



NATIONAL CENTRE FOR PUBLIC ACCREDITATION

REGULATIONS

ON PUBLIC ACCREDITATION OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES
(CLUSTERS OF PROGRAMMES) OF HIGHER, SECONDARY AND
FURTHER PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

NCPA'S STANDARDS AND CRITERIA

OF PUBLIC ACCREDITATION

CODE OF ETHICS

FOR MEMBERS OF EXTERNAL REVIEW PANELS



PUBLIC ACCREDITATION



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REGULATIONS

on public accreditation of educational programmes (clusters of programmes) of higher, secondary and further¹ professional education

1. General regulations

- 1.1. The present regulations determine methods of organizing and conducting public accreditation of educational programmes (clusters of programmes²) and are applied to educational institutions, which deliver educational programmes of higher, secondary and further education regardless of their departmental subordination and legal organizational forms.
- 1.2. Public accreditation (hereinafter - Accreditation) is evaluation and recognition of high quality of educational programmes and training of specialists for various sectors of industry, economy, culture and social sphere; review of compliance with the standards of public accreditation, which are harmonized with the European standards and guidelines for quality assurance in higher education ESG-ENQA.
- 1.3. The standards and procedures of accreditation comply with the Russian legislation in the sphere of education (the Federal Act of the Russian Federation No273-FZ of December 29, 2012, Regulations on state accreditation of educational institutions and scientific organizations (the RF government decree No184 of March 21, 2011), general principles and documents of the Bologna Process, and in particular – the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area - ESG-ENQA).
- 1.4. The goal of public accreditation is to improve the quality of education, to develop the culture of quality in educational institutions, discover best practices in continuous improvement of educational quality and to inform the public about educational institutions, which deliver educational programmes in compliance with the European standards of quality assurance.
- 1.5. The key principles of Accreditation are social and professional character of expertise, voluntary involvement, objectiveness, periodicity of procedures, collegiality of decision making, and transparency of positive decisions.
- 1.6. Licensed educational institutions, which are recognized by professional, academic and scientific community, have the right to undergo the Accreditation procedure. The educational programmes listed in the reference book "Best educational programmes of innovative Russia" have an advantage.
- 1.7. The Accreditation procedure is conducted by the National Centre for Public Accreditation (hereinafter - NCPA) on the basis of an application from an educational institution.
- 1.8. An educational institution has the right to withdraw the application at any stage of the Accreditation procedure before the accreditation decision is made.
- 1.9. Accreditation costs are incurred by the educational institution.
- 1.10. Information on conducting and results of separate stages of Accreditation are confidential.

¹ The regulation is applicable in case of programmes of further professional education which are implemented at higher educational institutions.

² A cluster of programmes – is a group of educational programmes the external review of which can be conducted with the help of only one external review panel.

2. The procedure of Accreditation

- 2.1. In order to undergo Accreditation an educational institution submits an application to NCPA. The application should include the exact name of the educational programme and the code of the educational programme (if available).
- 2.2. Time limits, conditions, financial provision of Accreditation are determined by the contract between NCPA and the educational institution.
- 2.3. The educational institution, which has signed the contract with NCPA (candidate for accreditation), has the right to be supplied with instructive and methodological materials on the procedures of Accreditation and have a special training session (on request).
- 2.4. The educational institution organizes and conducts self-evaluation and prepares a self evaluation report. The main purpose of this process is to analyze whether the programme under evaluation meets the standards of Accreditation.
- 2.5. The self-evaluation report is submitted to NCPA not less than 35 days before the external review of an educational programme (a cluster of programmes).
- 2.6. NCPA has the right to return the self-evaluation report to the educational institution for follow-up revision, refuse to organize and conduct the external review if the self-evaluation report does not comply with the standards of Accreditation.
- 2.7. NCPA determines and agrees with the educational institution the time limits and the schedule of the external review.
- 2.8. The external evaluation of the level and quality of implementation of an educational programme (a cluster of programmes) for compliance with the standards of Accreditation is conducted by the external review panel with the site-visit and preparation of the final Report on the results of the external review.
- 2.9. The final Report on the results of the external review is submitted to the educational institution within three weeks after the site-visit. The educational institution may submit its comments within one week after the receipt of the final Report (only in case of technical or factual inaccuracies).
- 2.10. On the basis of the analysis of the documents and information presented by the educational institution, Self-evaluation Report, Final Report on the results of the external review NCPA prepares information analytical materials (summary report) for making decision on Accreditation of the educational programme (a cluster of programmes) and publishes these materials on the official website both in Russian and English languages.
- 2.11. The decision on Accreditation of an educational programme (a cluster of programmes) is made by the collegial body – the National Accreditation Board and is recorded in the minutes.
- 2.12. On the basis of a positive decision on Accreditation the educational institution receives the Accreditation Certificate of Public accreditation of educational programmes (a cluster of programmes) for the period of six years.
- 2.13. Educational programmes are included into the Register of educational programmes of NCPA. The information on the accreditation of an educational programme (a cluster of programmes) is published in the mass media, reference books and on the Internet.
- 2.14. The educational institution has the right to appeal the procedure of Accreditation to the Appeals Committee at the National Accreditation Board.

3. Review panel

- 3.1. In order to conduct external review of an educational programme (a cluster of programmes) NCPA composes a review panel out of the number of specially trained candidates.

- 3.2. A review panel consists of 3-5 members. It is composed of highly qualified specialists in the sphere of evaluation of educational programmes including international experts, a representative of employers with the relevant qualification and a representative of students. If an educational institution applies for Accreditation of several educational programmes, several review panels, one for each educational programme may be formed, or a review panel / panels for evaluation of several specialized programmes. Such a choice depends on the type of the programme/qualification/cluster/clusters of educational programmes.
- 3.3. The key principles of an expert's work are honesty, commitment, good faith, objectiveness, confidentiality while working with the documents submitted.
- 3.4. Experts, representatives of the academic community on evaluation of the educational programme (a cluster of programmes), including international experts shall be appointed by the accreditation agencies, public or professional bodies, unions, organizations, foundations, associations, whose sphere of activity is closely connected with higher education or science. Criteria for selection are: work experience in the sphere of higher education, science or industry; work experience in a managerial position; academic title and degree; the field of activity that is relevant to the educational programme under review. Selection criteria are defined by the requirements on the membership in the Guild of Experts in the Sphere of Professional Education.
- 3.5. Experts, representative of professional community shall be appointed by the professional organizations – the key stakeholders in graduates' employment, relevant ministries (departments), or employers' unions. Selection criteria are: competency and work experience in the field of activity that is relevant to the educational programme (a cluster of programmes) under review.
- 3.6. Experts, representatives of student community (students, post graduate students) shall be appointed by the external educational institutions or by student organizations and unions. Selection criteria are: positive recommendation of the institutional administration; good knowledge of regulatory and legal framework in the sphere of higher education; good knowledge of the basic principles of the Bologna process.
- 3.7. Each expert has to sign a contract with NCPA on participation in the evaluation procedure and an application on lack of conflict of interests with the educational institution, in which the evaluation is conducted.
- 3.8. The personal composition of the review panel is agreed with the educational institution under review. The educational institution has the right to reject up to two proposed candidates.
- 3.9. Experts are personally responsible for objectiveness and reliability of evaluation and conclusions, timeliness of expertise and preparation of materials for the Final report on the results of the review.
- 3.10. An expert has the right to request and receive necessary additional materials, documents, information concerning Accreditation of an educational programme (a cluster of programmes), to voice and defend his/her opinion on the evaluation of an educational programme (a cluster of programmes), to discuss the Final Report on the results of the external review in the process of Accreditation.
- 3.11. The Chair of the review panel manages the activity of the external review panel. The Chair of the review panel agrees the time limits and the schedule of the site-visit with NCPA and the educational institution, bears responsibility for fulfillment of the external review programme and preparation of the Final report on the results of the external review.
- 3.12. The review panel works in the educational institution for 2-3 days. After the site-visit the Chair of the review panel presents an oral report on the results of the review to the management of the educational institution (department/institute).

The oral report is based on the consensus of all members of the external panel. The oral report should contain the main findings of the external evaluation of educational programmes (a cluster of programmes). The oral report is recommendatory and is not disclosed until it is finally approved by the National Accreditation Board.

- 3.13. After the review the external review panel prepares the Final report on the results of the external review. The Final report is based on the analysis of the self-evaluation report, presented documents and information, interviews with representatives of professional community, students, postgraduates, doctoral students, employees and the management of the educational institution. The Final report includes the section - Conclusion, which represents explicit collegial decision of all members of the external evaluation review panel on compliance or noncompliance of the educational programme (a cluster of programmes) with the standards of Accreditation and involves opinions of separate panel members, if such opinions differ from the general conclusion.
- 3.14. The Final Report is signed by the Chair of the review panel and submitted to NCPA and the educational institution.

4. The National Accreditation Board

- 4.1. The National Accreditation Board (hereafter-the Board) is a collegial public body, which is formed by NCPA for considering materials and making decisions on Accreditation of educational programme (a cluster of programmes). Special purpose committees may be created within the National Accreditation Board.
- 4.2. Representatives of Russian and foreign educational institutions, public and professional bodies, organizations, unions, foundations, associations (including foreign organizations) working or interested in the field of education and (or) science may be members of the Board. The composition of the Board is formed taking into account the gender balance.
- 4.3. The Chair person manages the work of the Board. The chair is responsible for holding sessions of the Board, approving the schedule of the sessions, assuring feasibility and objectiveness of made decisions and holding extraordinary sessions as and when necessary.
- 4.4. The one third of the composition of the Board is re-elected every four years.
- 4.5. The National Accreditation Board's sessions are held as and when necessary but not less than twice a year.
- 4.6. The National Accreditation Board makes collegial decisions on accreditation of educational programme (a cluster of programmes) based on consideration of the information analytical materials (summary reports) that were prepared by NCPA, with account of learning outcomes and objective data on employment and demand for graduates.
- 4.7. The Board has the right to make a decision by a simple majority of votes of the members who are present at the session.
- 4.8. Decisions of the National Accreditation Board are recorded in the minutes and signed by the Chair.
- 4.9. The order of the session of the Board, decision rules for accreditation, and other questions of the organization and conduct of meetings of the Council are determined collectively by the members of the Council and shall be entered in the minutes.
- 4.10. Preliminary consideration of the information analytical materials, and writing a draft of the decisions on Accreditation of an educational programme (a cluster of programmes) fall within the competence of the special purpose committees. A special purpose committee has the right to elect the Chair of the special purpose

committee, who represents the special purpose committee in the National Accreditation Board.

5. Accreditation certificate

- 5.1. Designing, producing, accounting for and storing of the Accreditation certificate forms on accreditation of educational programme (a cluster of programmes) are carried out by NCPA.
- 5.2. Accreditation certificate of educational programme (a cluster of programmes) is granted for the period up to six years.
- 5.3. After the Accreditation expires, an educational institution has the right to apply for Accreditation again.
- 5.4. In case of Short-term Accreditation (less than six years), or when the term expires the educational institution has the right to submit a report on corrective measures in accordance with the recommendations of the external evaluation panel, based on which the National Accreditation Board during its next session may make decision on prolonging the term of Accreditation or on appointing an additional site-visit of 1-2 experts for external evaluation.
- 5.5. In case of refusal of Accreditation, the educational institution receives a written notice with the justification of the refusal. The second application for Accreditation is considered according to the standard procedure not less than 1 year after the first application was submitted.
- 5.6. In case of violation of the Accreditation procedure an educational institution has the right to appeal to the Appeals committee at the National Accreditation Board.
- 5.7. In case of re-registration or reorganization the educational institution notifies NCPA in the written form and encloses documentary evidence for reissuance of the Accreditation certificate.
- 5.8. In case of loss or damage of the Accreditation certificate the educational institution applies in written form to NCPA for issuing a duplicate of the Accreditation certificate.

NCPA'S STANDARDS AND CRITERIA OF PUBLIC ACCREDITATION³

Standard 1. Policy (mission, vision) and procedures for quality assurance

Institutions (higher education institutions, faculties and departments) should have a policy and associated quality assurance procedures and quality standards for programmes they deliver and qualifications they award. They should also commit themselves explicitly to the development of the quality culture which recognizes the importance of quality and quality assurance in their work. To achieve this, the institutions should develop and implement a strategy for the continuous enhancement of quality.

The strategy, policy and procedures should have a formal status and be publicly available. They should also include a role for students and other stakeholders.

ENQA guidelines

Formal policies and procedures provide a framework within which the higher education institutions can develop and monitor the effectiveness of their quality assurance systems. They also help to provide public confidence in institutional autonomy. Policies contain the statements of intentions and the principal means by which these will be achieved. Procedural guidance can give more detailed information about the ways in which the policy is implemented and provides a useful reference point for those who need to know about the practical aspects of carrying out the procedures.

The policy statement is expected to include:

- the relationship between teaching and research in the institution;
- the institution's strategy for quality and standards;
- the organization of the quality assurance system;
- the responsibilities of departments, faculties and other organizational units and individuals for the assurance of quality;
- the involvement of students in quality assurance;
- the ways in which the policy is implemented, monitored and revised.

The formation of the higher education area depends crucially on a commitment at all levels of an institution to ensuring that its programmes have clear and explicit intended outcomes; that its staff are ready, willing and able to provide teaching and learner support that will help its students achieve those outcomes; and that there is full, timely and tangible recognition of the contribution to its work by those of its staff who demonstrate particular excellence, expertise and dedication. All higher education institutions should aspire to improve and enhance the education they offer their students.

Criteria with regard to Standard 1

- Availability of clearly articulated, documented, adopted and published goals and strategic vision of the study programme.
- Use and effectiveness of methods for achieving and adjusting the goals of the study programme.
- Involvement of all stakeholders (administration and teaching staff, students, employers) in determining the goals and strategic vision of the study programme.
- The programme has in place an internal quality assurance system providing involvement of departments and other Institution's subdivisions as well as of teachers and students in quality assurance procedures.

³ NCPA's Standards and criteria of public accreditation are compliant with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the Higher Education Area (ESG-ENQA)

Standard 2. Approval, monitoring and periodic review of study programmes

Institutions (higher education institutions, their faculties and departments) should have formal mechanisms for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of their programmes and awards.

ENQA guidelines

The confidence of students and other stakeholders in higher education is more likely to be established and maintained through effective quality assurance activities which ensure that programmes are well-designed, regularly monitored and periodically reviewed, thereby securing their continuing relevance and currency.

The quality assurance of programmes and awards are expected to include:

- development and publication of explicit intended learning outcomes;
- careful attention to curriculum and programme design and content;
- specific needs of different modes of delivery (e.g. full time, part-time, distance learning, e-learning) and types of higher education (e.g. academic, vocational, professional);
- availability of appropriate learning resources;
- formal programme approval procedures by a body other than that teaching the programme;
- monitoring of the progress and achievements of students;
- regular periodic reviews of programmes (including external Panel members);
- regular feedback from employers, labor market representatives and other relevant organizations;
- participation of students in quality assurance activities.

Criteria with regard to Standard 2

- Periodic reviews of curricula and course programmes in line with the goals and expected learning outcomes of the programme.
- Taking students' and employers' opinions into account for the development of curricula and course programmes of the study programme (student-centered education).
- Conducting regular monitoring of student performance and achievements with the purpose of assessment of the programme's effectiveness.
- Conducting periodic internal and external evaluations of the study programme.

Standard 3. Assessment of student learning outcomes (competencies)

Students should be assessed using published criteria, regulations and procedures which are applied consistently.

ENQA guidelines

The assessment of students is one of the most important elements of higher education. The outcomes of assessment have a profound effect on students' future careers. It is therefore important that assessment is carried out professionally at all times and that it takes into account the extensive knowledge which exists about testing and examination processes. Assessment also provides valuable information for institutions about the effectiveness of teaching and learners' support.

Student assessment procedures are expected to:

- be designed to measure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes and other programme objectives;
- be appropriate for their purpose, whether diagnostic, formative or summative;
- have clear and published criteria for marking;

- be undertaken by people who understand the role of assessment in the progression of students towards the achievement of the knowledge and skills associated with their intended qualification;
- where possible, not rely on the judgments of single examiners;
- take account of all the possible consequences of examination regulations;
- have clear regulations covering student absence, illness and other mitigating circumstances;
- ensure that assessments are conducted securely in accordance with the institution's stated procedures;
- be subject to administrative verification checks to ensure the accuracy of the procedures.

In addition, students should be clearly informed about the assessment strategy being used for their programme, what examinations or other assessment methods they will be subject to, what will be expected of them, and the criteria that will be applied to the assessment of their performance.

Criteria with regard to Standard 3

- Availability of published documents regulating formative and summative assessment of student learning outcomes/competencies.
- Use of clear criteria and objective procedures for assessing student performance/competencies in line with expected learning outcomes.
- Conducting of student assessments by qualified professionals (independence, credibility, professionalism).
- Use of the procedures for independent assessment of students' learning outcomes (for example – Federal Internet-Examination in the Sphere of Higher Education, Open International Internet Olympiads).
- The extent to which the students are involved in research activities.
- Promotion of student mobility at the international level.
- Employment of graduates.

Standard 4. Quality assurance and competencies of teaching staff

Institutions (higher education institutions, their faculties and departments) should have in place instruments and criteria for the assessment of competencies of the teaching staff. These instruments and criteria should be available to organizations undertaking external reviews, and commented upon in reports.

ENQA guidelines

Teachers are the single most important learning resource available to most students. It is important that those who teach have a full knowledge and understanding of the subject they are teaching, have the necessary skills and experience to transmit their knowledge and understanding effectively to students in a range of teaching contexts, and can access feedback on their own performance. Institutions should ensure that their staff recruitment and appointment procedures include a means of making certain that all new staff have at least the minimum necessary level of competence. Teaching staff should be given opportunities to develop and extend their teaching capacity and should be encouraged to value their skills. Institutions should provide poor teachers with opportunities to improve their skills to an acceptable level and should have the means to remove them from their teaching duties if they continue to be demonstrably ineffective.

Criteria with regard to Standard 4

- Adequate level of teachers' qualification (academic degree, academic rank, honors in the teaching field, State prizes, published textbooks and methodological materials).

- Teaching staff's competencies in the study fields covered by the study programme (conducting research in the teaching disciplines, RSCI - Russian Science Citation Index).
- Involvement and participation in teaching of educators from other HEIs, including those from abroad.
- Having in place the system for monitoring and development of the quality of teaching.
- Availability of opportunities for periodic professional development of the teaching staff.
- Involvement of the teaching staff members in international collaborative initiatives, international internships.

Standard 5. Learning resources and student support

Institutions (higher education institutions, their faculties and departments) should ensure that the resources available for the support of student learning are adequate and appropriate for each programme offered.

ENQA guidelines

In addition to their teachers, students rely on a range of resources to assist their learning. These vary from physical resources such as libraries or computing facilities to human support in the form of tutors, counselors, and other advisers. Learning resources and other support mechanisms should be readily accessible to students, designed with their needs in mind and responsive to feedback from those who use the services provided. Institutions should routinely monitor, review and improve the effectiveness of the support services available to their students.

Criteria with regard to Standard 5

- Availability of adequate building facilities (classrooms, laboratories) and equipment for the delivery of the programme.
- Availability of modern library and information resources to students.
- Availability of adequate facilities and environment for students' individual and research work.
- Development of the social infrastructure providing access to quality education for students of different social backgrounds and ages (offering of LLL programmes, programmes "Accessible environment").
- Use of the feedback provision system to get students' opinions on the conditions and organization of the educational process.

Standard 6. Information system providing effective implementation of the study programme

Institutions (higher education institutions, their faculties and departments) should ensure that they collect, analyze and use relevant information for the effective management of the programmes of study and other activities.

ENQA guidelines

Institutional self-evaluation is the starting point for effective quality assurance. It is important that institutions have the means of collecting and analyzing information about their own activities. Without this they will not know what is working well and what needs attention, or the results of innovatory practices.

The quality-related information systems required by individual institutions will depend to some extent on local circumstances, but it is at least expected to cover:

- student progression and success rates;
- employment of graduates;
- students' satisfaction with their programmes;

- effectiveness of teachers;
- profile of the student population;
- learning resources available and their costs;
- the institution's own key performance indicators.

The Institution's comparing itself with other organizations allows the Institution in question to extend the range of its self-knowledge and to access possible ways of improving its own performance.

Criteria with regard to Standard 6

- Use of the systems of gathering, analysis and use of information for managing the study programme.

Information on:

- students' performance and achievements (contests, Olympiads);
- employment of the graduates.
- the Institution's basic performance indicators.
- Integration with the Institution's internal electronic resources, availability of benchmarking information on the achievements of the study programme as compared with other specialities in the Institution.
- Availability and completeness of educational and methodological materials in the Institution's local network.

Standard 7. Public information

Institutions (higher education institutions, their faculties and departments) should regularly publish up to date, impartial and objective information, both quantitative and qualitative, about the programmes realized and awards it is offering.

ENQA guidelines

In fulfillment of their social role, higher education institutions have a responsibility to provide information about the programmes they are offering, the intended learning outcomes of these, the qualifications they award, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used, and the learning opportunities available to their students. Published information might also include the views and employment destinations of past students and the profile of the current student population. This information should be accurate, impartial, objective and readily accessible and should not be used simply as a marketing opportunity.

Criteria with regard to Standard 7

- Publication of information about the study programme including the data on the curricula, expected outcomes, qualifications awarded, teaching level, forms of teaching and assessment, students' educational opportunities.
- Publication of objective information on the employment of the programme's graduates.
- Publication of data on the quality and accomplishments of the study programme.

CODE OF ETHICS FOR MEMBERS OF EXTERNAL REVIEW PANELS

This code sets forth the basic rules of professional conduct to be followed by external experts in the process of external reviews of study programmes.

External reviewers shall carry out their evaluation activities in accordance with Guidelines for External Reviews of Study Programmes developed by the National Centre for Public Accreditation (NCPA) for conducting the public accreditation procedure.

External reviewers are expected to have a sufficient level of competence for evaluation of study programme(s), be specially trained and certified. External reviewers of study programmes are required to adhere to the following high ethic standards: professionalism (professional competence), honesty, impartiality and objectivity.

Violation of the regulations stipulated by the Guidelines for External Reviews of Study Programmes, NCPA Standards and Criteria for Public Accreditation or in the present Code of Ethics may lead to NCPA's taking appropriate disciplinary measures.

Requirements for external reviewers:

1. Professional competence

Experts are professionals in the corresponding fields of study; they are responsible for carrying out the evaluation of study programme(s) at the high level against the NCPA standards and criteria.

Experts should show respect in establishing relations with other expert reviewers and the staff of the educational institution under accreditation. They should avoid using expressions and statements that might express disrespect towards honor and dignity of other experts and representatives of the institution under review.

2. Conflict of interest policy

Before being appointed as Review panel members, experts will be required to notify the National Centre for Public Accreditation (NCPA) in writing of any connection of interest, which could result in a conflict, or potential conflict, of interest to the review.

Circumstances leading to the conflict of interest may be the following:

- Present or former employment in the Institution delivering the study programme(s) under review.
- Provision of consulting services regarding accreditation of the study programme(s) under review.
- Former or actual engagement in negotiations concerning possible employment in the Institution delivering the study programme(s) under review.
- Studying at the Institution delivering the study programme(s) under review.
- Financial relationships with the Institution delivering the study programme(s) under review.

Experts will be required to notify NCPA as soon as possible of any changes in or additions to the interests already disclosed which occur during the review process. If experts are unsure as to whether an interest should be disclosed, they should discuss the matter with NCPA.

During the review process of the study programme(s) the Review Panel members should voluntarily avoid any meetings /decisions which could lead to a conflict of interest. Panel members shall notify NCPA of any discrepancies between their personal interests and the interests of public accreditation of the study programme(s) under review, as the discrepancies could result in affecting the integrity of the external review procedure.

Panel members shall not take any money or other rewards from the institution under review which can affect the evaluation results.

Experts shall not exceed his/her powers, conferred by NCPA.

Panel members and NCPA sign a non-conflict-of interest agreement prior to the beginning of public accreditation procedure and submit it to NCPA.

3. Confidentiality

Confidentiality is one of the key principles of NCPA activities. The information and documentation submitted to NCPA is confidential and should be used only in the process of public accreditation of (an) study programme(s).

Expert reviewers assume obligations of providing no access to the submitted information. The information can't be made public without permission of the institution under review and NCPA.

The working documents completed by experts are considered NCPA internal documentation and shall be kept confidential. The contents of the documents are NCPA intellectual property.

Any assessment or expression of expert opinions contained in the working documents is not to be communicated to representatives of the Institution under review.