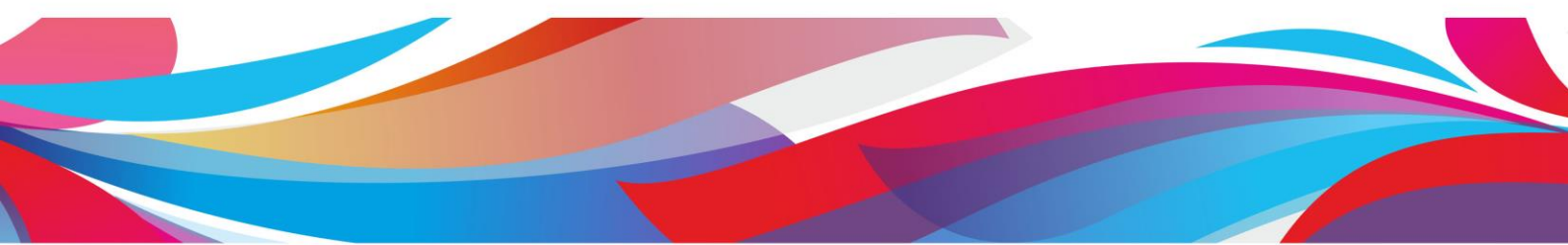




NATIONAL CENTRE
FOR PUBLIC ACCREDITATION

REGULATIONS

ON PUBLIC ACCREDITATION
OF CLUSTERS OF FURTHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES



PUBLIC ACCREDITATION

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REGULATIONS

on public accreditation of clusters of further education programmes

1. Definitions

- 1.1. The Federal Law N 273-ФЗ from 29 December 2012 "On Education in the Russian Federation" (Article 76) stipulates:
- Further professional education is aimed at meeting educational needs and professional development of a person, ensuring that their qualifications correspond to the changing conditions of professional activity and social environment.
 - Further professional education is implemented by means of further education programmes: qualifications development programmes and professional retraining programmes.
 - A qualifications development programme (course duration is 16 hours or more) is aimed at enhancement and/or acquiring a new competence necessary for the professional activity and/or professional development within the present qualification.
 - A professional retraining programme (course duration is 250 hours or more) is aimed at acquiring a competence necessary for during a new type of professional activity, acquiring a new qualification.
- 1.2. The content of a further education programme is defined by the curriculum developed and approved by the educational institution with the account of the needs of a person or an organization on whose initiative the further professional education is provided.
- 1.3. A professional retraining programme is developed by the educational institution based on qualifications requirements (Order of the Ministry of Labour No 148Н from 12 April, 2013), professional standards and the requirements of the State Federal Educational Standards for secondary vocation and/or higher education.
- 1.4. A cluster of further education programmes is a group of related professional development programmes, professional retraining programmes which can be professionally evaluated by one expert panel.
- 1.5. Public accreditation of clusters of further education programmes (hereinafter - accreditation) is evaluation and recognition of the quality of delivery of further education programmes included in a cluster, quality and level of education and training of graduates who have completed such programmes delivered by an educational institution, in accordance with the NCPA's standards of public accreditation, which are harmonized with European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education ESG¹, requirements of professional standards and labour market requirements applicable to specialists, workers and employees of the relevant profile with the consideration of the Federal State Educational Standards (if available).

2. General provisions

- 2.1. The present Regulations determine methods of organizing and conducting public accreditation by the National Centre for Public Accreditation (hereinafter NCPA) of clusters of further education programmes, delivered by an educational institution regardless of its departmental affiliation and organizational and legal form.
- 2.2. The standards and procedures of Accreditation comply with the current Russian legislation in the sphere of education (the Federal Act of the Russian Federation of

¹ Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in European Higher Education Area (<http://www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg/>)

29 December 2012, N 273-Ф3 «On Education in the Russian Federation») and the general principles and documents of the Bologna Process.

- 2.3. NCPA acts as an institution designated by employers, their associations and the professional community to conduct accreditation of clusters of further education programmes delivered by an educational institution.
- 2.4. The goal of public accreditation is to establish considerable (outstanding) achievements of an educational institution delivering the cluster of further education programmes; the achievements which reflect advanced trends in the global development in the sphere of education, science and industry for the enhancement of education quality and establishment of the quality culture in an educational institution; to inform the general public about the educational institution delivering a cluster of further education programmes in compliance with NCPA's standards of Accreditation.
- 2.5. The key principles of accreditation are social and professional character of external evaluation, voluntary involvement, independence, objectiveness and competency, openness, credibility and relevance of information on the accreditation procedures; periodicity of procedures; collegiality of decision-making and transparency of decisions.
- 2.6. In order to be eligible for accreditation an educational institution should be licensed.
- 2.7. An educational institution has the right to be informed about the standards, criteria, procedures and dates of conducting Accreditation.
- 2.8. An educational institution has the right to recall the application at any stage of the Accreditation procedure before the accreditation decision is made.
- 2.9. Accreditation costs are incurred by the educational institution.
- 2.10. Information on conducting and results of separate stages of Accreditation is confidential for the third party.

3. The procedure of accreditation

- 3.1. Time limits, conditions and financial provision of Accreditation are determined by the contract between NCPA and the educational institution.
- 3.2. Under the contract with NCPA the educational institution has the right to be provided with instructive and methodological materials on the procedures of Accreditation.
- 3.3. The educational institution organizes and conducts self-evaluation of the cluster of further education programmes 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.
- 3.4. NCPA advises the educational institution on the issues arising during the preparation for accreditation and in the process of self-evaluation of the cluster of further education programmes.
- 3.5. The self-evaluation report is submitted to NCPA in Russian and English (if necessary) not less than 35 days before the external review of the cluster of further education programmes.
- 3.6. NCPA has the right to return the self-evaluation report of the cluster of further education programmes to the educational institution for follow-up revision, refuse to organize and conduct the external review if the self-evaluation report of the cluster of further education programmes does not comply with the Guidelines for self-evaluation of study programmes.

- 3.7. NCPA determines and agrees with the educational institution the time limits and the schedule of the external review of the cluster of further education programmes.
- 3.8. The external evaluation of the quality of implementation of a cluster of further education programmes (hereinafter – external review); the quality and the level of training of graduates, who have completed such programmes, for compliance with the standards of accreditation, is conducted by the External Review Panel.
- 3.9. Forms of conducting the external review:
 - On-site;
 - Distance;
 - Combined.

During the on-site external review all experts visit a higher education institution.

During the distance external review experts do not visit a higher education institution.

During the combined external review a reduced External Review Panel visit a higher education institution.

Distance or combined forms are used when:

- force majeure circumstances occur (force majeure circumstances are emergency or unavoidable circumstances, which comprise: government bans, civil unrest, epidemics, blockade, embargo, earthquakes, floods, fires or other natural disasters),

- an expert can not take part in the on-site external review for reasons beyond NCPA control (expert's illness, default in providing visa, etc.).

During distance or combined external reviews members of the External Review Panel take part in the external review with the help of IT technologies.

The decision about the form of the external review is made by NCPA Director upon presentation of the Head of the Accreditation Office.

- 3.10. If the External Review Panel considers that the marks on the standards of certain educational programmes in the cluster² significantly differ from the marks of the other programmes, the External Review Panel can exclude such programmes from the cluster without any repercussions for the whole cluster. Further education programmes excluded from the cluster are evaluated separately by the Review Panel and a separate Final Report is prepared on the outcomes of the review.
- 3.11. The External Review Panel prepares the Final Report on the results of the external review of the cluster of further education programmes.
- 3.12. NCPA sends the Final Report on the results of the external review of the cluster of further education programmes to the educational institution no later than a month after its completion. The educational institution may submit its comments within one week after the receipt of the Final Report on the external review of the cluster of further education programmes (only in case if there are technical or factual inaccuracies). NCPA does not enter into any discussions on the results of the external evaluation of the cluster of further education programmes.
- 3.13. On the basis of the analysis of documents and information presented by the educational institution, Self-evaluation Report of the cluster of further education programmes, Final Report on the results of the external review of the cluster of further education programmes NCPA prepares materials (Summary Report) for

² "A cluster is a specific system in which adding an element improves the operation, while excluding an element does not result in dramatic consequences for the system." E.I Sokolova The Definition of an "Educational cluster" in the conceptual field of contemporary pedagogics / Research e-journal Continuous education: XXI century". – Issue No2 (6). Available at: <https://i1121.petsu.ru/journal/article.php?id=2371>

deciding on accreditation of the cluster of further education programmes at the meeting of the National Accreditation Board and publishes them on its official website in Russian and in English.

- 3.14. Decision on accreditation (denial of accreditation) of the cluster of further education programmes is made by the permanent collegial body – the National Accreditation Board and is recorded in the minutes.
- 3.15. On the basis of a decision on accreditation the educational institution receives the Certificate of Public Accreditation of further education programmes included in the cluster for the period of up to 6 years.
- 3.16. The accredited further education programmes are entered into the Register of Accredited Programmes of NCPA. The information on accredited educational programmes is published in the mass media, reference books and Internet.
- 3.17. The educational institution has the right to appeal the procedure of Accreditation to the Appeals Committee.

4. Review Panel

- 4.1 In order to conduct external review of a cluster of further education programmes NCPA forms a Review Panel of 3 independent experts who have sufficient qualification and competence in teaching, professional and expert activities, have undergone special training and certification and do not have any conflict of interest with an educational institution whose programmes are undergoing external evaluation.
- 4.2 The Expert Panel includes:
 - a representative of academic community responsible for the preparing of the Final Report of the cluster of further education programmes.
 - a representative of professional community (employer) evaluating the alignment of the cluster of further education programmes with the labour market demand.
 - a representative of student community (listener) ³, who has completed a further education programme in the past three years.
- 4.3 Independent experts – representatives of academic community including international experts shall be nominated by accrediting bodies or public and professional bodies, organizations, unions, associations, foundations, whose sphere of activities is connected with education and (or) research. The criteria for selection of experts are: for representatives of academic community – work experience in the sphere of education, research and industry; work experience in leadership positions (head of the educational institution or its structural subdivision); academic degree and title; professional competency in the field of the educational programme under review; the knowledge of the main provisions of the Bologna process; participation in the procedures of public accreditation (optional); attending a training programme for experts in public accreditation.
- 4.4 Independent experts – representatives of professional community (employers) shall be nominated by professional organizations or employers' unions. The selection criteria are: competency and work experience in leadership positions in the field of activity that is relevant to the educational programmes in the cluster under review; the knowledge of the main provisions of the Bologna process; participation in the procedures of public accreditation (optional); attending a training programme for experts in public accreditation.
- 4.5 Independent experts – representatives of student community (listeners) who have completed a similar further education programme in the past three years. A

³ A listener is a student of a further education programme and/or a person enrolled in a preparatory department of a HEI (clause 8 of part 1. Article 33 of № 273-ФЗ Federal Law).

listener shall be nominated by an educational or professional organization/centre for qualification development and professional training. The selection criteria are: the knowledge of the main provisions of the Bologna process; participation in the procedures of public accreditation (optional); attending a training programme for experts in public accreditation.

- 4.6 In case an organization has applied for accreditation of several clusters of further education programmes, a separate Expert Panel is formed for each cluster of further education programmes.
- 4.7 The Expert Panel should be composed in such a way so that the qualification of experts corresponded to the level of education, specialism and the field of study in order to make it possible for one expert panel to professionally evaluate every further education programme included in the cluster.
- 4.8 The key principles of an expert's work are honesty, commitment, good faith, objectiveness, confidentiality in the work with documents.
- 4.9 Every expert signs a contract with NCPA and a no conflict of interest document on participation in the external review of a cluster of further education programmes.
- 4.10 The composition of the Review Panel is agreed with the educational institution under review. The educational institution has the right to reject proposed candidates with the explanation of reasons for rejection.
- 4.11 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 of a cluster of further education programmes.
- 4.12 An expert has the right to request and receive necessary additional materials, documents and information concerning Accreditation, to voice and defend his/her opinion on the evaluation of a educational programme, the quality and the level of education and training of the graduates who have completed the further education programme included in the cluster under review; to discuss the Final Report on the results of the external review.
- 4.13 NCPA appoints the Chair of the Review Panel from among the Panel members, representatives of the academic community, having a higher level of qualification in accordance with the selection criteria.
- 4.14 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 the fulfillment of the external review schedule and preparation of the Final Report on the results of the external review of the cluster of further education programmes.
- 4.15 The Review Panel works in the educational institution for 2-3 days. After the site-visit the Chairperson of the Review Panel presents an oral report on the results of the review to the management of the educational institution (department). The Report is prepared on the agreed opinions of all Panel members and contains main conclusions of the Panel on the outcomes of the review of the cluster of further education programmes.
- 4.16 In case of force majeure circumstances when an expert is unable to take part in the site visit (illness, visa denial, etc.), this expert can perform a desk review.
- 4.17 After the review of the cluster of further education programmes 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 management of the educational institution. The Final Report includes the section – "Conclusion of the External Review Panel", which represents explicit collegial decision on conformity or nonconformity of the cluster of further education programmes to NCPA's standards and involves opinions of separate Panel members, if such opinions differ from the general conclusion.

- 4.18 The Final Report on the review of the cluster of further education programmes is signed by the Chair of the Review Panel and submitted to NCPA, which forwards the Report to the educational institution.

5. The National Accreditation Board

- 5.1. The National Accreditation Board is a standing collegiate body of NCPA.
- 5.2. The National Accreditation Board is elected by the General Meeting of the Founders and is comprised of 20 to 30 members. One third of the Board members retire every five years and new members are elected.
- 5.3. Representatives of Russian and foreign educational institutions, public and professional bodies, unions, foundations, associations (including international ones), whose activities and interests are connected with education and/or research, may be elected to the National Accreditation Board. The Board is formed with the consideration of the gender balance.
- 5.4. The following responsibilities fall within the competencies of the Board:
- consideration and decision-making of the outcomes of quality assurance procedures of the cluster of educational programmes;
 - consideration and approval of regulations on public accreditation of the cluster of educational programmes, processes, procedures and methodology of public accreditation, and the rights granted to the organization delivering the educational programmes or/and graduates who completed such programmes.
- 5.5. The composition, rules of establishment, competency, and procedure of work of the National Accreditation Board are determined by the Regulations on the National Accreditation Board.

6. Accreditation decision making

- 6.1. The decision on accreditation of the cluster of further education programmes or denial of accreditation and on the terms and conditions of accreditation shall be taken by the National Accreditation Board based on the Summary Reports prepared by NCPA. The National Accreditation Board makes one of the following decisions:
- to accredit the cluster of further education qualifications development programmes (course duration 16 hours or more) for the full term of 4 years
 - to accredit the cluster of further education qualifications development programmes (course duration 16 hours or more) for the reduced term of 2 years;
 - to accredit the cluster of further education professional retraining programmes (course duration 250 hours or more) for the full term of 6 years;
 - to accredit the cluster of further education professional retraining programmes (course duration 250 hours or more) for the reduced term of 4 years;
 - to deny accreditation of the cluster of further education programmes.
- 6.2. The terms and conditions of accreditation of the cluster of educational programmes are as follows:
- the cluster of further education programmes is not accredited if at least one standard receives a D mark (non-compliance);
 - the cluster of further education programmes is accredited for the reduced term if more than 3 standards receive a C mark (partial compliance);
 - the cluster of further education programmes is accredited for a full term (4 years for qualifications development programmes, and 6 years for professional retraining programmes) in all other cases.

- 6.3. If marks on the standards of certain further education programmes in the cluster significantly differ from the marks of the other programmes, such programmes can be excluded from the cluster without any repercussions for the whole cluster. Further education programmes excluded from the cluster are evaluated separately by the Review Panel and a separate Final Report is prepared on the outcomes of the review. The decision on accreditation (denial of accreditation), terms and conditions of accreditation of such further education programmes is made by the National Accreditation Board for each further education programme separately in accordance with the Regulations on Accreditation of a Further Education Programme⁴.
- 6.4. The final decision on accreditation of a cluster of further education programmes is made by the National Accreditation Board on a collegiate basis and can differ from the recommended decisions indicated in 5.2 of the present Regulations (with the account of opinions of the Board members and additional information about a certain educational programme and evidence presented).
- 6.5. In the event of conflict of interests, which can affect the completeness and objectivity of decisions the Board member must make it known before the beginning of the meeting and he/she shall not participate in the voting. All declarations of the Board members are recorded in the minutes of the Board meetings.
- 6.6. The decisions of the Board are documented in the minutes, which are signed by the Chairman and the Secretary of the Board.

7. Accreditation Certificate

- 7.1 Upon making a decision by the National Accreditation Board on accreditation of a cluster of further education programmes NCPA:
 - issues the Accreditation Certificate of public accreditation of the cluster of further education programmes (hereinafter Accreditation Certificate) signed by the Chair of the National Accreditation Board and Director of NCPA;
 - provides the educational institution with the electronic logo of NCPA.
- 7.2 Designing, producing, accounting for and storing of the Accreditation Certificate blanks are carried out by NCPA
- 7.3 The period of validity of the Accreditation certificate for further education qualifications development programmes (course duration 16 hours or more) is no more than 4 years.
- 7.4 The period of validity of the Accreditation certificate for further education professional retraining programmes (course duration 250 hours or more) is no more than 6 years.
- 7.5 The electronic logo of NCPA is valid for the period of the Accreditation Certificate validity.
- 7.6 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.
- 7.7 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.
- 7.8 In case of breach of the Russian legislation, failure to comply with the requirements set by the present Regulations NCPA on the decision of the National

⁴ A cluster is a special system, in which an additional element improves its operation, while removal of an element does not result in fatal consequences / Sokolova E.I. The term «innovation education cluster» in the conceptual field of modern pedagogy/ Scientific online journal «Lifelong education: the XXI century». – Issue No 2 (6). Available at: <https://i1121.petrus.ru/journal/article.php?id=2371>

Accreditation Board has the right to declare accreditation invalid and recall the Accreditation Certificate.

8. Appeals and complaints

- 8.1 In case of a breach of the accreditation procedure the educational institution delivering the cluster of further education programmes has a right to lodge an appeal with the independent Appeals Committee against the accreditation decision (denial of accreditation) on the cluster of further education programmes, or the terms and conditions of accreditation.
- 8.2 An educational institution, experts and persons involved in the accreditation procedure have the right to lodge an appeal and/or complaint, against any decisions and/or action (inaction) of experts, members of the National Accreditation Board, NCPA's staff at any stage of the accreditation procedure.
- 8.3 An educational institution has the right to lodge an appeal against any final decision of the National Accreditation Board or the part of it, which affects the interests of an educational institution.
- 8.4 A complaint regarding procedural or other issues can be filed at any stage of the accreditation procedure: self-evaluation, review, decision-making.

9. Follow-up

- 9.1 After the National Accreditation Board makes a decision on Accreditation of the cluster of further education programmes NCPA within a month:
 - Publishes on the NCPA's website the materials of the National Accreditation Board meeting (presentations, minutes);
 - Enters the information of accredited further education programmes included in the cluster in the Register of accredited programmes placed at NCPA's website. Publishes information on accredited programmes in mass media, reference books and Internet;
 - Forwards to the educational institution delivering the cluster of further education programmes a copy of the minutes of the National Accreditation Board containing the information about the accreditation decision to the educational institution delivering the cluster of further education programmes; electronic logo of NCPA; the original of Accreditation Certificate;
 - Sends to the members of the External Review Panel an information letter with a link to the section of the NCPA's website containing the materials of the National Accreditation Board meeting (presentations, minutes);
 - Sends to the members of the National Accreditation Board an information letter with a link to the section of the NCPA's website containing the materials of the National Accreditation Board meeting (presentations, minutes).
- 9.2 In case of a decision by the National Accreditation Board to deny accreditation of the cluster of further education programmes NCPA sends to the educational institution delivering the further education programmes included in the cluster a letter with the justification of the decision. The educational institution has a right to apply for re-accreditation not less than a year after the first application. The application is reviewed according to the standard procedure.
- 9.3 In case of a reduced term of accreditation of the cluster of further education programmes the educational institution has to:
 - submit to NCPA a plan of actions (road map) on addressing recommendations of the External Review Panel and the National Accreditation Board 60 days after a decision on accreditation on the cluster of further education programmes. NCPA examines the plan for 15 days and, if necessary, informs the educational institution about necessary changes and/or additions to the plan;

- submit to NCPA a report on corrective actions which have been undertaken to address the recommendations in accordance with the plan once the reduced term of accreditation of the cluster of further education programmes has expired.
- 9.4 After considering the Report on corrective actions at a meeting of the National Accreditation Board a decision may be taken on extending the accreditation term of the cluster of further education programmes for the full term (in certain cases, an additional site visit by 1-2 experts could be recommended).
 - 9.5 In case of a failure of the institution to submit to NCPA a plan of actions (road map) within 60 days on addressing recommendations of the External Review Panel and the National Accreditation Board, NCPA has the right to suspend or retract accreditation of the cluster of further education programmes (repeal the accreditation certificate).
 - 9.6 In case of a full term accreditation (6 years) of the cluster of further education programmes the educational institution has to submit to NCPA a plan on improvement of the cluster of further education programmes with the account of comments and recommendations of the External Review Panel (if available) within a month after the decision on accreditation.
 - 9.7 On the expiry of the full period of accreditation (6 years) the educational institution has the right to apply for re-accreditation of the cluster of educational programmes. In this case the educational institution delivering the cluster of further education programmes is required to include the information on how the recommendations of the External Review Panel (if applicable) have been addressed.
 - 9.8 NCPA keeps a register of accredited further education programmes, which serves as a tool for monitoring the implementation of decisions of the National Accreditation Board. If necessary NCPA provides methodological support and consultations to help prepare a report on corrective actions.
 - 9.9 NCPA in advance (no less than a month) reminds the educational institution to submit the report on corrective actions and sends guidelines on the preparation of the report on corrective actions to the educational institution.

10. The use of accreditation results

- 10.1 Stakeholders (secondary school leavers, students, employers) use the information on public accreditation when making a choice of a further education programme included in the cluster.
- 10.2 The educational institution delivering the accredited further education programmes included in the cluster has a right:
 - To publish information about its public accreditation of the cluster of further education programmes including the NCPA's logo, on its site, on information stands, in learning and teaching materials of the relevant programmes, in information newsletters.
 - To use the information about public accreditation of the the cluster of further education programmes for advertising purposes;
 - To refer to the information about public accreditation of the cluster of further education programmes in education and qualification documents issued to graduates who completed the accredited educational programme.
 - To submit the information about public accreditation of the cluster of further education programmes to the accrediting body of the state accreditation.
- 10.3 On the basis of the outcomes of public accreditation ratings (rankings) may be compiled of accredited further education programmes included in the cluster with the identification of educational institutions delivering these programmes.