

**Substantive Change Report**  
**by Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education**  
**(ARACIS)**

Register Committee

Ref. RC32/C71

Ver. 1.0

Date 2021-12-15

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Decision of: 13/12/2021  
 Report received on: 27/10/2021  
 Agency registered since: 07/10/2009  
 Last external review report: 13 September 2018  
 Registration until: 30/09/2023  
 Absented themselves from decision-making: Not applicable

Attachments:

1. [Substantive Change Report, 27/10/2021](#)
2. [Annex: Guide on conducting the process of Periodic External Evaluation of Doctoral Study Domains](#)
3. [Annex: Mapping of ESG criteria](#)

1. The Register Committee considered the Substantive Change Report of 27/10/2021.
2. The Register Committee noted that in May 2021, ARACIS introduced a new form of external quality assurance activity addressing doctoral study programmes.
3. The Committee understood that doctoral studies can be organized by one higher education establishment, university consortium or by consortia and partnerships legally established between a higher education institution or university consortium and research-development units.
4. The Committee noted that ARACIS carries out two forms of doctoral study programme evaluations:
  - a periodic external evaluation of institutions organizing doctoral study programmes (IOSUD)
  - a periodic external evaluation of doctoral study domains (DSD).
5. To maintain accreditation, the periodic external evaluation of doctoral study domains is set to be carried out every five years on a contract basis. For universities, the periodic evaluation of IOSUD shall be carried out together with the institutional evaluation of the higher education institution.

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6. The Committee considered the mapping of the standards against the ESG 1.1-1.10 and noted that some standards may not be sufficiently addressed (ESG 1.2 & ESG 1.9). The Committee underlined that the next external review of ARACIS should pay particular attention to the coverage of ESG Part 1 and how it is addressed within the review reports produced by ARACIS (ESG 2.1).
7. The Committee noted that the first version of the methodology on the evaluation of doctoral studies was developed in 2017 based on international best practices with support from World Bank experts. The Committee welcomed the wide consultation carried out by ARACIS between 2017 and 2021 with higher education institutions, the National Council of Rectors, students' federations and representatives of teachers' unions (ESG 2.2).
8. The Register Committee noted that the guides and methodology for the external evaluation of doctoral study programmes are published on the website of ARACIS and that the agency applies the same principles and procedures in its doctoral programme evaluation as those used for institutional, study programs and master studies domains (ESG 2.3).
9. The Committee understood that the members of the experts panel include:
  - in the case of DSD: an expert evaluator (academic staff, doctoral advisor), a student (if possible a doctoral student in the domain undergoing evaluation) and an international expert (academic staff, preferably also a doctoral advisor).
  - in the case of IOSUD: a mission director, a coordinator (academic staff and doctoral advisor), one expert evaluator for each fundamental science domain (academic staff and doctoral advisor), a doctoral student, an international expert (preferably also a doctoral advisor).
10. All experts are members of the Agency's National Register of Evaluators (ESG 2.4).
11. In the case of the evaluation of doctoral study domains, the external evaluation report and the international expert's report shall be forwarded to the Permanent Specialty Commission in charge of the doctoral study domain under review (ESG 2.5).
12. The Register Committee took note that the first external evaluation report was approved by the Agency's Council on August 2021 and that the agency is publishing the reports and decisions of its doctoral study programme accreditation (ESG 2.6).
13. The procedures for the evaluation of doctoral study programmes are subject to the general appeals regulations of ARACIS (ESG 2.7).
14. The Register Committee welcomed the intention of ARACIS to include doctoral studies as part of a dedicated thematic analysis in 2022, after

all institutions organizing doctoral study programmes and all doctoral study domains have been evaluated (ESG 3.4).

15. During the upcoming external review of ARACIS renewal of registration, the Register Committee expects that the following issues to be specifically analysed by the review panel:

i. How ARACIS ensures sufficient coverage of ESG Part 1 in its evaluation of doctoral procedures (ESG 2.1);

ii. How the agency ensures consistent decision making given the different approaches in the external QA of doctoral studies i.e. *the periodic external evaluation of institutions organizing doctoral study programmes (IOSUD) and the periodic external evaluation of doctoral study domains (DSD)*.

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## EQAR Substantive Change Report

<b>Reference #</b>	21050301
<b>Status</b>	Complete
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<b>Agency #1</b>	Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
<b>Agency acronym</b>	ARACIS
<b>Expiry date #1</b>	30/09/2023
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<b>Other organisations?</b>	No
<b>A. Has the organisational identity of the registered agency changed?</b>	No
<b>B. Has the organisational structure changed?</b>	No
<b>C. Changes in EQA activities</b>	1. One or several new external QA activities were introduced

## Description new/changed

Evaluation of third cycle (doctoral) university studies.

The evaluation of doctoral studies is a new external evaluation activity, performed by the agency, that was previously mentioned as in preparation - see Agency Annual update from 14.06.2021.

The Law of National Education no. 1/ 2011 ([https://www.aracis.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/EN\\_National-Education-Law\\_no-1\\_2011\\_June-2021.pdf](https://www.aracis.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/EN_National-Education-Law_no-1_2011_June-2021.pdf)) mentions, at article 158, that doctoral studies can be organized by institutions following accreditation and periodical evaluation, and only for study domains that at their turn have passed such an external evaluation process. The last change to the law, in what it concerns external evaluation processes for doctoral studies, was passed on 1 April 2021 (Emergency Ordinance no. 22/2021 regarding the modification and completion of National Education Law no. 1/2011 and of Emergency Ordinance no. 75 / 2005 regarding Education Quality Assurance:

<https://lege5.ro/Gratuit/gu3tknzqgmza/ordonanta-de-urgenta-nr-22-2021-privind-modificarea-si-completarea-legii-educatiei-nationale-nr-1-2011-si-a-ordonantei-de-urgenta-a-guvernului-nr-75-2005-privind->

Consequently, on 20 April 2021, the Methodology on conducting the evaluation of university doctoral studies ([https://www.aracis.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Order-3651\\_2021-and-Annex-1\\_Methodology-evaluation-of-university-doctoral-studies.pdf](https://www.aracis.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Order-3651_2021-and-Annex-1_Methodology-evaluation-of-university-doctoral-studies.pdf)) was revised and approved by Ministerial Order no. 3651/ 2021.

The Agency developed evaluation Guides (<https://www.aracis.ro/self-assesment-report-guide-doctoral-evaluation/>), as follows:

- on conducting the process of periodic evaluation of doctoral study domains...

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... (<https://www.aracis.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/EN-Guide-on-conducting-the-process-of-Evaluation-of-Doctoral-Study-Domains.pdf>), respectively  
•of periodic evaluation of institutions organizing doctoral study programs (<https://www.aracis.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/EN-Guide-on-the-process-of-External-Evaluation-of-an-IOSUD.pdf>).

The periodical evaluation of all doctoral study domains and institutions organizing doctoral study programs in Romania have to be concluded by 31 December 2021, and, for the current cycle, the evaluation of institutions organizing doctoral study programs and of all doctoral study domains within institutions organizing doctoral study programs are performed altogether. Starting the next periodical evaluation, the evaluation of institutions organizing doctoral study programs will be performed within the institutional evaluation, as one of the components of the university.

The Guides are similar to those in place for evaluation of study programs, respectively for evaluation of institutions, in terms of:

- organization - the evaluation of doctoral study programs is done at domain of studies level, similar to master programs;
- domains of evaluation and criteria, as defined by the Emergency Ordinance no. 75/2005 on education quality assurance ([https://www.aracis.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/EN\\_Emergency-Ordinance-no-75\\_2005-on-QA\\_June-2021.pdf](https://www.aracis.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/EN_Emergency-Ordinance-no-75_2005-on-QA_June-2021.pdf)),
- steps in evaluation;
- composition of the evaluation experts panel;
- publication of reports.

Consequently, it is not an external evaluation developed from scratch, but it is based on the Agency previous experience of evaluating institutions and study programs. The follow-up procedures are...

... nevertheless strengthened, all institutions organizing doctoral study programs and doctoral study domains have to pass a follow-up procedure after three years, no matter if the outcome of the evaluation was of compliance or non-compliance.

The external evaluation activity started in May 2021, and the first external evaluation report was approved by the Agency Council on 29.07.2021; the reports and the decision of the Council are available here:

<https://www.aracis.ro/evaluarea-periodica-a-iosud/>.

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### 1. New EQA activity:

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1	Evaluation of third cycle (doctoral) university studies: periodical evaluation of institutions organizing doctoral study programs (IOSUD) and of doctoral study domains (DSD)
<b>Focus</b>	study programmes or higher education institutions
<b>ESG 2.1</b>	Mapping against European Standards and Guidelines Part 1 of criteria, standards and performance indicators for external evaluation of institutions organizing doctoral study programs and doctoral study domains according to Ministerial Order no. 3651/ 2021, Annexes 3 and 2 (see links below, at Standard 2.3). Please see the uploaded table at the end of this Form.

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## ESG 2.2

The Methodology on conducting the evaluation is the result of a long process of consultations with the Higher Education Institutions, the National Council of Rectors, students' federations and representatives of teachers' unions, that took place between 2017 and 2021. All versions were available on Agency website. A first version was developed in 2017 with support from World Bank experts, based on international best practices. In 2018, a working group was constituted, with representatives of the categories of stakeholders mentioned above, in order to develop the performance indicators through a co-creation process. Finally, the legislative modifications realized in April 2021 led to a simplification of the evaluation process that allowed the development of a simplified methodology, so the implementation could start in May 2021. A smaller number of performance indicators was established – 36 for institutions, respectively 35 for domains, so that the burden on the higher education institutions to be reduced. It is also important to mention that, for the first cycle of evaluations, 3 years were given to universities to fulfill some of the indicators, taking into consideration that practically these are referring to a 5 years period in the past, so the universities weren't aware of some of the indicators beforehand. In this way, the institutions are allowed to show the improvement of their activities, during a follow-up evaluation after 3 years. The internal quality assurance processes are considered. Upon completion of the first external evaluation cycle eventual directions for a more flexible process will be identified.

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## ESG 2.3

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Annex 1 MO 3651/ 2021 - Methodology on conducting the evaluation of university doctoral studies: [https://www.aracis.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Order-3651\\_2021-and-Annex-1\\_Methodology-evaluation-of-university-doctoral-studies.pdf](https://www.aracis.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Order-3651_2021-and-Annex-1_Methodology-evaluation-of-university-doctoral-studies.pdf)

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2	Annex 2 MO 3651/ 2021 - SYSTEM of the criteria, standards and performance indicators DSD: <a href="https://www.aracis.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Order-3651_2021_Annex-2-Domains.pdf">https://www.aracis.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Order-3651_2021_Annex-2-Domains.pdf</a>
3	Annex 3 MO 3651/ 2021 - SYSTEM of the criteria, standards and performance indicators IOSUD: <a href="https://www.aracis.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Order-3651_2021_Annex-3-IOSUD.pdf">https://www.aracis.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Order-3651_2021_Annex-3-IOSUD.pdf</a>
4	Guides on conducting the process of Periodic External Evaluation of DSD and IOSUD: <a href="https://www.aracis.ro/self-assesment-report-guide-doctoral-evaluation/">https://www.aracis.ro/self-assesment-report-guide-doctoral-evaluation/</a>
<b>ESG 2.3</b>	NOT APPLICABLE

## ESG 2.4

The experts' panel: national expert(s) – academics; doctoral students for institutions organizing doctoral study programs, for doctoral study domains whenever possible, and international experts:

- institutions: a mission director (member of Agency Council); a coordinator at institution level (member of academic staff from National Register of Evaluators, doctoral advisor); one doctoral student (member of National Register of Student Evaluators); one expert evaluator for each fundamental science domain (academic member of Register, doctoral advisor); an international expert (member of International Evaluators' Register).
- domains: an expert evaluator (member of academic staff listed in Register, doctoral advisor in the same doctoral study domain as the one undergoing evaluation); an international expert (member of Register); one student (member of Register).

All experts are members of the Agency National Register of Evaluators:

<https://www.aracis.ro/registrul-national-al-evaluatorilor/>. The members of Register are selected based on open calls, following specific criteria. The national experts and the students are also passing an evaluation test in order to be part of the Register.

External Quality Evaluation Department (for institutions) or Accreditation Department (for domains appoints the Experts' Panel, on proposals from the Permanent Specialty Commissions of the agency.

Before each evaluation mission starts, online trainings of reviewers are organized, with the participation of all panel member for institutions and domains evaluation within a Higher Education Institution. Dedicated trainings were organized for the national experts (March 2021), for the members of the...

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... Permanent Specialty Commissions (February and March 2021) and for the students (March and July 2021).

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<b>ESG 2.5</b>	The same principles and procedures used for institutional, study programs and master studies domains are applied.
<b>ESG 2.6</b>	
1	<a href="https://www.aracis.ro/evaluarea-periodica-aiosud/">https://www.aracis.ro/evaluarea-periodica-aiosud/</a>
<b>ESG 2.7</b>	The procedures of complaints ( <a href="https://www.aracis.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Procedura-de-sistem.-Solutionarea-petițiilor-reclamațiilor-sesizari-COMPLAINTS-P.S.-03-ARACIS.pdf">https://www.aracis.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Procedura-de-sistem.-Solutionarea-petițiilor-reclamațiilor-sesizari-COMPLAINTS-P.S.-03-ARACIS.pdf</a> ) and appeals ( <a href="https://www.aracis.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Procedura-operatională.-Solutionarea-contestațiilor-depuse-de-instituțiile-de-învățământ-superior-APPEALS-P.O.-10-ARACIS.pdf">https://www.aracis.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Procedura-operatională.-Solutionarea-contestațiilor-depuse-de-instituțiile-de-învățământ-superior-APPEALS-P.O.-10-ARACIS.pdf</a> ) are the same as for the other external evaluations performed by the Agency. They are also explained in the Guides ( <a href="https://www.aracis.ro/self-assessment-report-guide-doctoral-evaluation/">https://www.aracis.ro/self-assessment-report-guide-doctoral-evaluation/</a> ).
<b>ESG 3.4/ESG 3.6</b>	The evaluation of doctoral studies for other 43 Higher Education Institutions is in progress. Evaluation of doctoral studies shall make the object of a dedicated thematic analysis, in 2022, after all institutions organizing doctoral study programs and doctoral study domains will be evaluated by the end of 2021.
<b>D. Activity outside the scope of the ESG</b>	No
<b>File #1</b>	<a href="#">Mapping_against_ESG_Part_1_of_criteria.pdf (102 KB)</a>
<b>Last Update</b>	2021-10-27 10:44:58
<b>Start Time</b>	2021-10-27 10:17:47
<b>Finish Time</b>	2021-10-27 10:44:58

# Guide on conducting the process of Periodic External Evaluation of Doctoral Study Domains

## 1. Legal framework

1.1. The external evaluation process of doctoral study domains is based on the provisions of the following normative acts:

- **Law of National Education No 1/2011, with subsequent amendments and additions**, in particular, Title III - Higher Education, Chapter III – Organization of University Studies, Section 12 – Third cycle – Doctoral studies, Articles 158 and 159, but also Articles 160-170);
- **Romanian Government Decision No. 681 of 29 June 2011 on the approval of the Code of Doctoral Studies**, with subsequent amendments and additions;
- **Government Emergency Ordinance no. 75/2005 on Quality Assurance of Education**, approved with amendments and additions by Law No 87/2006, with subsequent amendments and additions (in particular Articles 10, 13 and 29);
- **ORDER 3651 of 12.04.2021 of the Minister of Education** to approve the Methodology for evaluation of doctoral studies and the systems of criteria, standards and performance indicators used in the evaluation and the systems of criteria, standards and performance indicators used in the evaluation.

1.2. The process of periodical external evaluation or accreditation for the doctoral study domains, as appropriate, shall be carried out under the provisions of Article 158 para. (2) – (5) of the Law of National Education No. 1/2011 with subsequent amendments and additions, and involves the following steps:

a) The evaluation of the organization framework, named as “the institution organizing doctoral study programs (IOSUD)” organized under the terms of Article 132 paragraph (1) of Law No 1/2011, with subsequent amendments and additions, on the basis of the provisions of Art. 13 let. a) - c) of the Government Emergency Ordinance No 75/2005 on the Quality Assurance of Education, approved with amendments by Law No 87/2006, with subsequent amendments and additions.

b) evaluation of the doctoral study domains in which the doctoral study programs are organized.

1.3. The doctoral study domains’ evaluation is carried out in view of the accreditation or the maintaining of the accreditation; this guide sets out how the evaluation is carried out for maintaining the accreditation.

1.4. According to the law, if a doctoral study domain is organized by several Doctoral Schools within the same institution organizing doctoral study programs (IOSUD), the evaluation is carried out only once at the IOSUD level.

1.5. In evaluating IOSUD, the Agency co-opts doctoral students and international experts.



1.6. The periodic external evaluation of doctoral study programs shall be carried out every five years by domains of doctoral studies by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS) or by another quality assurance agency abroad, registered in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), from now on referred to as the Agency, on a contract basis.

## 2. Successive stages/steps in the process of Doctoral Study Domains Periodic External Evaluation

2.1. The doctoral study domains' periodic external evaluation process involves the following successive stages of work:

Step	Dead-line	<i>The name, description and deadlines of the step</i>
Step 1	7 days	<p><b>The IOSUD submits its Evaluation Request and the evaluation process begins</b></p> <p>The education provider submits to ARACIS an application requesting to initiate a doctoral study domain's periodic external evaluation process, as per the model provided by the agency. The IOSUD shall nominate a person in charge/responsible to coordinate the process of the respective doctoral study domain's evaluation, who shall be mentioned in the application</p> <p>Following the verification carried out by the <i>Service of Management of Evaluation Documents, Registration and Archive (SMDERA)</i>, the ARACIS Executive Board shall validate that the conditions necessary to start the evaluation process have been met and shall decide to initiate the external evaluation process no later than 7 days after receipt of the application for evaluation. The decision is communicated in writing to the education provider, together with the evaluation contract for signing. If the ARACIS Executive Board (BEX) finds that the conditions for initiating the external evaluation procedure have not been met, it shall communicate this to the requesting institution.</p> <p><i>Deadline:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Within 7 days of receipt of the application to initiate the evaluation procedure, ARACIS shall send the evaluation contract to the education provider.</i></li> </ul>
Step 2	44 days	<p><b>Submitting the Internal Evaluation Report of the Doctoral Study Domain</b></p> <p>No later than <b>30 days</b> after signing the evaluation contract, the education provider shall submit to ARACIS, in electronic format, by publishing in the ARACIS cloud, the Internal Evaluation Report accompanied by the Annexes, drawn up in accordance with Annex 2 of the present Guide.</p> <p><i>Deadline:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>no later than 30 days after signing the evaluation contract.</i></li> </ul>

Step	Dead-line	<i>The name, description and deadlines of the step</i>
Step 3	39 days	<p><b>ARACIS establishes the Experts Panel's composition, sets the date and the program of the evaluation/site visit</b></p> <p>The Accreditation Department, on proposals from the Permanent Specialty Commission in charge of the doctoral study domain, appoints the Experts Panel.</p> <p>The Experts Panel's composition is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an expert evaluator – member of the academic staff listed in the National Register of Evaluators (RNE) having the status of doctoral advisor; in the same doctoral study domain as the one undergoing evaluation – who is also a Coordinator of the Experts Panel;</li> <li>• an international expert – preferably a doctoral advisor in the same university doctoral study domain as the one under review, member of the ARACIS International Evaluators' Register, operating outside Romania;</li> <li>• one doctoral student, member of the National Register of Student Evaluators (RNE-S), designated by the student members in the ARACIS Council<sup>1</sup>, preferably having studied in the doctoral study domain undergoing evaluation</li> </ul> <p>When nominating the members of the Experts' Panel it is recommended that the principles of equal opportunities and gender equality are observed.</p> <p>The program of the evaluation visit of shall be established by the coordinator of the Experts' Panel Mission director, by consultation of all the members of the Experts' Panel.</p> <p><i>Deadline:</i></p> <p>- <i>setting the date of the visit and nomination of the members of the evaluation panel should be completed not later than <b>25 days</b> after signing the evaluation contract.</i></p>
Step 4	43 days	<p><b>Analysis of the Internal Evaluation Report and request for clarification/additional information</b></p> <p>Within a maximum of 4 working days from the submission of the Internal Evaluation Report of the applicant institutions' doctoral study domain, this report, together with all attached annexes shall be forwarded in digital format in the ARACIS cloud, to all the members of the Experts' Panel, by allowing them access to this cloud. The specialty inspector who provides technical support to the Permanent Specialty commission in charge with the respective domain, should make sure that the report is complete and that all the members of the Experts' Panel have access to it<sup>2</sup>.</p> <p>The Experts' Panel shall analyze the Internal Evaluation Report and it may ask the requesting institution for clarification or further information on the elements referred to in the report.</p> <p><i>Deadlines:</i></p> <p>- <i>for transmitting the reports to the members of the experts' evaluators' panel: 4 days;</i></p>





Step	Dead-line	<b>The name, description and deadlines of the step</b>
Step 7	107 days 122 days	<p align="center"><b>Submitting the External Evaluation Report to the IOSUD and drawing up an answer by the evaluated institution</b></p> <p>The coordinator of the Experts' Panel sends the external evaluation report to the IOSUD including the doctoral study domain undergoing evaluation. The evaluated institution should formulate and communicate to ARACIS its point of view/reply on the external evaluation report, which may include observations on any material errors.</p> <p><i>Deadline:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- no later than <b>4 days</b> after verification and completion of the reports, where appropriate.</li> <li>- for the evaluated institution, no later than <b>15 days</b> after it has received the external evaluation report for sending back the IOSUD' response.</li> </ul>
Step 8	152 days	<p align="center"><b>Finalizing the Analyzing External Evaluation Report and analysis within ARACIS' Permanent Specialty Commission</b></p> <p>The Expert' Panel completes the External Evaluation Report, integrating, if it is the case, the observations received, and making proposals regarding meeting or failing to meet quality standards. The ARACIS' Permanent Specialty Commission, in charge of the doctoral study domain undergoing evaluation, analyzes the report drawn up by the Experts Panel and the evaluated institution's response and shall propose a decision to ARACIS' Council. The decision of the Permanent Specialty Commission is stipulated in a document (Minutes) signed by all its members.</p> <p><i>Deadline:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- no later than <b>30 days</b> after receipt of the education provider's reply, but not later than the first up-coming meeting of the ARACIS Council.</li> </ul>
Step 9	152 days 157 days	<p align="center"><b>The ARACIS Council analyzes the proposed decision and takes the final decision</b></p> <p>The ARACIS Council analyzes the proposal for decision received from the Permanent Specialty Commission and takes a final decision on maintaining accreditation/withdrawal of accreditation, as appropriate, for the doctoral study domain under review. The decision to withdraw the accreditation shall be taken in the event of a finding that quality standards have not been met.</p> <p>The ARACIS Council's decision shall be communicated to the evaluated institution and published on the Agency's website within 5 working days of its adoption.</p> <p><i>Deadlines:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- no later than <b>30 days</b> for the ARACIS Council's decision, no later than 30 days after receipt of the response of the education provider; within a maximum of <b>5 working days</b> after the ARACIS' Council decision to inform the evaluated institution.</li> </ul>
Step 10		<p align="center"><b>Procedures for Complaints/Appeals</b></p> <p>If the evaluated institution finds procedural defects or deviations from the evaluation</p>



Step	Dead-line	<b>The name, description and deadlines of the step</b>
		<p>procedure (Complaint) or disagrees with the ARACIS decision (Appeal) it can formulate a Complaint/Appeal - within a maximum of <b>14 days</b> after it has received the ARACIS Council decision.</p> <p>In case the evaluated institution identifies flaws in observing ethics and professional conduct rules of the Experts' Panel members or of the specialty inspectors from the technical staff of ARACIS, it may formulate a Complaint, no later than <b>5 days</b> after receiving by the HEI of the composition of the Experts' Panel, respectively <b>5 days</b> after the evaluation visit was finalized or the occurrence of the events subject of the complaint formulated.</p> <p>The Appeals, respectively the Complaints, shall be resolved according to the ARACIS dedicated procedures.</p> <p>The appeal will be resolved following ARACIS's specific procedures.</p> <p><i>Deadline:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- for appeals: no later than <b>14 days</b> after receipt of the letter communicating the ARACIS decision;</li> <li>- for complaints: no later than 5 days after the occurrence of flaw in observing ethics and professional conduct rules.</li> </ul>
Step 11		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Communication of the decision to the ME</b></p> <p>The Agency shall inform the Ministry of Education (ME) of the decision taken following the periodic external evaluation process.</p> <p><i>Deadline:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- no later than 5 working days after the expiry of the deadline for appealing/complaining, and the adoption of the final decision.</li> </ul>
Step 12		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The institution under review is requesting a new evaluation (step applicable only in case of findings that the quality standards have not been met)</b></p> <p>If the Agency has found that the quality standards of a doctoral study domain have not been met, the evaluated institution shall be required to apply for a new evaluation, carried out by the Quality Assurance Agency having conducted the previous evaluation within a maximum of <b>one year</b>. The new evaluation process will focus primarily on analyzing the partially met or not met performance indicators during the first evaluation and will involve the resumption of all stages/steps, under conditions similar to those described above. If the institution does not request a new evaluation from the Agency by the deadline, the report drawn up following the first evaluation becomes final and the domain undergoing evaluation goes into liquidation without the right to organize the admission process for new doctoral students.</p> <p><i>Deadline:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- no more than one year after the warning communicated by the ME.</li> </ul>
Step 13		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Follow-up/Intermediate Evaluation activities</b></p> <p>The purpose of this sequence is to enable the evaluating agency to support IOSUD in the</p>

Step	Dead-line	<i>The name, description and deadlines of the step</i>
		<p>process of enhancing the quality of education and research/innovation carried out in doctoral university studies, but also to monitor the extent to which the recommendations made during the external evaluation process are implemented by the evaluated institution, i.e., to verify that the standards and criteria, not fulfilled (met) or partially fulfilled during the initial evaluation, are fulfilled.</p> <p><i>Deadlines:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>one year</b> after the warning communicated by the ME in the event of finding a non-compliance with the standards (step 12);</li> <li>- no later than <b>3 years</b> after the decision to maintain the accreditation has been issued, in order to assess the progress made by the institution under review on the recommendations made by the Agency;</li> <li>- no later than 4 years after the decision to maintain the accreditation has been issued, if the intermediate evaluation visit after <b>3 years</b> has found that the performance indicators are still not met.</li> </ul>

### 3. Drawing-up the Internal Evaluation Report of a Doctoral Study Domain

3.1. The Internal Evaluation Report of a doctoral study domain will be carried out following the template proposed in *Annex No. 2 – Structure of the Internal Evaluation Report of a doctoral study domain*.

3.2. The internal Evaluation Report is based on the mechanisms of the internal quality assurance process and shall cover: the type of doctoral study programs, the research/development and innovation activities, the interaction and social impact and the contribution to the local/regional development, the support and services provided to students, the professional development of doctoral advisors and auxiliary staff. Each time, when applicable, the information shall be presented gender-wise.

3.3. The Internal Evaluation Report, together with all related Annexes, will be validated by the Doctoral School Council of the Doctoral School, respectively by the Council of the University Doctoral Studies and will be available for public consultation in electronic format on the IOSUD's website.

3.4. The reference period for which the Internal Evaluation Reports will be drawn up will be the last five academic years, for the indicators relating to the cohorts of doctoral students, i.e., respectively the last five calendar years, for the indicators relating to the scientific research activity.

3.5. The Internal Evaluation Report of Doctoral Study Domain shall be drawn up and submitted to ARACIS in Romanian and English and its Annexes shall be drawn up in Romanian or English.

### 4. Drawing-up the External Evaluation Report

4.1. Within a maximum of 15 days after completing the evaluation visit, the Experts' Panel shall draw up an External Evaluation Report containing the findings of the evaluation process on the fulfillment of the standards and criteria set out in Annex No. 4 of this Guide. The international expert will draw up a separate report, for the respective doctoral domain, no later than 10 days after completing of evaluation



visit, in English, pursuing the same objectives. The Experts' Panel shall integrate in the report the findings and recommendations of the international expert. The final form includes, if this is the case, observations regarding material errors received from IOSUD.

**4.2.** The External Evaluation Report template is attached to this Guide (*Annex 3 – Template for External Evaluation Report of DSD*).

**4.3.** The External evaluation report shall contain judgments on the fulfillment of each performance indicator; for each indicator it will be determined whether it is unfulfilled, partially fulfilled or fulfilled. An indicator shall be considered partially fulfilled if the indicator has not been fully fulfilled, but the deficiencies can be remedied within a period not exceeding **3 years**, namely the period until the intermediate/follow-up visit. The External evaluation report shall contain the proposal for decision put forward by each member of the Experts' Panel.

**4.4.** The external evaluation report shall contain recommendations for improving the activity of the IOSUD subject to the evaluation process, binding on all indicators considered to be partially fulfilled or not fulfilled.

**4.5.** The doctoral study domain's External evaluation report, as well as the report of the international expert, (both the Committee's and the international expert's report, except for the Experts Panel's members' proposals for decisions) shall be published on the ARACIS website once the ARACIS Council has adopted the final decision (and following the resolution of the appeals, if applicable). The report shall mention the names of the members of the Experts' Panel.

## **5. The results of the Periodic External Evaluation process of Doctoral Study Domains**

**5.1.** In the case of the periodic external evaluation of an existing, accredited doctoral study domain, finding compliance with the quality standards shall result in maintaining the accreditation (accreditation) of the domain concerned for a 5 years period.

Maintaining the accreditation is proposed in the following situations:

- A. All the indicators have been evaluated as met;
- B. All the performance indicators have been evaluated as met, except for those in the indicator category reported with an asterisk, in the evaluation process carried out under the terms of Article 12 of Annex No. 1 of the Order No. 3651 of 12.04.2021 on approval of the *Methodology for evaluating university doctoral studies and the system of criteria, standards and performance indicators used in the evaluation*.
- C. A maximum of 12 performance indicators has been assessed as partially fulfilled, if all the critical indicators, as set out in *Annex No 4 – Indicators and Critical indicators related to periodic evaluation of Doctoral Study Domains* have been assessed as being fulfilled.

**5.2.** The finding of a non-achievement of the quality standards shall result in withdrawing the Doctoral Study Domain accreditation (conditional accreditation or no accreditation).

Failure to meet standards can be found in the following situations:

- A. A performance indicator has been assessed as not fulfilled, except for the indicators marked with an asterisk, in the evaluation process carried out under the conditions of Article 12 of Annex No. 1 of Order No. 3651 of 12.04.2021 on approval of the *Methodology for evaluating university doctoral studies and the system of criteria, standards and performance indicators used in the evaluation.*
- B. A maximum of 12 performance indicators have been assessed as partially fulfilled if there are critical indicators, as per *Annex No. 4 – Indicators and Critical indicators*, that have been assessed as being partially fulfilled;
- C. A minimum of 13 performance indicators was assessed as partially fulfilled.

In this case, as a first step, the awarded rating is the conditional accreditation and the IOSUD operating the domain is warned by the Ministry of Education, based on the conclusions of the external evaluation and is given a maximum of **one year** to correct the identified deficiencies.

**5.3.** The warned IOSUD, within a maximum of **one year** after receiving the warning, is required to apply for a new evaluation conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency which carried out the previous evaluation, bearing the costs of the assessment. Otherwise, the evaluation report initially drawn up becomes final and the doctoral study domain concerned has its accreditation withdrawn (is non-accredited), going into liquidation, without having the right to organize an admission process for new doctoral students.

**5.4.** If the evaluation carried out at the IOSUD's request within the one- year period shows that quality standards have been fulfilled, the doctoral study domain shall receive accreditation (accreditation) for a period of five years.

**5.5.** If the evaluation carried out at the IOSUD's request within the one- year period shows that quality standards have not been fulfilled, the doctoral study domain accreditation is withdrawn (it is non-accredited), going into liquidation, without having the right to organize an admission process for new doctoral students.

**5.6.** The proposals for accreditation, conditional accreditation or non-accreditation will be adopted based on an inclusive assessment, typically in line with those referred to in points 5.1 and 5.2, respectively, considering the need for supporting the education provider to improve the quality of education and to demonstrate the progress achieved.

## **6. Intermediate evaluation activities (follow up process)**

**6.1.** The purpose of this sequence is to enable the evaluating agency to support IOSUD in the process of enhancing the quality of education and research/innovation carried out in doctoral university studies, but also to monitor the extent to which the recommendations made during the external evaluation process are implemented by the evaluated institution, i.e., to verify that the standards and criteria not fulfilled or partially fulfilled during the initial evaluation are fulfilled.



**6.2.** In the case of a decision to maintain the accreditation, the evaluated institution will send ARACIS a progress report no later than **3 years** after the evaluation date, detailing how it has implemented the recommendations made.

**6.3.** The report will be reviewed by an intermediate evaluation panel consisting of an expert evaluator, a student and an ARACIS specialist inspector from the Direction of Quality Assurance of ARACIS who was usually involved in the initial evaluation process. If the progress report is inconclusive, the intermediate evaluation panel requires clarifications to the evaluated institution.

**6.4.** If, in cases (B) and (C), as defined in Article 5.1, following the intermediate evaluation visit after 3 years, it is found that the recommendations made have not been implemented, an intermediate evaluation will be carried out after a further year, with a 1 - 2 days on-site visit, the costs being paid by the education provider. The provisions of Article 6.3 shall be applied accordingly.

**6.5.** Following the analysis of the progress report by the intermediate evaluation committee panel and the intermediate evaluation visit, the panel will draw up its own progress report in which it shall make, if necessary, further recommendations. The progress report of the panel shall be approved by the ARACIS Council. The progress report shall be sent to the institution subject to the evaluation and published on the ARACIS website.

**6.6.** In case of failure to meet quality standards, resulting in a warning and a one-year period for correcting the reported problems, the evaluation process of the doctoral study domain shall be resumed, following the steps set out in Chapter 2, with the costs being covered by the education provider. If the visit carried out one year later shows that the quality standards have been fulfilled, the intermediate evaluation process should be conducted under Articles 6.2. – 6.5.

- <sup>1</sup> In case in the National Register of Evaluators – Students for the respective doctoral studies domain there are no student experts or the existing ones are not available for the evaluation mission, it is possible to nominate one doctoral student in a related domain, or a doctoral student having graduated university masters' studies in the domain, or a master student in the domain.
- <sup>2</sup> In case the evaluation is carried out as per Article IV of the Emergency Ordinance No. 22/2021 for amending and completing the Law of national education No.1/2011 and of the Government Emergency Ordinance no. 75/2005 on Quality Assurance of Education, this responsibility is that of the ARACIS specialist inspector from the Direction of Quality Assurance of ARACIS having been designated to provide technical support to the evaluation activity of IOSUD.

Mapping against ESG Part 1 of criteria, standards and performance indicators for external evaluation of IOSUD and DSD according to OM Ministerial Order no. 3651/2021, Annexes 3 and 2 (see links at ESG 2.3).

ESG Part 1	Annex 3 (IOSUD)			Annex 2 (DSD)		
	Criteria	Standards	Performance indicators	Criteria	Standards	Performance indicators
1.1	A.1 C.1	A.1.1 C.1.1	A.1.1.1 A.1.1.2 C.1.1.1 C.1.1.2 C.1.1.3	A.1 C.1	A.1.1 C.1.1	A.1.1.1 A.1.1.2 C.1.1.1 C.1.1.2
1.2	A.1 B.2	A.1.1 B.2.1	A.1.1.1 A.1.1.3 B.2.1.1 B.2.1.2	A.1 B.2	A.1.1 B.2.1	A.1.1.1 B.2.1.1 B.2.1.2 B.2.1.5
1.3	B.2 B.3 B.4	B.2.1 B.3.1 B.4.1	B.2.1.3 B.3.1.1 B.4.1.1	B.2 B.3	B.2.1 B.3.1	B.2.1.3 B.2.1.4 B.3.1.1 B.3.1.2
1.4	A.1 B.1 B.3 B.4 C.4	A.1.1 B.1.1. B.3.1 B.4.1 C.4.1	A.1.1.1 B.1.1.1 B.1.1.2 B.3.1.1 B.4.1.1 C.4.1.1 C.4.1.2 C.4.1.3 C.4.1.4 C.4.1.5 C.4.1.6 C.4.1.7	A.1 B.1 B.3	A.1.1 B.1.1 B.1.2 B.3.1 B.3.2	A.1.1.1 B.1.1.1 B.1.2.1 B.1.2.2 B.3.1.1 B.3.1.2 B.3.2.1 B.3.2.2
1.5	A.3 C.3	A.3.1 C.3.1	A.3.1.1 A.3.1.2 C.3.1.1 C.3.1.2 C.3.1.3 C.3.1.4	A.3 C.3	A.3.1 A.3.2 C.3.1	A.3.1.1 A.3.1.2 A.3.1.3 A.3.1.4 A.3.2.1 A.3.2.2 C.3.1.1 C.3.1.2 C.3.1.3
1.6	A.1 A.2 B.2 C.1 C.2	A.1.2 A.2.1 B.2.1 C.1.1 C.2.2	A.1.2.1 A.1.2.2 A.2.1.1 A.2.1.2 A.2.1.3 B.2.1.3 C.1.1.1 C.2.2.1	A.1 A.2 B.2 B.3 C.1 C.2	A.1.2 A.1.3 A.2.1 B.2.1 B.3.2 C.1.1 C.2.2	A.1.2.1 A.1.2.2 A.1.3.1 A.1.3.2 A.1.3.3 A.2.1.1 B.2.1.3 B.2.1.4

			C.2.2.2 C.2.2.3			B.3.2.1 B.3.2.2 C.1.1.1 C.1.1.2 C.2.2.1 C.2.2.2 C.2.2.3
1.7	A.1 C.2	A.1.2 C.2.1	A.1.2.1 A.1.2.2 C.2.1.1	A.1 C.2	A.1.2 C.2.1	A.1.2.1 A.1.2.2 C.2.1.1
1.8	C.2	C.2.1	C.2.1.1	C.2	C.2.1	C.2.1.1
1.9	C.1	C.1.1	C.1.1.4	C.1	C.1.1	C.1.1.2