
THEMATIC ANALYSIS, 2025

Results of a survey of members of external expert commissions of the Eurasian Center for Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Health Care (ECAQA)

From January to December 2025, a survey was conducted among the external expert commissions (hereinafter referred to as EEC) of the ECAQA that participated in the assessment of educational institutions and educational programmes at 25 educational institutions (2 universities, 11 medical universities, 4 research centers, and 8 CPD organizations), including the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The questionnaire was sent to more than 250 experts, including employers and students, who participated in the EEC in 2025. Completed questionnaires were received from 189 (75.6%) foreign, Kazakh, and Uzbek experts, employer experts, and students. The majority of respondents were academic experts (82%) – teachers and employees of educational institutions, research centers providing CPD activities, and CPD organizations.

Of those who responded to the questionnaire, 22 were international experts (representatives of foreign accreditation agencies, associations, and educational institutions from Hungary, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Uzbekistan, and the Russian Federation).

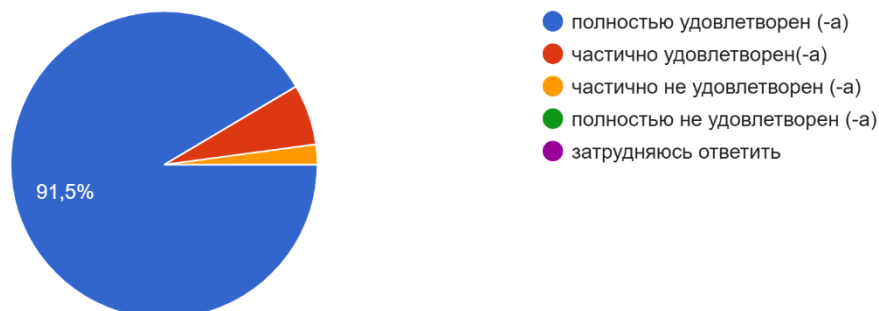
The questionnaire was conducted anonymously, not all at once, but as external expert work at educational institutions was completed. A link to the questionnaire was sent to the experts' personal email address, and they were given a deadline to complete it.

The purpose of the questionnaire was to assess the quality of the organization and conduct of external visits by accreditation experts within the framework of institutional and specialized accreditation, with the aim of improving preparatory activities, the external assessment process, and subsequent activities.

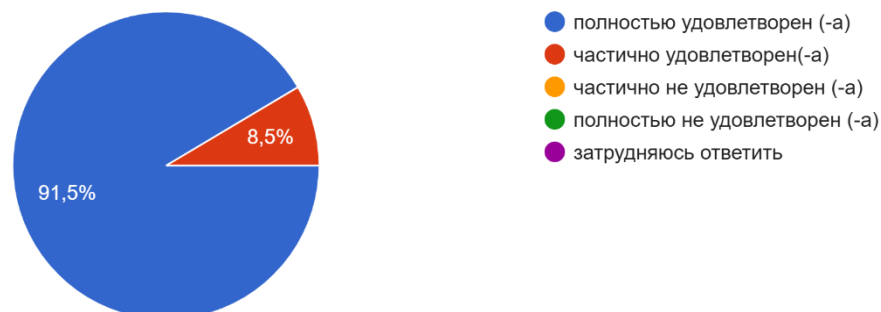
Methods: The questionnaire was conducted online in Kazakh, Russian, and English using Google. The questionnaire included 15 closed- and open-ended questions and differed from the one used in 2024 (some questions were shortened and wording was modified to obtain more specific information). Statistical processing of the survey results was performed automatically using the aforementioned online resource. The questionnaire used response options such as "fully satisfied/fully agree", "partially satisfied/partially agree", "dissatisfied/disagree" and "I doubt the answer" as well as a 5-point rating system from 0 to 5 (from worst to best). Several questions were combined and presented in a single diagram.

Results:

In response to the first question, 91.5% of respondents answered positively to the *provision of materials for experts to prepare and conduct accreditation* (self-assessment reports, standards, guidelines, expert report forms, quality assessment profiles and criteria, code of ethics, etc.) by accreditation center employees (see figure below). 6.4% were partially satisfied, without providing a reason, and 2.1% of respondents indicated they were partially dissatisfied:



Regarding the *content of the expert commission's visit programme* to the educational institution, including the events, their timing, and the route, the majority of experts surveyed (91.5%) responded that they were completely satisfied with the visit's programme, stating that it was very comprehensive and all the events were appropriate. However, 8.5% of respondents responded that they were partially satisfied due to the visit's duration, structure, selection of events, and their sequence (diagram below).



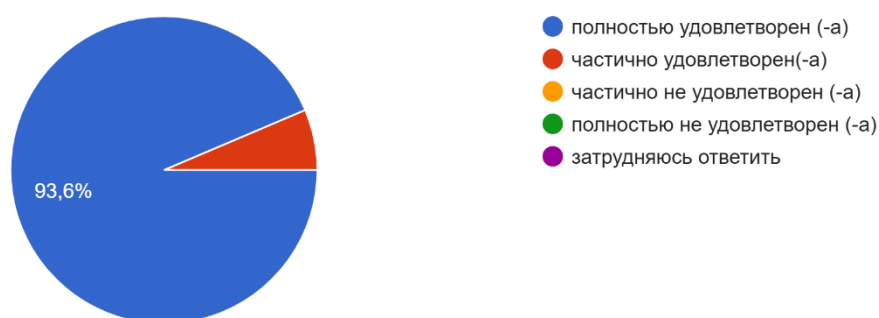
At the same time, in their comments, experts noted that the most acceptable duration is 3 days, but emphasized the importance of a well-thought-out route to avoid wasting time on commission members' movement and to include time for technical breaks and more time for closed discussions in the middle of the day.

In a few comments, experts recommended focusing more on visits to clinical and practical sites and seminars according to the course schedule. In the visit programme to CPD organizations, expand the number of visits to scheduled non-formal education cycles/events to clearly demonstrate the entire process: documentation, training, and intended outcomes.

The experts shared their suggestions regarding the content of the external assessment programme, including:

- Organize the recording of interview responses from employees of the accredited educational organization for inclusion in the final reports of the EEC.
- Review the questionnaires for teachers and students, as they are largely formal and do not reflect existing problematic issues.
- Eliminate formal events without analyzing the results, as there is an excessive emphasis on quantitative indicators alone.
- The visit programme to higher medical colleges includes an excessive number of extracurricular activities, while more time should be devoted to documentation.
- Educational programmes contain little analysis and application of innovative learning methods, and there is little vertical or horizontal interdisciplinary integration with the educational programme content.
- Conduct an analysis of the educational and clinical outcomes of graduates, including employment, academic and clinical advancement, participation in research projects, publication activity, and the alignment of acquired competencies with the actual requirements of the healthcare system.

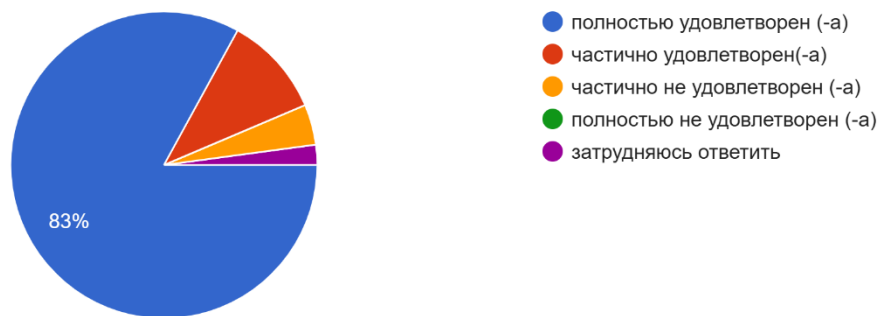
93.6% of respondents *were completely satisfied with the environment created during the commission's visit to the educational institution.* They were particularly pleased with the interaction between the expert commission members. All noted the mutual assistance and support, the effectiveness of collaboration within the commission, and the ethical approach. The diagram below is presented.



At the same time, 6.4% of respondents chose "partially satisfied" because there were some nuances in the behavior of some commission members regarding the distribution of responsibilities and the preparation of the experts' final report. According to respondents, this is solely the responsibility of the expert - member of the external expert commission, but the role of the commission chair is no less important. There were no negative or unfavorable responses.

The interviewed experts on accreditation assessed the chairpersons of the expert commissions in whose work they participated.

83% of respondents were completely satisfied with the leadership skills, collegiality, and ethics of their commission chairs. Most experts surveyed felt their opinions were fully taken into account and felt supported by their chair. They noted their ability to summarize the results of the external assessment and report them to the management of the educational organization being accredited.



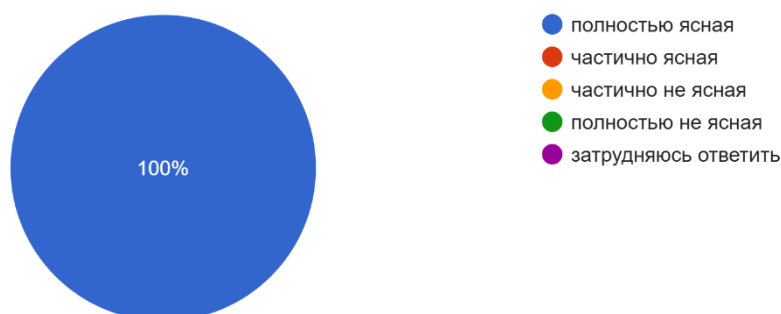
A certain number of respondents (10.6%) are partially satisfied with the competence of the expert acting as the chairperson of the commission.

In the comments, a respondent wrote the following: *"Chairpersons should give all members of the EEC the opportunity to ask questions, and then, if no one asks, they should ask themselves. They shouldn't take over everything and give the floor only afterward. The chair should engage students in the work and generally assign roles so that there aren't any open-ended questions later"*.

It should be noted that before visiting an educational institution, members of the expert commission are familiarized with the Regulations on the External Expert Commission of the ECAQA, which describe all the functions and duties of the chairperson and members of the commission.

4.3% of surveyed experts chose "partially dissatisfied" and 2.1% "I find it difficult to answer" which totals 6.4% and raises concern for the accreditation center, as each expert appointed by a commission chair undergoes appropriate training and is informed of responsibilities and rights, as well as signs the Expert Code of Ethics before beginning work on the commission. Therefore, the accreditation center will consider incorporating issues on ethics and communications into the expert training programme and the preparation of expert commission chairs, as well as strengthening their ability to summarize and draw conclusions.

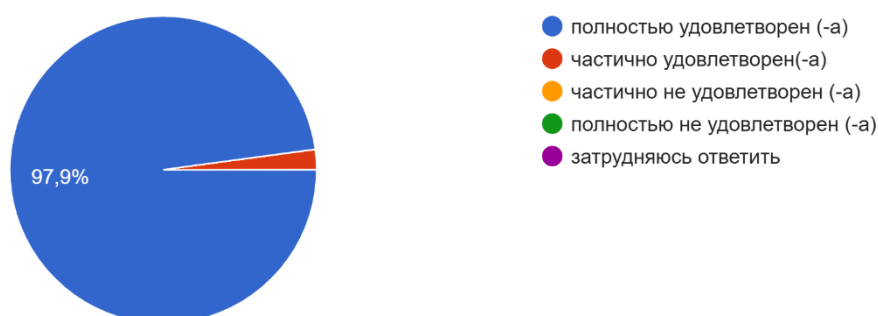
All respondents (100%) clearly understand *the goals and objectives of the external expert assessment of an educational institution or educational programme* (see diagram below). To this end, the accreditation center familiarizes commission members in advance with documents such as the Accreditation Standards, the Regulations on the EEC, the Guidelines for Conducting Expert Assessment of Educational Institutions and Educational Programmes, and the Guidelines for Writing EEC Reports.



The experts participating in the external assessment have been trained by the accreditation center and hold an accreditation expert certificate valid for 5 years. Before the visit to the educational institution, the chairperson, with the participation of an observer from the ECAQA, conducts an organizational briefing, where they receive feedback from the experts on their review of the self-assessment report, assign responsibilities to the experts, discuss the documents to be reviewed on-site, and the format of the final report.

The programme for visiting the educational institution is discussed in advance. Experts reserve the right to make additions or changes to the visit programme in advance.

Almost every expert surveyed (97.9%) is clear about their personal role in the work of the expert commission for assessing an educational organization or educational programme (diagram below).



However, 2.1% of respondents were partially satisfied with this question. It is assumed that these responses were from employer experts who, surrounded by a team of authoritative academic experts, did not fully understand their mission and found it difficult to formulate questions for the educational organization being accredited. This is due to the specific nature of healthcare education and the inclusion of representatives of practical medicine (directors of medical clinics, centers, etc.) on the expert commission, who, for the most part, lack active academic experience. At the same time, the accreditation center is making certain efforts to include employer representatives in expert training programmes.

Experts interviewed during the questionnaire *experienced some difficulties when conducting external assessments of educational organizations or educational programmes*. The most common (57.4%) difficulties were with the content of self-assessment reports. According to the experts, the reports lacked information, and they had to ask numerous questions during the visit to validate the self-assessment report data and obtain substantial evidence of compliance with accreditation standards. In their comments, one expert noted that all processes (SOPs, checklists) should be clearly regulated. Regular internal audits and error analysis should be introduced. Differentiated compensation or employee incentives should be used.

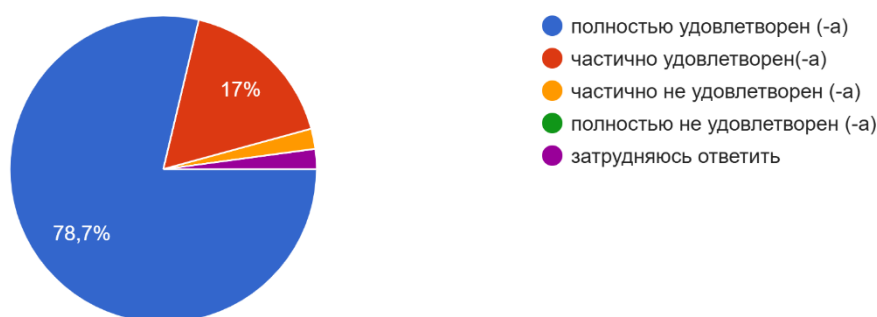
23.4% of respondents lacked a clear understanding of accreditation standards and had difficulty completing quality profiles and assessment criteria (8.5%). 19.1% experienced difficulties preparing the final expert report due to the complexity and length of the report structure proposed by the accreditation center. 17% experienced

difficulties preparing recommendations for improvement. 2.1% felt there was a significant amount of material for external assessment.

Thus, experts believe that external assessment is a very serious, responsible, and complex process, allowing them to develop analytical skills and critical assessment to a greater extent than participating in standard audits or certifications. During a three-day visit, they must review a large number of documents, participate in more than 10 meetings, 4-5 interviews, and visit several practical training sites for students at various educational levels (depending on the type of accreditation). Experts need to continually learn and improve their skills in the area of education quality assessment and accreditation. Experts believe that if they have not been invited to participate in an external expert commission for more than 8-10 months, it is difficult for them to revisit and understand deeply the essence of accreditation assessment, develop recommendations for improvement, and compile a final report.

Regarding *the expert's final report form provided by the accreditation center*, 78.7% of respondents said they were completely satisfied, while 17% were partially satisfied. A further 2.1% of surveyed experts chose "partially dissatisfied" and "I find it difficult to answer" (see diagram below).

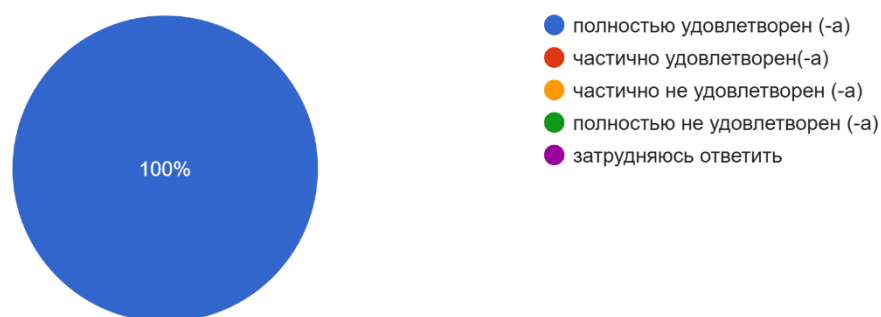
Before visiting the educational institution, experts undergo a briefing, which includes an introduction to the structure of the final report, which consists of 6 sections. The report format is based on the EEC Reporting Guidelines. The main section is the 4th - the analytical section.



According to the experts interviewed, this is the most complex section, requiring evidence of compliance with accreditation standards. The ECAQA Expert Council developed the report template and considered all requirements for providing expert information (introductory section, information on the review of the self-assessment report, information on the external expert visit, analytical section, conclusion with recommendations for improvement, section six - recommendations for the accreditation council, annexes in the form of tables).

The experts interviewed expressed a preference for a simplified report format, such as a checklist, which runs counter to the ECAQA's internal requirements for final expert reports. A checklist can serve as a working tool during the expert commission's visit to an educational institution, but it is not an analytical document.

For 100% of respondents, *the applied accreditation standards are clear and applicable* for analyzing the self-assessment report and conducting an external assessment of the educational institution or educational programme (see diagram below).



The list of questions that experts would like to discuss and hear during the learning is presented below in order of frequency of occurrence in the responses:

- 1) Developing recommendations for improvement (44.7%)
- 2) Preparing the final expert report (38.3%)
- 3) Formulating questions during meetings and interviews (27.7%)
- 4) Finding evidence of compliance with accreditation standards (36.2%)
- 5) Interpreting accreditation standards (27.7%)
- 6) Conducting an external assessment (21.3%)
- 7) What documents to review to validate the self-assessment report data for compliance with accreditation standards (17%)
- 8) For 2.1% of respondents, everything was clear and they do not need additional training.

Over the past 5 years, 61.9% of respondents (in the ECAQA) have completed *learning as accreditation experts*, and 17% of respondents have also attended accreditation seminars at another accreditation agency. The remaining 18% had previously trained at the ECAQA and other accreditation agencies, and 4% found it difficult to answer.

On a five-point scale, the majority (91%) of experts surveyed *rated the ECAQA as an accreditation agency* out of 5, 8% rated it out of 4, and 2% did not answer the question. For the ECAQA, this is an excellent indicator of the high-quality organization and conducting an external assessment of educational organizations and/or educational programmes. At the same time, a “4” rating, despite its positivity, is an incentive for further improvement of work, which largely concerns the regular training of experts, improving the planning of an external visit to an educational organization and instructing the chairpersons of expert commissions.

An interesting comment was made by a respondent regarding the further digitalization of processes (unified platforms, evidence templates, dashboards), which will reduce the administrative burden and improve the comparability of assessment results.

The ECAQA strategic development plan for 2026-2028 includes the task of digitalizing accreditation processes and developing software. The programme's structure is currently being discussed to integrate all processes related to accreditation application

submission, contract conclusion, the formation of the EEC, the EEC results, the accreditation council's decision-making, etc.

At the end of the survey, respondents provided *feedback and recommendations for improving the accreditation center's work*. The recommendations are grouped and include the most frequently repeated recommendations received during the expert survey. The same applies to expert feedback on the ECAQA (see table below).

Although some of the respondents' recommendations contradict the ECAQA's internal regulations during the external assessment process, the requirements for the structure of the final expert report and post-accreditation monitoring, we considered it appropriate to publish them in this thematic analysis.

Regarding the recommendation to strengthen cooperation with professional national and international organizations, we also clarify that the ECAQA actively collaborates with international and national partners, including through the formation of expert commissions, review of accreditation standards, and the organization of training seminars for experts. Detailed information about the ECAQA's partners is available on the website in the "Partners" and "International Cooperation" sections.

The respondents' punctuation is kept in the reviews and recommendations below.

Reviews	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The organization is clear. There are no additions. – The work on advance familiarization and preparation for the examination has been streamlined – The ECAQA has proven itself to be very successful. Transparency, objectivity, lack of affiliation, a well-selected panel of experts and a good chairperson, and excellent preliminary training courses. – The work is well-coordinated, I wish you success. – I would like to express my gratitude to our supervisors, Makpal Aldibekovna and Alibek, for their clear and 	<p>On the activities of the ECAQA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Meet 2-3 times a month and discuss specific accreditations, problematic issues, areas for improvement, and quality of implementation. – Strengthen interaction with professional national and international organizations. – Further digitalization of processes (unified platforms, evidence templates, dashboards) will reduce the administrative burden and improve the comparability of assessment results. <p>Post-accreditation monitoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Conduct monitoring of the accredited organization within clearly defined timeframes and by the same composition. <p>Regarding the organization of the work of the EEC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Duration of the EEC. – Optimize reporting information. – Include a checklist of supporting documents with references in the self-assessment report. – Organize more frequent meetings with the team.

<p>organized work as observers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Center constantly takes suggestions into account and makes adjustments. - The work of the accreditation center is highly organized. All processes are streamlined, requirements are clear and transparent, and interaction with educational organizations is effective. No significant deficiencies were identified, so no improvements are currently required. - Everything is being handled as part of the routine. There were no particular difficulties. - No recommendations. I would like to commend the high level of work of the ECAQA. - Continue the work and improve processes. - I wish you success and inspiration. - Continue the work and improve. - Good luck in your work. - Everything is excellent. - I wish the agency prosperity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide relatively accurate report templates and specific assessment criteria to prevent subjectivity in the commission's work. - Create favorable working conditions for the commission; it was very stuffy in the summer, the air conditioning wasn't working, and the working conditions were uncomfortable. <p>According to the standards and assessment criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - According to the standards of the CPD, undergraduate, and residency programmes, expand the criteria for digitalization and AI. - Combine the last two standards, 8 and 9. - Increase the transparency and clarity of assessment criteria. Reduce redundant reporting. Ensure a unified approach and expert objectivity. <p>Expert training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct regular meetings and training seminars with all experts. - Conduct training courses on writing final expert reports. - Ensure regular expert training, especially after the introduction of updated accreditation standards. - Overall, everything is satisfactory. However, I would like to undergo training at the ECAQA. - Conduct training on regulatory legal acts and their amendments to legislation in healthcare and medical education. - Conduct training on evidence assessment tools.
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The following conclusions were reached based on the survey of EEC members:

The ECAQA identified areas for improvement for 2025:

1. Strengthen the training of accreditation experts, taking into account their educational level (higher, postgraduate, continuing professional development, higher medical colleges) and their roles in the external expert commission, taking into account the recommendations of the experts interviewed, including those on ethics and communications, and inter-team interaction.

Responsible: ECAQA Expert Council, ECAQA Academic Advisor.

2. Develop programmes for visiting educational institutions, taking into account the experts' wishes.

Responsible: ECAQA Accreditation and Monitoring Department, EEC Chairs.

The results of the survey of accreditation experts were considered at the meeting of the ECAQA Expert Council, Protocol No.1 dated 09.01.2026.