Annex 2:

REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY IN HIGHER EDUCATION
ACCREDITATION BOARD

Updated regulation on the internal functioning of the Accreditation Board

Approved by Decision No. 110, dated 11.09.2026

Article 1: Purpose

This Regulation aims to define rules and procedures governing the functioning of ASCAL's Accreditation Board. Consequently, it defines duties and responsibilities of the Accreditation Board, its internal organisation, meeting convocation and decision-making procedures, potential conflicts of interest, and confidentiality.

Article 2: Legal basis

This Regulation is approved in compliance with Law No. 80/2015 "*On higher education and scientific research in higher education institutions in the Republic of Albania*"; Law No. 44/2015 "*Code of Administrative Procedures of the Republic of Albania*"; Law No. 8480, dated 27.05.1999 "*On the functioning of collegiate bodies of state administration and public entities*", as amended; Law No. 23, dated 03.02.2026 "*On the prevention of conflict of interest in the exercise of public functions*"; Law No. 9887, dated 10.03.2008 "*On personal data protection*"; Decision No. 109, dated 15.02.2017 "*On the organisation and functioning of the Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education and the Accreditation Board and on setting fees for quality assurance processes in higher education*", as amended.

Article 3: Definitions

For the purpose of this Regulation, the following terms and acronyms have these meanings:

- ASCAL–Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education;
- Higher Education Quality Code - set of standards and guidelines for internal and external quality assurance in higher education.

Article 4: Mission

The Accreditation Board is a national collegiate body that ensures external quality assurance of higher education institutions and their study programs through accreditation decisions and monitoring the maintenance of quality standards and continuous improvement of academic quality in the Republic of Albania.

Article 5: Board composition

5.1 The Accreditation Board is composed of 11 members, of whom 3 to 5 are foreign members. Accreditation Board members must have at least 10 years of experience in academic and research institutions, both in Albania and abroad. They must hold a accademic degree, academic title, or have at least five years of experience in the field of higher education quality assurance. The Chair and members of the Accreditation Board must be proficient in spoken and written English.

5.2 The Accreditation Board is supported in its activity by the Accreditation Board Relations and Internationalization Sector at ASCAL.

5.3 The Accreditation Board includes a student and a labour market representative.
5.4 Appointment and dismissal of the Chair and members of the Accreditation Board are carried out by Prime Minister's Order. Accreditation Board members are appointed for a 4-year term.

Article 6: Duties and responsibilities

Accreditation Board duties and responsibilities are as follows:

6.1 **Makes final decision on accreditation of a given program and/or institution. Accreditation decision can be positive or negative. When decision is positive**, validity of institutional accreditation and related study programs cannot exceed 6 years;

6.2 Provides reasons for and substantiates accreditation decisions, considering following **data and evidence**: institutional legal context, key data on institution and its programs, self-evaluation reports and supporting evidence, external evaluation group report, eventual verbal reporting by external evaluation group members at Accreditation Board meeting, data on evaluation procedures, results and conclusions from previous evaluations/accreditations, information on implementing recommendations given during previous evaluations/accreditations, and any other relevant data;

6.3 **Decides on duration and validity term of accreditation** in case of positive decision.
Criteria for determining validity of institutional or study program accreditation are:

a. Level of fulfilment of quality code standards according to external quality evaluation results;
b. Results of previous accreditations and ongoing recommendation fulfilment as well as quality progress from one accreditation to another;
c. Monitoring results and maintenance of quality standards from licensing/opening of higher education institution and/or study program onwards;
d. Institutional stability regarding data, documentation, and processes related to and serving maintenance and enhancement of academic offer quality standards;
e. For study programs, duration of validity and accreditation term is determined in relation to study program duration.
f. Accreditation duration is determined in academic years. End date is expressed in format: day/month/year;

6.4 Applies Code of Administrative Procedures for decision-making. Accreditation Board decision is final;

6.5 **Decides, based on request, evidence, and documentation** of a higher education institution, approval for external evaluation by a **foreign quality assurance agency**;

6.6 **Reviews evaluation reports**, upon request of ministry responsible for education, for preliminary evaluation in case of establishment and/or reorganisation of higher education institutions and their study programs, and **recommends** establishment and/or reorganisation of higher education institutions and study programs to ministry responsible for education;

6.7 Issues official **Accreditation Certificate** within one month from date of positive accreditation decision. Model certificates are approved by Accreditation Board and contain unique identification code referring to certification registry. Certificate is co-signed by Accreditation Board Chair and ASCAL's General Director. Decision and certificate are sent to head of respective higher education institution or any other authorized person and published on official

website;

6.8 Requests ASCAL to **monitor performance** of higher education institutions and study programs based on accreditation process results;

6.9 **Reviews and reconsiders its accreditation decisions** in cases where:

6.9.1 ASCAL identifies lack of compliance with standards or potential deviations therefrom after initial accreditation or during accreditation period;

6.9.2 It (Accreditation Board) has reasonable doubts regarding quality decline, deviation from quality standards, or legal provisions;

6.9.3 Ministry responsible for education sends data and documents on potential violations of quality standards or legal provisions.

Accreditation Board establishes special commission to review identified cases, in cooperation with ASCAL and Accreditation Board representatives and, if necessary, external experts. Commission reviews available information and may request additional evidence or scheduling further meetings with various parties. Commission drafts report and submits it to Accreditation Board for further decision-making.

If Accreditation Board identifies legal violations or other deviations from legal provisions, it notifies ministry responsible for education for further inspections. This provision also applies to higher education institutions undergoing accreditation process;

6.10 Takes into consideration the accreditation status of foreign higher education institutions in their respective countries of origin when deciding on the **accreditation of joint study programs** offered by Albanian and foreign higher education institutions, as well as programs offered by their respective branches operating in the Republic of Albania. Consequently, ASCAL verifies official accreditation status of partner institution(s). Accreditation Board may request additional information on involved higher education institutions;

6.11 **Approves annual report** on its and ASCAL's performance, which is made public within first quarter of following calendar year. Report contains at least following chapters:

- Foreword (by Accreditation Board Chair and ASCAL Director);
- Latest developments in Albanian higher education system;
- Activities, procedures, and projects:
    - accreditation procedures and decisions, national student survey;
    - reports and analyses on general findings from quality assurance procedures (ESG 3.4);
    - participation in international projects and networks;
    - cooperation with stakeholders (ministry responsible for education, higher education institutions, student associations, economic sector, ...);
    - informative and communication activities: conferences, workshops, events;
    - human and financial resources (ESG 3.5);
    - internal quality management and organisational development, staff development (ESG 3.6);

6.12 Approves ASCAL **mission statement** and any revision thereof;

6.13 **Approves special criteria for selecting domestic and foreign experts** for institutional and

study program evaluation. Criteria are subject to annual evaluation. Criteria may be revised and/or modified at any time by Accreditation Board;

6.14 **Approves annually list of domestic and foreign experts** to be engaged in evaluation committees, following proposals of ASCAL and international bodies (e.g., ENQA, EUA, ESU, ...). Expert list is subject to continuous updates at Accreditation Board meetings;

6.15 **Approves internal regulation for ASCAL functioning and activity upon ASCAL request;**

6.16 **Approves methodology and instruments of National Student Survey** for teaching quality assurance upon ASCAL proposal;

6.17 Reviews, prior to publication, **final reports for National Student Survey** and subsequently approves them.

Article 7: Conflict of interest

7.1 Conflict of interest exists when an Accreditation Board member has **close relationship with higher education institution and/or study programs** subject to Accreditation Board decision-making. Close relationships include:

- current employment or other services to higher education institution;
- participation in any board or committee of higher education institution;
- previous employment or other services (in last 5 years);
- current employment or any involvement by family members;
- current project cooperation;
- previous research project cooperation (in last 3 years).

Accreditation Board members must declare in advance if in conflict of interest.

7.2 In case of conflict of interest, Accreditation Board member is not involved during process of addressing respective case. **Member is not provided documentation or reports** for specific procedure. He/she leaves meeting room during discussions and voting for **decision-making** belonging to respective institution.

Article 8: Meetings

8.1 Accreditation Board meets **12 times a year**. If necessary, Board may meet up to 3 (three) additional times within same calendar year, upon request of minister responsible for education.

8.2 Accreditation Board meeting is conducted in presence of **at least eight members**.

8.3 **Meeting dates** are scheduled several months in advance.

8.4 **Member absence** must be **approved by Chair**. Member notifies Chair **at least 48 hours** in advance and **justifies absence**. Every meeting absence is justified and documented in meeting minutes. In the event of a breach of these rules, including absence from more than one-third of meetings within a 12-month period, the Accreditation Board shall request the Council of Ministers to replace the respective member.

8.5 Accreditation Board Relations and Internationalization Sector at ASCAL is sent **draft agenda** at least 14 days before meeting. Any Accreditation Board member may request **adding items to agenda up to 7 days** before meeting.

8.6 **Agenda is approved** at beginning of meeting. **During meeting**, the agenda may be **amended by** a vote. Any accreditation decision cannot be added to agenda if respective procedures were not part of provisional agenda.

8.7 Calling **additional meetings** may be requested by at least six members, accompanied by proposed agenda, to be scheduled at least 6 weeks in advance.

8.8 ASCAL sends **meeting documents** at least 10 working days before meeting. In special cases, when urgent issues requiring decision-making arise, ASCAL may send documentation up to 48 hours before meeting.

8.9 **Extraordinary meeting** may be called upon request of Chair or six Accreditation Board members, together with proposed agenda, to be scheduled at least 2 days in advance.

8.10 Accreditation Board **Chair** chairs meeting. In case of **absence, Deputy Chair** chairs meeting. In case of both absent, mos senior member chairs meeting.

8.11 Chair **opens meeting**, gives floor during discussions, **asks members to vote**, and announces **decisions**.

8.12 Chair may decide to **conduct meetings** via digital technology in case of inability to be present and when quorum of eight members is not met. Technical preparations must be made before meeting.

8.13 Meetings are not open to public and discussion topics are treated **confidentially**. Opinions and votes of individual members are not disclosed to third parties or public.

8.14 **ASCAL Director participates in** meeting without voting right. Other staff members may also attend Board meetings upon request.

8.15 External members (e.g., external evaluation experts, higher education institution representatives, other experts) may be invited to provide information and evidence regarding specific agenda topics. Information is kept secret.

8.16 **Meeting minutes** are kept by ASCAL after each meeting. Minutes contain meeting agenda, member attendance and absences, **results and main decisions** (including vote counts). The minutes shall include summaries of the evaluation reports and discussions to the extent necessary to explain the decisions taken. **Draft minutes** are sent to members, along with invitation for next meeting, prior to respective meeting. Deadline for submitting **written comments** may be set with dispatch. Minutes are approved at next meeting. **Approved minutes** are signed by all Accreditation Board members.

Article 9: Decisions

9.1 Each member **has one vote**. Voting right **cannot be transferred** to another member.

9.2 **Decisions are valid when** adopted by a **three-quarters majority of present members**. **Chair votes last.**

9.3 In case of failure **to meet required quorum**, voting is **postponed** to next meeting.

9.4 **Remote voting** may be conducted for **issues not needing discussion** and for which decision must be **taken before next meeting**. Requests for decisions are submitted in writing and contain respective reasoning. Issue must be elaborated in way supporting positive or negative decision. Decision is taken if **at least eight members have sent their votes**. If member **requests organising discussion on topic**, it is included in agenda of subsequent meeting. Voting is

conducted electronically by email within period of at least 7 days or maximum 14 days. Voting result is announced at next meeting.

Article 10: Subcommittees

10.1 Accreditation Board may decide to establish **standing or temporary committee**, defining its tasks. Subcommittee may invite external experts. External experts are also subject to confidentiality obligations.

10.2 Subcommittee elects **chair** among its members. Subcommittee chair regularly reports to Accreditation Board on subcommittee activities.

10.3 Accreditation Board decides **procedural rules followed by subcommittee.**

Article 11: Entry into force

11.1 This Regulation enters into force immediately upon approval.

11.2 Upon entry into force of this Regulation, previous internal acts conflicting with it are repealed.