shall condition the assessment activities of each institution's study programmes.
 10. in the short term, the assessment model will be duly adjusted, integrating the institutional assessment results. This may lead to different types of procedures, from a complete simplification to keeping the mechanisms used so far.

FOLLOW-UP OF STUDY PROGRAMMES ACCREDITED WITH CONDITIONS

11. The procedure for verifying compliance with the conditions imposed at the time of the assessment/accreditation of study programmes will be carried out directly through the SIA3ES. This applies to **conditional accreditations** decided from 2023 onwards.
12. The notification will be sent **through the SIA3ES** two months before the end of the accreditation.
13. The Higher Education Institution must also submit the follow-up report **through the SIA3ES** in Portuguese and English.
14. The Management Board will review the reports submitted and **decide on the fulfilment** of the conditions set out at the time of the conditional accreditation.
15. Without prejudice to the previous number, the Management Board **may appoint an expert** from the scientific area of the study programme for an opinion on compliance with the conditions. Preferably this expert will be a member of the External Assessment Team who instructed the procedure leading to the act of conditional accreditation of the study programme.
16. The processes lodged on the **previous platform** will follow the traditional procedure: notification from the A3ES secretariat sent to the HEIs and submission by the HEIs of the follow-up report by email.

REQUEST FOR CHANGES TO THE ELEMENTS CHARACTERIZING A STUDY PROGRAMME

17. Changes **to the characterising elements** of a study programme may be admitted, following instructions to be published in a future Decision.

CHANGE IN THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF ADMISSIONS OF A STUDY PROGRAMME

18. The **change in the maximum number of admissions** to a study programme can be requested through the SIA3ES in accordance with Decision No. 127/2024.

GUIDELINES FOR FILLING IN STUDY PROGRAMME DATA ON THE SIA3ES PLATFORM

19. The completion of the proposals for new study programmes and for changes to the elements characterising study programmes in operation benefit from a set of guidelines that facilitate information flow between the SIA3ES and the SIMGES (of the Directorate General for Higher Education), simplifying and articulating the assessment and registration operations with DGES (a separate document).

Lisbon, 4 April 2024