

Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MoECR)
Moldova Higher Education Project (MHEP)

Procurement References: MD-MOED-205741-CS-INDV

TERMS OF REFERENCE

for consulting services to assist the MoECR with the Accreditation of Higher Education Programs and Institutions Offering Master and Doctoral Programs

1. Background information on the Project

Moldova Higher Education Project (MHEP) is a World Bank-financed Project to be implemented between May 2020 and December 2025.

The total cost of credit is EUR 35.7 million (US\$39.4 million equivalent) financed by the International Development Association (IDA) and is provided to the Republic of Moldova in support of Moldova Higher Education.

The Project Development Objective is to improve the labor market orientation of selected higher education institutions and the quality assurance mechanisms. The Project is organized around three components and includes systemic interventions in the areas of higher education quality, financing and management, as well as a targeted program to be implemented by selected higher education institutions and pedagogical colleges to address some of their most pressing needs in labor market orientation.

MHEP components are described below:

1. Improving the Quality Assurance Mechanisms
2. Improving the Labor Market Orientation through Targeted Interventions
3. Project Management

Component 1 – Improving the Quality Assurance Mechanisms. This component aims to improve Moldova higher education system's quality assurance mechanisms, which would also contribute to improve its labor market orientation. It comprises three sub-components that support activities in: (i) National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and Quality Assurance (QA); (ii) System Management and Monitoring; (iii) Higher Education Financing.

Component 2 – Improving the Labor Market Orientation through Targeted Interventions. This component will finance the design and implementation of a targeted and needs-based program (Higher Education Improvement Program - HEIP) aimed at improving the labor market orientation of Moldova's higher education institutions, as well as their research capacity.

Component 3 – Project Management. This component will support the day-to-day management of the Project by the MoECR with assistance of a dedicated team of individual consultants who would provide managerial, fiduciary, and technical support to the implementation of the proposed Project for its full duration.

To address the challenges with the Quality Assurance (QA) of Moldova's higher education system under Component 1, an individual consultant will be hired for technical assistance to the accreditation of Master's and Doctoral Higher Education Programs and Institutions Offering Doctoral Programs.

2. Objective of the assignment

The objective of the consultancy is to assist the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research's Higher Education Department and the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (NAQAER) in the accreditation of Master's and Doctoral Higher Education Programs and Institutions Offering Doctoral Programs.

3. Scope of Work

In order to achieve the objective, the individual consultant shall perform the following tasks:

1. Conduct an evaluation of the normative acts at the national level related to the external evaluation for accreditation of Master's and Doctoral Higher Education Programs and Institutions Offering Doctoral Programs, including recording the listed programs and situation of the system regarding the accreditation process of the mentioned programs;
2. Develop a database for recording of Master's and Doctoral Higher Education Programs, including Institutions Offering Doctoral Programs by higher education institutions (analysis of all programs and of annual reports of higher education institutions,
 - requests of information from the higher education institutions about specific programs,
 - classification by type of programs and number of European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits,
 - accredited or non-accredited, including expiration of the accreditation term, concretization of the name of Institutions Offering Doctoral Programs and of the Doctoral Programs, etc.;
3. Conduct a review of international experiences regarding the accreditation process of Master's and Doctoral Higher Education Programs;
4. Develop proposals to improve the Methodology for external evaluation of Master's and Doctoral Higher Education Programs, and of Institutions Offering Doctoral Programs, in accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance in higher education (ESG 2015), including establishing the schooling capacity for Master's Programs;
5. Develop proposals to improve the guidelines for external quality evaluation of both: Master's and Doctoral Higher Education Programs;
6. Organize 4 workshops with 25 people each for the higher education institutions with Master's and Doctoral Higher Education Programs on the revised methodologies;
7. Develop recommendations for preparation of institutional self-evaluation reports for Master's and Doctoral Higher Education Programs.

4. Duration of the assignment, estimated time input and expected outcomes

This consultancy is expected to last 24 months starting in May 2021, and the deliverables shall be submitted in Romanian language as follows:

Deliverables	Submission Deadline	Approval by
1. Analysis study of the normative acts related to the external evaluation for accreditation of Master's and	12 weeks from signing the contract	Ministry of Education,

Doctoral Higher Education Programs, and Institutions Offering Doctoral Programs;		Culture and Research
2. Database for recording of Master's and Doctoral Higher Education Programs, including Institutions Offering Doctoral Programs, by higher education institutions.	12 weeks from signing the contract	Ministry of Education, Culture and Research
3. Report on international experiences regarding the accreditation process of Master's and Doctoral Higher Education Programs.	24 weeks from signing the contract	Ministry of Education, Culture and Research
4. Methodology for external quality evaluation for Master's Higher Education Programs revised 5. Methodology for external quality evaluation for Doctoral Higher Education Programs and Institutions Offering Doctoral Programs revised	32 weeks from signing the contract	Ministry of Education, Culture and Research
6. Guidelines for external quality evaluation revised for Master's Programs, including recommendations for mixed activities (online and face-to-face) 7. Guidelines for external quality evaluation revised for Doctoral Higher Education Programs and Institutions Offering Doctoral Programs, including recommendations for mixed activities (online and face-to-face)	52 weeks from signing the contract	Ministry of Education, Culture and Research
8. Report on the workshops for higher education institutions prepared	72 weeks from signing the contract	Ministry of Education, Culture and Research
9. Recommendations for preparation of institutional self-evaluation reports for Master's and Doctoral Higher Education Programs	90 weeks from signing the contract	Ministry of Education, Culture and Research

All deliverables shall be submitted in electronic format (MS Office) in Romanian language.

Period of approval of deliverables will not exceed 10 working days from the submission date to MoECR.

5. Qualification requirements and basis for evaluation (evaluation criteria)

(i) General experience (30 points):

- PhD degree in higher education area
- At least 5 years of experience in the field of university management, with focus in European Higher Education Area.

(ii) Adequacy for Project (40 points):

- Extensive experience, at least five assessments in external quality evaluation of programs/institutional based on European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance in higher education;
- Experience in international cooperation projects, preferable in the area of internal and external Quality Assurance (QA) in Higher Education;
- Working experience in higher education system policies would be an advantage.

(iii) Language and Experience (30 points):

- Strong computer skills, specifically with MS Office, in particular MS Excel, and ability to master other software quickly.
- Flexibility and good analytical skills;
- Good teamwork skills;
- Excellent knowledge in Romanian (both written and oral) and ability to develop documents in English;

6. Institutional Arrangements

The Consultant will report to the Project Coordinator, Project Executive Director and the Higher Education Policies Department of the MoECR. The Project Management Team will oversee the process of consulting services, manage the implementation of the contract, and will support the Higher Education Policies Department in the process of analysing the deliverables provided by the Consultant.

The MoECR and Project team will provide the Consultant the necessary support to complete the assignment: project documents necessary for assignment accomplishment, necessary work conditions, including office space, telephone, fax and other office equipment and supplies.

Confidentiality statement: All data and information received from MoECR for the purpose of this assignment is to be treated confidentially and are only to be used in connection with the execution of these Terms of Reference. All intellectual property rights arising from the execution of these Terms of Reference are assigned to MoECR. The contents of written materials obtained and used in this assignment may not be disclosed to any third parties without the expressed advance written authorization of the MoECR.