

Methodology development process for the Slovak Internationalisation Audits 2024

August 2024

The development of the Methodology for the Slovak Internationalisation Audits 2024 was preceded by the crucial step of selecting the 10 higher education institutions that will formally take part in the audits.

Stage 1: Project application assessment

Purpose: assess the received applications from Slovak institutions, ranking all project applications based on criteria fulfillment.

Evaluation criteria:

- Project consistency
- Existence of the internationalization strategy and compliance of the project with this strategy and with the long-term intention of the higher education institution / research institution
- Sustainability of the Project
- Added value of the Project

Project application assessment process:

- Following a call for project applications organized by the Ministry of Education, to which 13 applications from higher education institutions (HEIs) were received, and following a separate call for experts to take part in the audits, six members of the expert panel were chosen to assess the project applications.
- Panel members scored each of the 13 applications on a scale of 1-10, for each of the four evaluation criteria above.
- The resulting scores for each institution were added, thus ranking the 13 applications from the highest to lowest score.
- Based on the available funding, 10 of the 13 applicant institutions were retained to formally take part in the audits.

Stage 2 – Audit Methodology development

A Methodological panel composed of 3 international experts – Daniel Casten (Czech Republic/USA), Irina Ferencz (Belgium/Romania) and Prof. Guido Van Huylenbroeck

(Belgium) – was selected and tasked to design an audit/assessment of the internationalisation of selected higher education institutions in Slovakia.

Purpose: design all steps of the audit/assessment process.

The audit process was designed to hold a consultative role, and to be implemented in close collaboration with each participant institution, in order to:

- 1) accurately assess the real capacities of the institution with regards to internationalisation processes and its current level of internationalisation,
- 2) support the institution to enhance its internationalisation strategy, and
- 3) enable it to clarify future goals/ambitions, as well as build and/or strengthen the structures and processes necessary to fully achieve the related internationalisation goals and specific objectives.

The Draft methodology, originally proposed by the Methodological panel, was further enhanced with input from the broader team of international (3) and Slovak (3) experts, which will be jointly implementing the methodology together with the assessed institutions. It was then finalised and presented to the participant institutions.

Main steps:

- Design the methodology, building on similar initiatives from other countries and organisations working in the sphere of higher-education, and comprising the assessment criteria, assessment process, timetable, and all operational steps.
- Design templates for the (1) self-evaluation report (and Key statistics sheet), (2) site visit programme, (3) site visit report, and (4) action plan.
- Divide and organize the expert panel members into four panels. Each respective HEI is to be assigned one panel to conduct the audit/assessment. Each panel works with each respective assigned HEI to facilitate the self-evaluation, site visit, and action plan development steps.
- Deliver 2 online training sessions: 1) for all members of the expert panel and 2) for the participant HEIs.

Scope of the audit process

The primary focus of the encompassing audit process is on the internationalisation of the education-related activities of the participant higher education institutions (HEIs). The internationalisation of research and the institution's third mission (i.e., service to society), will only be addressed tangentially (from the perspective of synergies with education-related activities).

Stage 3 – Audit Methodology implementation

The audit process is divided in **5 main steps**, with specific tasks for the participating HEIs and, for 4 of these steps, for the expert panels carrying out the respective audits, as follows:

Step 1 – Self-Evaluation

Purpose:

- Create an accurate snapshot of the state of internationalisation of the HEI, as a basis for expert advice.
- Support the HEI to reflect on its own internationalisation activities and goals for the project, providing an international & comparative perspective.

Role of the Expert panels	Role of the participant HEIs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expert panels liaise with their respective HEIs and answer any potential questions on the Self-Evaluation report template and/or the organisation of the site visits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• HEIs fill in the Self-Evaluation Survey and Key Statistics sheet• HEIs start preparation of the Site Visit – setting dates & securing key representatives' availability

Step 2 – Site visits

Purpose:

- Clarify details of the Self-Evaluation Survey and Key statistics
- Discuss with the HEI leadership and key staff to better understand the institutional context, specificities and goals for internationalisation & the project
- Start reflections on the Action Plan (AP)

Role of the Expert panels	Role of the participant HEIs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct a 1.5 – 2-day site visit that includes meetings with leadership and main actors and stakeholders connected to internationalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Secure the availability of key stakeholders for the meetings foreseen during the site visit and support the local organization of the visit and its smooth running

Step 3 – Site visits follow-up, Evaluation Report delivery, Action Plan (APs) preparation

Purpose:

- Provide the HEIs with an objective, external assessment on the state of its internationalisation processes and with recommendations for enhancement to reach related goals
- Discuss the recommendations and translate them into a Draft Action Plan, that will guide the implementation of the projects and the use of funds
- Conduct workshop with each respective institution to review the findings detailed in the Evaluation Report and discuss the Action Plan.

Role of the Expert panels	Role of the participant HEIs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deliver an Evaluation Report–based on findings of the Self Evaluation stage as well as the Site Visit–detailing the panel’s findings on the state and capacities for internationalisation and providing recommendations for both strategic and operational direction over the subsequent 1-5 years• Conduct Validation Workshop to review findings as detailed on the the Evaluation Report• Comment on the draft Action Plan submitted by the institutions. This Action Plan is intended to be binding and be completed within the funding period of the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflect on and comment on the Draft Evaluation Report• Participate in the Validation Workshop with members of the expert panel to discuss the Evaluation Report and development of the Action Plan• Based on the Evaluation Report, prepare and submit the Draft Action Plan to the Expert Panel

Step 4 – Action Plans (APs) finalisation

Purpose:

- Refine the Draft Action Plans, based on the expert panels’ inputs, to maximise goal reach.

Role of the Expert panels	Role of the participant HEIs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Final check of the Action Plan submitted by the institution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finalise the Action Plans in line with the expert panels’ recommendations-

Step 5 – Implementation

Purpose:

- Roll-out the internationalization enhancement activities and related funds, in line with the approved Action Plans.

Role of the Expert panels	Role of the participant HEIs
University will conduct an internal workshop attended by representatives of the respective Expert Panel to review the Evaluation Report and Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure the Action Plans evolve to match strategic intent and deliver on the priorities of the institution and national priorities• Ensure effective and efficient implementation and use of funds• Conduct workshop with key stakeholders of the institution reviewing the Evaluation Report and Action Plan