

## Terms of Reference

Position:	Mid-term External Evaluator
Recruitment code:	QAIN -16
Project Name:	Quality, Accountability, Integrity, and Transparency in Higher Education (QAIN)
Budget code and name of activity:	QAIN BC.7001 – External Evaluation
No. of working days	15 days
Period of engagement:	July – September 2021

### Context and Background

In the past decade, higher education in Kosovo has undergone tremendous growth compared to its capacity and the possibilities it provides. Despite its significance, however, this growth has to some extent contributed to the decline of higher education quality, which continues to be a topic of public debate in Kosovo. Unemployment rate for holders of tertiary qualifications remains very high – 17.5%, giving a clear indication of a mismatch between supply and demand. The mission of the education sector is development of an effective education system, which contributes to economic growth and provides better opportunities for all citizens of Kosovo.

The Quality, Accountability, Integrity, Transparency in higher education (QAIN) project is funded by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), with a contribution of the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MESTI), and is intended to align the Kosovo higher education system with international standards of quality, transparency, integrity, and accountability.

The **outcome** of this Action is the Kosovo higher education system intrinsically acts on internationally aligned quality, transparency, integrity, and accountability standards, whereas its long-term **impact** is improved quality and competitiveness of the higher education sector, which contributes to social and economic development of the country.

### Purpose and Objectives of Consultancy:

The purpose of this consultancy is to provide expertise in the mid-term evaluation of implementation of the Quality, Accountability, Integrity, and Transparency in Higher Education (QAIN) project. The evaluator should

provide an assessment of the overall project progress and results against the objectives and indicators of achievement, as mandated by the donor, ADA, and stipulated in the project document.

### **Objectives:**

1. To determine the extent to which public higher education institutions have improved their institutional capacities toward improved quality, accountability, integrity, and transparency as a result of project activities.
2. To determine the extent of support which QAIN provided up to now, in regards to addressing legislative and institutional shortcomings toward improved quality, accountability, integrity, and transparency in higher education.

### **Scope**

The evaluation will cover activities related to the above-mentioned objectives that have taken place since the beginning of the project up to the time of evaluation.

*Timing:* The evaluation will take place in the 26 month of project implementation.

### **Evaluation questions:**

1. To what extent have higher education institutions improved their capacities toward ensuring greater transparency, integrity, and accountability as a result of support received from QAIN?
2. To what extent has the support provided by QAIN sufficed for addressing legislative and institutional shortcomings toward improved quality, accountability, integrity, and transparency in higher education? In what ways could this support be improved?

### **Design and approach**

The evaluation will have a mixed-methods approach and will include the following:

- Review of relevant project documents
- Interviews with Consortium partners (3 interviews)
- Interviews with Project Steering Board (PSB) members (3 interviews)
- Interviews with KAA representatives (2 KAA + 2 SCQ)
- Survey of representatives of the 7 public higher education providers both management and staff (a random sample to be determined)

## Workplan:

The evaluator is expected to maintain the following order of tasks:

- 1) Kick-off and clarification meeting – hold an in-person or online meeting with the project management to discuss the proposed evaluation plan and any additional information/clarifications that might be required about the project and the assignment;
- 2) Document review – Review all relevant project documents and conduct a preliminary assessment of the quality of data provided by the project management;
- 3) Develop an evaluation matrix – clearly show and map out how data will be collected to answer each evaluation question and how triangulation between different data sources and methods will be accomplished. The recommended structure of the evaluation matrix is as follows:
  - Evaluation criteria
  - Evaluation questions
  - Indicators
  - Sources
  - Data collection methods
- 4) Deliver a detailed Inception Report (IR) clearly outlining a detailed evaluation plan to ensure a shared understanding between the evaluator, the project manager, and ADA, as well as to identify potential risks and limitations and suggest adequate mitigation strategies;
- 5) Conduct data collection, analysis, and synthesis in accordance with the agreed upon evaluation plan;
- 6) Deliver a draft Evaluation Report to project management and ADA for review containing the following:
  - Executive Summary – 3-4 pages long to be used as stand-alone document to ensure easy access and use by stakeholders;
  - Background and context to the project;
  - Outline of the evaluation design, approach, and methodology used;
  - Evidence-based findings, conclusions, and recommendations;
  - Completed Results Assessment Form (RAF), Part 2, which captures the degree of the project results achievement.
- 7) Submit the final Evaluation Report.

The project management will ensure quality assurance and support the evaluator in the following ways:

- 1) Provide all relevant project documents and available data (as applicable) to the evaluator for review, as well as all required contextual information;
- 2) Facilitate access to project stakeholders;
- 3) Provide feedback on the Inception Report and the draft evaluation report;
- 4) Along with ADA, complete the Results Assessment Form (RAF), Part 1;
- 5) Develop a communication strategy to ensure dissemination of evaluation results and their use.

## **Evaluator Management Arrangements**

The evaluator is required to respect ethical standards and guiding principles for objective evaluation, with a focus in impartiality.

### **Requirements for the Evaluator:**

- Bachelor's degree, preferably a Master's degree, in social sciences;
- Substantial knowledge of the Kosovo education system, especially of the higher education system.
- Experience especially in evaluation of projects funded by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), the European Union (EU), or other donors that use OECD/DAC evaluation criteria, standards, and principles for use;
- Substantial experience in data analysis, synthesis, and triangulation;
- Advanced writing skills and experience in delivering written research summaries and other analysis and reports;
- Advanced proficiency in the Albanian and English language.
- The evaluator must not have been involved in the design or implementation of the QAIN Project.

### **Reporting:**

- The consultant reports to the Project Manager.