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QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER SCHOOL OF APPLIED PROFESSIONAL STUDIES IN VRANJE, SERBIA

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Abstract: The quality assurance system in the higher school of Applied Professional Studies in Vranje defines the strategy for quality assurance, quality assurance measures, and subjects and areas for quality assurance. Higher School of Applied Professional Studies in Vranje is subject to external quality control carried out by the Commission for Accreditation and Quality and the National Council for Higher Education, and internal controls by the Commission for self-evaluation and assessment of the quality of academic programs, teaching and working conditions in the school as the highest authority in the process of quality assurance, which is responsible for monitoring, securing and improving quality in all areas. School pays special attention to the systematic monitoring and improving the quality of academic programs, teaching process, scientific and professional work, evaluation of students, textbooks and literature, resources, non-teaching support and management.

Keywords: Quality assurance, school, standards, mission, vision, SWOT analysis, action plan

INTRODUCTION - STRATEGY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

Higher School of Applied Professional Studies in Vranje adopted the Strategy for Quality Assurance. In these primary and general development document in the area of quality assurance is defined mission, vision, objectives, goals and principles of the institutional system security and improve quality, also are determined the area of quality assurance and quality assurance system operators, quality assurance measures and mechanisms of implementation quality assurance system and action plan.



Figure 1. Location of the municipality of Vranje within Serbia

The aim of the quality management system, which establishes by this specified document is to provide high quality standards of education, scientific research and professional work in order to create the conditions for the inclusion of schools in European Higher Education Area and to contribute to the development of the community in terms of the general transformation of society.



Figure 2. Serbia – map of districts

The goal of providing quality systems in the higher school of Applied Professional Studies in Vranje is optimally meet the demand for

quality higher education in Serbia in the long term, particularly for education-specific profiles for the education system, then the community's needs for the development of competence and skills of human resources, at the same time with satisfaction of employed in schools. Guaranteeing and continuous improvement of quality will be achieved the highest level of quality study programs, teaching process, scientific research and professional work, continuous improvement of the overall business and developing a culture of quality, which will allow Higher School of Applied Professional Studies to become a modern and attractive multi-disciplinary school.

The Strategy emphasizes the responsibility of schools to monitor, improve and develop the quality of work. The strategy expresses willingness of teachers to schools teaching activities performed while maintaining high quality standards, to be included in the process of European integration in higher education and the quality of our services provide the confidence of students, employers, and the founder of the society in general. The school is strategically committed to their work permanently associated educational activities (transfer of knowledge), research activity (production of knowledge) and professional activity (application of knowledge). The main task of the school is to disseminate and promote knowledge and learning in the context of lifelong learning in the knowledge society, to stimulate creativity, to contribute to the sustainable development of communities, and to promote universal values and goals of the modern university education. School strives to maintain a high level of basic, vocational studies by international standards. Higher School of Applied Professional Studies is a complex institution that brings together different areas of technological fields, as well as the natural and social sciences relevant to the education profile who studied at the school.

By adopting the Strategy for Quality Assurance High School of Applied Professional Studies is committed to a comprehensive, stable, functional, flexible and transparent system of quality control to guarantee the compliance of quality of teaching and scientific research. The strategy of quality assurance is publicly available on the website www.visokaskola.edu.rs.

QUALITY ASSURANCE MEASURES

The steps to ensure quality include the external control and internal steps to ensure the quality.

External control means:

- » External Quality Assurance, based on the standards of the National Council for Higher Education, by the Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance;
- » Accreditation of Schools, by the National Council for Higher Education, within the prescribed period.

The internal steps to ensure quality includes:

- » Compliance with standards adopted by the National Council for Higher Education:
 - Standards for accreditation of higher education institutions and study programs;

- Standards for self-evaluation and quality assessment;
- » Fostering a culture of quality;
- » The security quality by providing to the activities of the Commission and the Commission for the quality of self-evaluation;
- » Determining the factors that affect to the provision of quality teaching and support processes (management) related to the field at next:
 - the quality of the teaching process (programs, classes, teachers, a scientific and professional work, evaluation of students, textbooks and literature, libraries, information resources, facilities and equipment, non-teaching staff);
 - quality of management;
- » The examination of existing and potential students and the inclusion of these requirements in education;
- » The security interaction of education, the vocational and the Science paper;
- » Development and implementation of different mechanisms, tools and techniques in order to improve the quality system;
- » Ensuring that top management supports security system quality and that is to ensure that all develop skills necessary to ensure the quality system;
- » The detection, analysis and implementation experience of the leading institutions of higher education;
- » Cooperation with companies;
- » The security of the active participation of students (Student Council);
- » Conducting regular internal audits and review of the quality management system by the management;
- » Self-evaluation at intervals up to three years;
- » The security of the public in the work.

QUALITY ASSURANCE SUBJECTS

Provision of quality subjects are the all school employees. In addition to these important subjects providing to the quality of the students involved in school activities through studenstskog Parliament and their representative bodies in other schools. Their rights and obligations in the provision of quality of these subjects through participation in the work of schools (school council, faculty council, the Committee for Quality Assurance, Committee for Publishing, Student Parliament and its committees, etc.), and through everyday use and improvement of the management process quality. The rights and obligations of all entities providing quality schools are regulated by the statute and relevant regulations (Regulations for Publishing, Rules for self-evaluation and quality assessment, etc.). All subjects have the right and obligation to participate in quality assurance in their workplace, and through participation in the body to ensure quality.

In addition to human subjects important quality assurance are space, laboratories, equipment, library holdings and information support to all work processes.

For the implementation of quality improvement measures, the Commission is responsible for self-evaluation and quality assessment.

Areas of quality assurance

In order to achieve the set of basic tasks and goals, the school pays special attention to the systematic monitoring and quality improvement in the following areas:

- » the study programs,
- » teaching process,
- » a scientific and professional work,
- » evaluation of the students,
- » textbooks and literature,
- » resources,
- » non-teaching support
- » management.

SWOT analysis

» **S (STRENGTH)**

1. Excellent geographical location. ++
2. Excellent structure and content of the study programs (some of them are unique in Serbia: Wood technology and production economics). +++
3. Excellent spatial conditions. +++
4. Quality assessment and self-assessment in all areas of quality assurance. ++
5. Good professional staff. ++
6. Incentives for young teachers and staff in the further development of the country and abroad. ++

» **W (WEAKNESSES)**

1. Inadequate research. ++
2. Low participation in development and professional projects. ++
3. Inadequate nurturing the spirit of inquiry and critical thinking of students. +
4. The level of quality of students enrolled in certain programs of study. +++

» **O (OPTIONS)**

1. The economy is still doing relatively well („Alfa Plam“, „Simpo“, „Bi water“, „Zivinoprodukt“ etc.) provides opportunities for the quality of professional practice. +++
2. Wide geographical area covered by the Higher School of Applied Professional Studies provides an opportunity to introduce new study programs. +++
3. The favorable geographical position provides an opportunity for cooperation with similar institutions of higher education in Macedonia, Greece and Bulgaria. ++

» **T (THREATS)**

1. The difficult economic situation that may endanger the structure of vocational studies. +++
2. Lack of funds may result in a reduction of quality in all aspects that define quality. +
3. Low participation in professional projects may affect the weaker development of teachers and staff, and therefore the quality of

their work with students, as well as the downgrade of the School. ++

Quantification of the previous estimates of the categories defined in the following way:

- +++ - Highly significant
- ++ - Medium significantly
- + - Little significant
- 0 - No significance

Proposed measures and activities to improve the quality

In accordance with the orientation defined in the Strategy of "quality assurance measures", need the following:

- » the competent authority of a Higher School of Applied Professional Studies conducted periodic review and improvement strategies, based on the acquired insight into the results of operation of the quality management system (monitoring and measurement provided for in the Rules of self-evaluation and includes the following standards (Annex 1.4.).
- » strategy to ensure continuous quality is operationalized appropriate action plans, according to the baseline defined in the Strategy for Schools.

STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

Higher School of Applied Professional Studies Vranje with a specific document adopted standards and procedures to ensure a minimum level of quality for each area to provide standards for self-evaluation and quality assessment of higher education institutions. Baseline Higher School of Applied Professional Studies in Vranje in the field of providing quality management are the following documents:

1. Law on Higher Education (The Republic of Serbia official messenger, No. 76/05)
2. The Bologna Declaration which our country signed in 2003.,
3. Ordinance on standards for self-evaluation and quality assessment of higher education institutions (The Republic of Serbia official messenger, No. 106/2006)
4. Ordinance on standards and procedures for the accreditation of higher education institutions and study programs (The Republic of Serbia official messenger, No. 106/2006)
5. Statute Higher School of Applied Professional Studies in Vranje.

Development of standards and procedures for quality assurance based on the above-mentioned documents, which the school defines the following acts:

1. Strategy for Quality Assurance,
2. Regulation of self-evaluation and quality assessment study programs, teaching and working conditions, which is adopted by the Governing Board Higher School of Applied Professional Studies in Vranje), and in which certain specific procedures for monitoring and measuring the quality of schools as institutions of higher education;
3. Ordinance on the books and the publishing industry, which was adopted by the Governing Board of the High School of Applied Professional Studies in Vranje

4. *Statute of Higher School of Applied Professional Studies in Vranje. Implementation of the adopted documents of the school precisely defined standards and procedures for ensuring the quality of study programs, teaching process, scientific research, monitoring and evaluation of students, textbooks and other literature, resources, non-teaching support and management processes. To maintain the quality of all aspects of the work Higher School of Applied Professional Studies in Vranje Commission are responsible for self-evaluation and assessment of the quality of study programs, teaching and working conditions in schools, as well as of management/leadership in the school. Commission for self-evaluation and assessment of the quality of study programs, teaching and working environment in the proposed legislation which operationalize the activities of quality assurance in all aspects of quality assurance.*

Strategy and mentioned rules are publicly available on the school website www.visokaskola.edu.rs

SWOT analysis

» **S (STRENGTH)**

1. *Mainstay of the economy - a direct application of study programs . + + +*
2. *Uniqueness of individual study programs (Wood technology and production economics) . + +*
3. *Quality implementation of programs of study and professional practice in particular. + + +*

» **W (WEAKNESSES)**

1. *Low participation of industry experts in the implementation of professional practice. + +*
2. *Low participation of industry experts as guest lecturers in teaching curricula. + + +*

» **O (OPTIONAL)**

1. *The involvement of industry experts in the implementation of professional practice with the prior provision of financial resources. + + +*
2. *Communication with related scientific and educational institutions in order to improve academic programs. + +*
3. *Donations for the purchase of equipment. + +*

» **T (THREATS)**

1. *The instability of the economic environment due to the economic crisis. + +*
2. *Lack of involvement of experts from the industry to engage in professional practice. + + +*

Quantification of the previous estimates of the categories defined in the following way :

- + + + - Highly significant
- + + - Medium significantly
- + - Little significant
- 0 - No significance

Proposed measures and activities to improve the quality of standards and procedures for quality assurance

The adoption of the Strategy for Quality Assurance, then the standards and procedures for quality assurance, self-evaluation of the Rules, the Rules of textbooks and other books of rules, and their publication, met the starting level of quality assurance.

In accordance with the commitment in the Strategy and Regulations self-evaluation, the following is needed:

- » *the Commission for self continuously monitors implementation of all tasks within the improvement and quality assurance, as well as evaluating the implementation of action plans for quality assurance;*
- » *proposes to operationalize procedures for quality assurance and adaptation in specific areas of the School as a higher education institution;*
- » *stated that the Commission proposes to periodically measure the improvement and development of new standards and measures for ensuring and improving the quality and quality management system;*
- » *to all school employees, in accordance with its obligations and business functions, contribute to meeting this standard;*
- » *comparison and analysis study programs with similar schools and institutions.*

QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

Institutional quality assurance system has been established and governed by the Statute Schools, The Strategy Quality Assurance and Regulations on self-evaluation.

Monitoring and ensuring the quality of schools is based on providing a new system that provides transparency, internal and external quality assessment, interpersonal, and time comparison of the quality of work, the development of a quality culture, raising awareness of the importance of achieving quality standards, undertaking academic and administrative measures in order to overcome perceived weaknesses and problems, and based on that the integrity and uniqueness of the system.

The basic preconditions Quality Assurance System were established by forming the competent authorities and the Commission, as well as supporting documents and determining the roles, tasks and responsibilities of each entity in the system of quality assurance. In order to maintain and further improve the quality of work in certain areas of activity Higher School of Applied Professional Studies Vranje, in accordance with the Regulations on self-evaluation, the school the established a body responsible for quality assurance: Commission for self-evaluation and assessment of the quality of study programs, teaching and working conditions in school.

Commission for self-evaluation and assessment of the quality of study programs, teaching and the conditions of work in schools is the highest body in the process of quality assurance, which is responsible for monitoring, securing and improving quality in all areas. The Commission has five members: three members from the ranks of

teachers, one from the group of students, one member from the non-teaching staff. Decision of the Academic Council, is determined by the composition of the Commission for self-evaluation and assessment of the quality of study programs, teaching and working conditions in school.

By Statute of the Schools, Strategy for quality assurance and the Ordinance on self-evaluation, provided the student participation in decision making and implementation of strategies, standards and procedures for quality assurance.

Students are involved and play an active role both in the process of self-evaluation, and in the process of defining quality policies in the school. The active role of students in the process of quality assurance is carried out: the work of student organizations and student representatives in the bodies of schools, student representatives participate in the work of quality assurance, periodic evaluation of the quality study programs, all elements of the teaching process, the literature of library and information resources, educational activities teaching staff and services through surveys, opinion on all general school acts which establish strategies for quality assurance and regulating standards and procedures for quality assurance.

Standards for quality assurance include a minimum level of quality of schools, to ensure the achievement of the mission and goals of the Schools. The strategy is determined by the quality of the methods for quality assurance, which include standard procedures for monitoring and quality control, and a system of incentives and corrective measures whose application ensures the achievement standards that guarantee a satisfactory level of quality of all segments of the educational, research and professional work of the school.

SWOT analysis

» S (STRENGTH)

1. The continuing work of the Commission for self-evaluation and quality assessment throughout the year. + + +
2. Maximum involvement of all the members of the self-evaluation. + +

» W (WEAKNESSES)

1. A relatively small number of the members of the self-evaluation and quality assessment. + + +

» O (OPTIONAL)

1. The inclusion of new members from the teaching staff in the composition of the Commission for self-evaluation. + + +

» T (THREATS)

1. Lack of financial resources. + +

Quantification of the previous estimates of the categories defined in the following way:

- + + + - Highly significant
- + + - Medium significantly
- + - Little significant
- 0 - No significance

Proposed measures and activities to improve the quality of quality assurance system

Establishment of institutional quality assurance system, the adoption of appropriate by-laws and constitution of the appropriate Commission as a body of quality assurance, achieved as a starting point for meeting the demands of a third standard.

In accordance with the commitment in the Strategy of quality assurance and adopted regulations, that the application of this standard continues to grow, you need the following:

- » Consistently implement planned procedures and measures for ensuring quality;
- » Systematically monitor the implementation and evaluate the effectiveness of implementation;
- » Systematically measure the effects of these measures;
- » Monitor the effectiveness of structural and organization model applied to quality assurance and the need to propose new solutions,
- » Establish institution cyclical self-evaluation and action planning to establish a system that encompasses a continuum of the following activities: planning quality assurance, implementation of quality assurance procedures, checking quality and quality improvement;
- » Provide institutional support to individuals and organizational units to improve the quality of activities.
- » Implement corrective measures to improve freshmen

CONCLUSIONS

Higher School of Applied Professional Studies Vranje is a serious public higher education institution with a tradition of thirty-nine years. As such it defines the mission, vision, goals, commitment and principles of institutional security systems and improving the quality, determine the area of quality assurance and the subjects of the quality assurance system, quality assurance measures and mechanisms of implementation quality assurance system, and an action plan. The foundation of Higher School of Applied Professional Studies in Vranje in providing and managing quality are the Law on Higher Education, and the Bologna Declaration which our country signed in 2003., the Regulation on standards for self-evaluation and quality assessment of higher education institutions, Regulation on standards and procedures for the accreditation of higher education institutions and study programs and the Statute Higher School of Applied Professional Studies in Vranje.

Guaranteeing and continuous improvement of quality will be achieved the highest level of quality study programs, teaching process, scientific research and professional work, continuous improvement of the overall business and developing a culture of quality, which will allow to Higher School of Applied Professional Studies become a modern and attractive multi-disciplinary school.

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