



REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA  
MINISTRY OF HEALTH

# REGULATORY DOCUMENT ON ACCREDITATION OF CONTINUING EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

For Health Professionals

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QENDRA KOMBETARE E EDUKIMIT NE VAZHDIM

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## I - INTRODUCTION

In the recent years, the Ministry of Health has devoted ever increasing attention to the development of human resources in order for the latter to successfully accomplish their functions for the preservation and amelioration of the health of the population<sup>1</sup>.

One of the most important challenges in meeting this objective is the establishment of a system for continuing education for health professionals, which is considered to be indispensable in updating the knowledge of health professionals. This objective is clearly stated also in the new Health Care Law of the Republic of Albania<sup>2</sup>, article 33, which is dedicated to continuing professional education.

### **Article 33** **Continuing professional education**

1. The Ministry of Health generates mandatory programs for continuing professional development.
2. Health care professionals must subject themselves to updated continuing professional education in order to enhance their professional knowledge and skills, with the view to increasing the quality of health care.
3. Employment, privileges or contracts with the health institutions shall cease to be in effect if the professional staff will not subject himself/herself to continuing education process established by the Ministry of Health.
4. Health care institutions shall be subjected to the respective sanctions if they elect to hire experts/specialists who do not meet the requirements stipulated by this Article.
5. Health care institutions facilitate continuing professional education of the health professionals.

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<sup>1</sup> - Long-term strategy for development of Albanian Health Care System, Ministry of Health, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> - Law on Health Care in the Republic of Albania, No. 10 107, of 30.03.2009.

In the context of introducing the continuous education system for health professionals, in May 2008, the Ministry of Health established the National Center for Continuing Education (NCCE), in line with Council of Ministers decision no 825 on 14.05.2008<sup>3</sup>. NCCE is an institution that reports to the Ministry of Health, and whose mission is promoting professional development of all categories of health care personnel, with the view to enhance their knowledge and skills for the ultimate goal of improving the quality of health care services. One of the tasks of the NCCE is related to the implementation of the process of accreditation of programs and activities of continuing education for health professionals, except for the programs which fall under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Sciences, and its structures.

In this context, the MoH established an Accreditation Working Group that was in charge for the development of this regulatory document for the process of accreditation of continuous education activities for health professionals. The Accreditation Working Group comprised representatives from all key stakeholders in order to ensure ample and comprehensive representation of all interested parties.

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<sup>3</sup> - Establishment and operation of this center is supported by the Bilateral Project for Cooperation and Development between the Government of Swiss Confederation and the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania.

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## A – THE PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

The purpose of this document is to provide a regulatory framework for the accreditation system of continuing education for health professionals, which includes the following areas:

- Process and procedures for the accreditation of continuing education activities;
- Development of the necessary standards and criteria for the accreditation of continuing education activities (such as: pedagogical, technical, ethical etc. standards);
- Definition of specific activities of continuing education and respective points/credits;
- Roles and responsibilities related to accreditation of continuing education activities in health sector;

This document is developed based on the Global Standards of Quality Improvement for health professionals, published by NCCE, whose purpose is to guide the Accreditation System towards continuous changes and improvements based on real life experiences.

## B – BASIC CONCEPTS

*Continuing education for health professionals* is the process through which health professionals update their knowledge and skills in order to meet the needs of patients, health services, and their professional development. The terminology acknowledges the multi disciplinary context of care for the patient, which in addition to medical knowledge and skills includes managerial, social and personal skills.

*Continuing education activities* refer to the whole range of activities which are meant to fulfill the needs of health professionals in order to meet their professional responsibilities and obligations. Some forms of continuing education include: Training (from one day to three months range); Conference; Seminars; Workshops; Lectures, Case discussions; Distance learning activities; Research activities.

*Accrediting institution* refers to the institution that is in charge of the evaluation and assures that the continuing education activities meet the approved criteria and standards, and determines the number of credits for participants (professionals of the health sector).

*Accreditation* refers to the process of approval of continuing education activities by the accrediting institution based on the approved procedures, standards, and criteria.

*Providers of continuing education activities* include all academic and nonacademic institutions, for profit and non for profit, which have the expertise and experience in the organization of the continuing education activities in health field. From the evaluation and accreditation process are excluded all those institutions that manufacture or trade goods that are used on or by the patients, and which are considered as parties of commercial interest. The latter may support financially activities of continuing education, in compliance with the policies envisaged by the accrediting institution regarding financial support and conflict of interest, but cannot provide accredited activities directly.

*Participants in continuing education activities* include all professionals who work in the health sector such as: doctors, nurses, dentists, pharmacists, but also managers and economist working in the health and hospital centers etc.



## II - THE STRUCTURE OF THE ACCREDITATION SYSTEM

The role of the system for the accreditation of continuing education activities for health professionals is to organize and deliver the process of evaluation and accreditation of continuing education activities for health professionals, based on approved procedures, standards and criteria.

The accreditation system is composed of the internal evaluation system and external evaluation system.

- Providers of continuing education activities are responsible for the conduct of internal evaluation, in cooperation with external evaluation institutions.
- External evaluation of activities of continuing education for health professionals is conducted by the National Center for Continuing Education, in line with the procedures and criteria approved by the Ministry of Health (MoH) and the Board of Recertification and Accreditation (BRA).

The structure of the accreditation system includes the whole range of institutions directly or indirectly related to the system of continuing education for health professionals. There is a mutual quid pro quo relation among these institutions which makes possible the proper functioning of the accreditation system, and enables the representation of the interested parties.

*The Ministry of Health* is the responsible institution for guiding the Accreditation system.

*The Board of Recertification and Accreditation* is established by the Ministry of Health and it is the highest decision making body of the accreditation system. It is responsible for the approval of the procedures and criteria related to this process.

*National Center for Continuing Education* is the technical agency of the Ministry of Health, which coordinates and implements the accreditation system, while being in charge for the accreditation of activities of continuing education for health professionals, according

to procedures and criteria approved by the MoH and BRA.

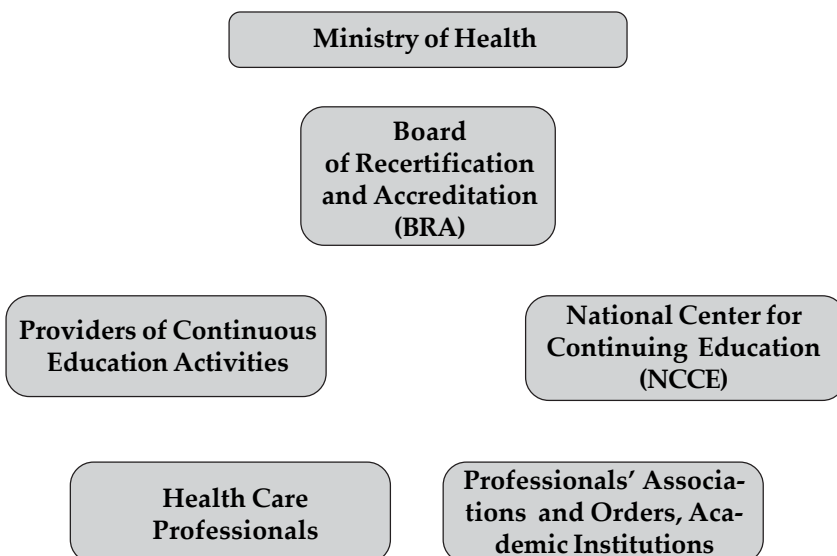
*Professionals associations, respective orders & academic institutions* are important actors of the accreditation system, which are represented in the process through their participation in the Board of Recertification and Accreditation, and in the selection of the list of experts who cooperate with the NCCE in the External Evaluation of the activities of continuing education.

*Providers of continuing education activities* are involved in the accreditation system through the conduct of the internal evaluation, which identifies the needs for continuing education, and the best methods for their accomplishment. The quality of activities planned and implemented by the providers directly influences/impacts the criteria and standards of the accreditation system, thus enabling the latter to be continuously improved.

*Health professionals* are important actors of the accreditation system because they are the driving force and the beneficiaries of this process.

Below is an organizational chart of the structure of the accreditation system, while the roles and responsibilities of the parties involved in this process are described in detail in Chapter VI of this document:

**SYSTEM OF ACCREDITATION OF ACTIVITIES OF CONTINUING EDUCATION  
FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS**



### **III - EVALUATION & ACCREDITATION PROCESS**

#### **A – ACCREDITATION REQUEST**

The request for the evaluation and accreditation of continuing education activities for health professionals should be based on the request and will of the providers, in a period not shorter than 45 days from its implementation date. The request for the evaluation and accreditation of the continuing education activities can be submitted at the offices of NCCE or in the website of this center. The request for accreditation is accompanied by a fee which varies from Lek 5000 to Lek 20000, depending on the type and duration of the activity (see annex 1).

For accredited activities that will be implemented again, the providers should notify the NCCE at least 7 calendar days before the beginning date.

The evaluation process is composed of the internal evaluation and the external evaluation, and should be documented in an evaluation file.

#### **B – INTERNAL EVALUATION**

The process of internal evaluation is conducted by the institution which is the provider of the continuing education activity itself, and constitutes the basis for the external evaluation. The process of internal evaluation is based on the forms and instructions issued by the NCCE for this process. The data provided by the applicant should reflect truthfully information regarding three key components:

## **1. Mission and goals of the activity**

The provider should submit a written declaration describing the mission of the continuing education activity, which should include: activity goals, areas of intervention, target audience, type of activity that will be provided, and expected outcome from this activity.

## **2. Activity planning**

The provider should: a) demonstrate a planning process of the activity, which combines the identified needs for continuing education with the activity expected results; b) utilize the data, based on needs assessment for the development and planning of the activities of continuing education; c) communicate the mission and goals of the activity in order for the participating professionals to be informed before participating in the activity ; d) ensure consistency with the policies foreseen by the Ministry of Health in terms of financial support and conflict of interest.

## **3. Evaluation and improvement**

The provider should: a) envisage evaluation of the efficacy of the continuing education activity in meeting the identified needs; b) make the necessary improvements suggested by the evaluation process.

## **C – EXTERNAL EVALUATION**

External evaluation is carried out by the NCCE, and is divided in two phases: 1) evaluation of the documentation prior to the accreditation, and 2) monitoring of the activity and final evaluation. The first phase is carried out before the activity is accredited, and implemented, and is composed of the following procedures:

1. NCCE reviews the documentation submitted by the applicant at this center, and if it is complete and detailed, performs the evaluation of the quality criteria of the planning process of the activity, including evaluation of utilized resources (trainers, pedagogical materials) and prepares report 1. In case of partial completion of the documentation required, the NCCE will not

award any credit to the topics missing didactic materials.

2. NCCE assigns one or more independent experts of the respective area from the list selected by the Board of Recertification and Accreditation to carry out the evaluation of the content of the curricula that will be used for the activity, and checks its consistency with the needs of the participants. Depending on the evaluation, the expert can suggest which topics should be awarded with credits. The expert prepares report 2.

3. NCCE proposes the proposal of the number of credits for the activity that will be accredited. The method for the calculation of the credits is described in Chapter V.

Documentation of the internal evaluation and of the external evaluation (including reports 1 & 2), together with the proposed number of credits based on the type of activity and its duration compose the Evaluation File, the approval of which completes the first phase.

The second phase is described in point E.

## **D – PUBLICATION OF RESULTS/DETERMINATION OF CREDITS**

Based on these two aspects of preliminary external evaluation, NCCE takes the decision for the accreditation or not of a given activity.

In case the accreditation is refused, the NCCE should give a written response to the applicant with the reasons for refusal and the respective suggestions for improving planning and development of future proposals.

Activities which are accredited and their relevant credits shall be announced in the center's web page.

NCCE shall carry out the process of external evaluation, and shall make its decision known within 30 following the application.

## **E – MONITORING AND FINAL EVALUATION**

NCCE is entitled to monitor the implementation of the activity in order to ensure the implementation of the foreseen standards and criteria. The NCCE owns the right to carry out an evaluation of the organization of the activity in case the providers are not performing

such a thing.

Following the completion of the activity, the applicant should fill in the evaluation file and the relevant documentation by submitting to the NCCE the list of participants in the activity and the outcomes of the activity evaluation process.

The NCCE may cancel the accreditation or revise the number of credits awarded in instances of violation of the above mentioned procedure and of the fundamental quality standards, such as:

- Changes in the activity program which infringe its quality, and impact the calculation of the approved credits.
- Non-reporting of conflicts of interest of organizers or/and of trainers of the activity.
- Utilization of the activity for personal or commercial promotion.
- Misuse of the name of accrediting institution and of credits approved by it.
- Failure to complete the file with the necessary documentation for the postactivity phase.
- Negative evaluation from the majority of the participants regarding:
  - a. organization of the activity,
  - b. content of specific topics, or
  - c. pedagogical level of the topic presented

## **F – THE RIGHT FOR APPEAL**

The providers of continuing education activities are entitled to appeal at the NCCE regarding the content of the external evaluation report. Every appeal should be submitted in writing and be accompanied by data and arguments in support of the claim. NCCE reviews the evaluation file, taking into account the remarks and when they are grounded it reflects them in the final report.

In the cases when the accreditation is denied after the above mentioned procedure, the provider has the right of appeal at the NAB.

## **IV - INTERNAL & EXTERNAL EVALUATION CRITERIA**

### **A – MISSION AND GOALS**

The provider must submit a written statement of the mission of the continuing education activity, which includes: the purpose of the activity, content areas, target audience, type of activity provided, and expected results of this activity.

- K1. The provider must present a statement of the mission for the continuing education activity, which should contain all basic components (purpose, content areas, type of activity, expected results) where results should be articulated in terms of changes that the activity will bring about in competence, performance of the professionals, or patient outcomes.

### **B – ACTIVITY PLANNING**

The provider must: a) use a planning process that links the identified needs for continuing education with the activity expected results; b) use the data based on needs assessment for the formulation and planning of the activities of continuing education; c) communicate the purpose and objectives of the activity in order for the participating professionals to be informed before participating in the activity; d) ensure consistency with the policies foreseen by the Ministry of Health in terms of financial support and conflict of interest.

- K2 The provider must determine the needs for continuing education (expressed in terms of knowledge, competencies/skills or practice) that will be addressed in the proposed continuing education activity.

- K3 The provider must develop activities whose aim is to change the competencies, performance or patients outcomes, described in the mission statement.
- K4 The provider must generate activities whose content is in consistency with the area in which the participating professionals exercise their profession.
- K5 The provider must select educational formats (pedagogical methods) which are appropriate for the context, objectives and expected results of the activity.
- K6 The provider must develop activities which are consistent with the context of desired competencies/skills by the professionals (for instance Clinical Guidelines, etc).
- K7\* The provider must organize activities independent of commercial interests.
- K8\* The provider must appropriately manage the commercial support (funds).
- K9\* The provider must keep separated the promotional from the educational part of the activity.
- K10\* The provider must actively promote improvements in the health services, and NOT look after the commercial interest of the providers and/or donors of the activity.

## C – EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT

The provider must: a) evaluate the effectiveness of the continuing education activity in meeting the identified needs; b) make the necessary improvements suggested by the evaluation process.

- K11 The provider must analyze changes in the participants (in terms of knowledge, practice or patients outcomes), achieved as a result of the overall program's.
- K12 The provider must use evaluation tools for the process of activity implementation (such as: the environment/facility, duration, number of topics covered, and resources used).

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\* Criteria 7, 8, 9 and 10 are described in more detail in the section "The policies regarding the financial support and conflict of interest" (Chapter IV).

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- K13 The provider must identify, plan, and implement the necessary or desired changes in the activity (such as: planner, trainers, infrastructure, methods, resources, tools, interventions) which are necessary for improving the quality of future continuing education activities.
- K14 The provider must ensure effective documentation of participants in the activity.



## V - CRITERIA FOR COMMERCIAL SUPPORT

The NCCE accepts a request for accreditation of continuing education activities solely from those institutions which do not have a commercial interest in the health sector. From the evaluation and accreditation process are exempt all those institutions that manufacture or trade goods which are used on or by the patients, and which fall under the commercial interest. The latter may support financially activities of continuing education in compliance with the policies stipulated by NCCE regarding financial support and conflict of interest described below.

***Commercial interest*** – this group includes all institutions which manufacture products or deliver health care services which are used on or by the patients such as: pharmaceutical companies, either producing or selling pharmaceuticals, medical equipments, and diet food products or children food. This group does not include not for profit or governmental organizations, as well as companies that do not have an activity in the health sector.

***Commercial support*** – refers to the financial contribution offered by the party of the commercial interest, which is used to cover whole or parts of the costs for continuing education activities.

***Conflict of interest*** – circumstances generate a conflict of interest when to an individual is given the opportunity to influence the content of continuing education activities, as well as the information regarding products or services of the commercial interest with which it has financial relations.

***Financial relationships*** – Financial relationships refer to those relations whereby an individual benefits from the salary, intellectual rights, and fees as advisors, pro-perty stakes or other financial benefits. Financial relationships are usually related to roles such as: hiring, leadership role or independent expert (including contractual research work), advisor, teaching, membership in consultation boards, participation in the board and other activities which are either expected or do in fact generate payments.

**Criteria 1: INDEPENDENCE**

**1.1.** The provider of continuous education activities should be able to guarantee that the decisions that will be taken in each of the areas mentioned below shall not be under the influence of any “commercial interest party”.

- (a) Identification of needs for continuing education;
- (b) Determination of the objectives of the activity;
- (c) Selection and presentation of the content;
- (d) Selection of all persons and organizers who may be in a position to influence the content of continuing education activity;
- (e) Selection of pedagogical methods;
- (f) Evaluation of the activity and its objectives.

**Criteria 2: RESOLUTION OF PERSONAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

**2.1.** The provider should be able to demonstrate that every person that can influence the content of an educational activity has declared upfront all financial relationships that present a conflict of interest for the activity provider.

**2.2.** The individual that shall refuse to declare relevant financial relationships does not have the right to be a member of planning committee, a lecturer, or author of continuous education activities, and can not have control or responsibility in the development, management, presentation or evaluation of the activity.

**2.3.** The provider must have implemented a mechanism to identify and resolve all conflict of interest prior to the educational activity being delivered to participants.

**Criteria 3: APPROPRIATE USE OF COMMERCIAL SUPPORT**

**3.1.** The provider should take all measures for securing commercial support.

**3.2.** The provider should not be forced by the commercial interest party to take advice or services related to lecturers, authors, participants or educational issues, including herein the content, as conditions of contributing funds.

**3.3.** The entire commercial support and financial resources for the activity of continuous education should be managed solely

through the providers (the institution that has made the request for accreditation at the accreditation institution).

Written agreement documenting terms of support

3.4. The terms and purpose of the commercial support should be documented in a written agreement between the commercial sponsor and the providers and its partners. The agreement should also include the provider, in case the support has been given directly to the educational partner of the provider or to some joint sponsor.

3.5. The written agreement should specify the commercial interest party which is the source of the commercial support.

3.6. The commercial sponsor together with the provider should sign the written agreement between both.

#### **Criteria 4: APPROPRIATE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATED TO THE COMMERCIAL PROMOTION**

4.1. Agreements regarding commercials exhibits or advertising should not influence planning or implementation of a continuing education activity, and neither should they be a condition for the provision of commercial support for the activity.

4.2. Product-promotion materials or product-specific advertisements of any type are prohibited in or during the continuing education activities. The juxtaposition of editorial and advertising materials on the same products or subjects must be avoided. Live (staffed exhibits, presentation) or enduring (printed or electronic advertisements) must be kept separate from the continuing education activity.

*- Printed materials, advertisements and promotional materials will not be interleaved within the pages of the content of the continuous education activities. Advertisements and promotional materials can be included in the first and last pages of printed materials as long as the promotional information is not related to the content of the continuing education activity.*

*- In electronic presentations, advertisements and promotional material should not be visible on the screen at the same time with the content of the continuing education activities, and should not appear between electronic presentations of the content of the activity.*

*- In live, face to face activities, advertisements and promotional materials cannot be displayed or distributed immediately, during or after*

*the continuing education activities. Providers cannot allow representatives of commercial interests to engage in sales or promotional activities during and in location of the organization of the continuing education activity.*

**4.3.** Educational materials that are part of the continuing education activity such as: presentations and written notes cannot include any advertising, trade name or product-group message.

**4.4.** Printed or electronic information distributed about elements which are not related to educational information of the activity may include product-promotional material or product-specific advertisements.

**4.5.** The accredited provider should not allow the commercial interest party to provide continuing education activities for the participants.

## **Criteria 5: CONTENT AND FORMAT WITHOUT COMMERCIAL BIAS**

**5.1.** The content or format of the continuing education activity or its related materials to it should be in support of improving the quality of health care and not favoring a particular company or registered business.

**5.2.** Presentations must give a balanced view of therapeutic options. Use of generic terms will contribute to this impartiality. If the educational materials of the continuing education activities include trade names, they should use available trade names from several companies and not just trade names from a single company.

## **Criteria 6: DECLARATION OF FINANCIAL RELATIONSHIPS**

**6.1.** All potential financial relationships of persons that might influence the continuing education activity should be declared to the participants in the activity prior to its implementation.

**6.2.** The providers of the continuing education activity should declare the source of commercial support to the participants in the activity before the launch of the said activity. This declaration should in no way include use of trade names or promotional message.

## VI - ACTIVITIES OF CONTINUING EDUCATION & RESPECTIVE CREDITS

Activities of continuing education refer to all activities whose scope is to meet the needs of the health professionals to fulfill their responsibilities and professional obligations. Activities of continuing education may be of different forms, and some of them are:

**Conference** refers to an activity lasting from 1 to 3 days on a given topic usually organized by associations of professionals, and where a series of lectures are held by experts of the area, and which runs in plenary sessions/or parallel sessions. The goal of a conference is to enrich the knowledge of the professional audience mainly regarding novelties in science and technology related to the respective health practice.

**Training** refers to an educational activity (running from 1 day up to three months) whose goal is to convey *knowledge, skills and competencies* required to accomplish a task or job in a satisfactory way. Training includes utilization of different pedagogical methods, and not simply holding lectures. Training can both be organized on the job, and outside the working place.

**Seminar** refers to an educational activity where a small group of participants learn about a certain topic and actively participate through discussions of given articles, presentations of different studies, questions and debates.

**Workshop** refers to the activity organized in a small group of participants, which includes discussions, addressing problems or handling of a technique of manipulation with the assistance of an expert. The purpose is that the participants should learn by doing, while making mistakes and correcting them by themselves or with the assistance of the others, skills and competencies necessary for their everyday practice.

**Distance learning activities** refer to educational activities which are carried out independently by the professional through the assistance of modern technology. Studying of written material, videotapes, video

conference, web conference, and email communication allow the health professional to follow a training program of interest, without being necessary for him/her to be physically present in a given activity.

**Presentation of a lecture** is also another activity which promotes continuing professional education. A lecture refers to an oral/verbal presentation held by a qualified professional with experience in the relevant area on a given topic for about 20 up to 40 minutes, accompanied by questions and answers. Communication, and presentation skills, together with the expertise, are some of the key qualities of a fine lecturer.

Research/study activity makes part of the continuing education activities. The involvement of the professional in research work, writing of articles or other professional and scientific work represent another form of continuing education.

The criteria developed for the internal and external evaluation of the quality of continuous education activities fall under the following categories:

**Live activities** – which include all educational activities that run in real time, and which occur with the commitment/involvement of at least two persons.

**Distance learning activities** – whereby the learning process can be individual or not, and can be organized through internet, teaching tools, kits etc.

This document contains only the criteria for the evaluation of some of the live activities that NCCE will accredit initially. The criteria for the evaluation of other live and distance learning activities will be developed in the future by the NCCE.

Calculation of credits for live continuous education activities will be done according to the criteria one hour one credit point, based only on real teaching hours, not including breaks among presentations, and the introductory session of the activity, etc.

## **VII - ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **A – BOARD OF RECERTIFICATION AND ACCREDITATION (BRA)**

The Board of Recertification and Accreditation is the highest decision-making body in the accreditation system of continuing education activities for the health professionals. The Board comprises 6 members, who are representatives of the following institutions:

a) Ministry of Health; b) NCCE; c) Faculty of Medicine; d) Order of Physician; e) Order of Nurses, f) Order of Pharmacists.

The BRA is established by the Ministry of Health. The chairman of the BRA is the representative of the Ministry of Health.

BRA convenes twice a year. When necessary, the chairman of the BRA may convene the NAB even more often.

NCCE plays the function of the technical secretariat of the Board of Recertification and Accreditation.

#### **The role of the Board of Recertification and Accreditation**

- The approval of changes or formulation of new procedures, criteria and standards developed by NCCE regarding the process of accreditation of continuing education activities for health professionals.
- Approval of the list of independent experts for each area of expertise who will be involved in the external evaluation of the activities.
- Review of claims by the providers regarding the process of external evaluation which have not been addressed on the basis of the procedures foreseen in point F of Chapter “Process of Evaluation and Accreditation”.

## **B – NATIONAL CENTER FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION (NCCE)**

National Center for Continuing Education (NCCE) is a technical agency reporting to the Ministry of Health, which is in charge for the external evaluation of the quality of continuing education activities for Health Professionals.

NCCE has operational independence in the conduct and follow-up of the evaluation process, regarding procedures of evaluation, formulation of criteria and standards, content of reports of evaluation results, cooperation with the National Accreditation Board, and activity providers, as well as in terms of publication of information related to evaluation and accreditation.

NCCE provides technical support related to the concept and implementation of the process of planning and internal evaluation of training programs by the providers of the activities of continuing education, with the view to enhancing and consolidating the technical expertise in this field.

### **The role of the National Center for Continuous Education**

The role of NCCE with regard to the accreditation system is the following:

- Assessment, planning and coordination of activities of continuous education through: 1) coordination and/or conduct of studies for the needs assessment regarding continuing professional education; 2) identification of priorities and making proposals for continuous education activities in line with these priorities; 3) contribution in the development of a national plan in the area of continuing education; 4) support in the coordination of activities of continuing education funded by different donors, their implementing agencies, and other local and international agencies.
- Implementation of continuing education activities through: 1) contribution in the process of contracting of universities, schools, foreign and local organizations, and individual experts in specific fields; 2) monitoring and supervision of continuing education activities in order to ensure implementation of standards and criteria foreseen by the NCCE; 3) ensuring the continuity of

contracts with involved organizations or individuals consultants.

- Accreditation of continuing education activities through: 1) developing and ensuring the implementation of quality criteria and standards for activities of continuous education; 2) development and publication of guidelines regarding standards of external and internal evaluation of quality and criteria of accreditation; 3) determination of respective credits for different forms of continuing education activities; 4) publication and update of the list of accredited activities of continuing education for different professionals of this area.

- Development of pedagogical techniques through: 1) development and concentration of expertise in the field of andragogy in order to enhance the knowledge and skills of trainers in the health sector; 2) evaluation of the quality of continuing education activities from the pedagogical point view in order to improve the quality of teaching, and to meet the needs of beneficiaries.

- Approval of accreditation for continuous education activities. The decision regarding approval of accreditation is taken following the review of the evaluation file, and reports drafted by the staff of the center, and the independent experts.

## C – INDEPENDENT EXPERTS

Independent experts are responsible for the evaluation of the content of the curricula to be used in the activity and ensuring its consistency with the needs of participants and formulation of report 2 (as described in Chapter 2).

Experts that will be involved in the external evaluation of an activity of continuing education are selected by rotation from the list of experts of each area of expertise approved by the Board of Recertification and Accreditation, in close cooperation with associations of professionals, respective orders, and academic institutions. The list of experts is reviewed every two years.

Experts involved in the process of external evaluation of an activity of continuing education like the other involved actors in this process, should declare prior to the development of the report any potential conflict of interest with the provider of continuing education

activities. Additionally, the expert selected for the external evaluation of an activity should not be involved in the planning, organization, and implementation of the same activity.

### **The role of independent experts**

The role of independent experts regarding the accreditation system is the following:

- Evaluation of curricula proposed for the continuing education activity.
- Evaluation of the consistency of the proposed curricula with the category of participants planned for participating in this activity.
- Formulation of the respective report of external evaluation (report 2).

## **D – RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTIES INVOLVED IN CONTINUOUS EDUCATION ACTIVITIES**

### **Responsibilities of accredit institutions are the following:**

- To be fair, not show any biasness, they should be innovative and consistent in their accreditation practices;
- To develop reasonable standards and criteria for the providers of the activities of continuous education;
- To demonstrate credibility, responsibility and guidance skills toward the accreditation process;
- To include in the accreditation process the verification of accomplishment of responsibilities for the activity providers;
- To promote continuous improvement of the quality of the accreditation system, and educational systems that it supports;
- To cooperate and coordinate the work with other institutions that organize and provide activities and stakeholder groups.

**Responsibilities of the participant (health professional) in the continuing education activities are the following:**

- To take part in activities of continuing education, in compliance with their individual needs for continuing education;
- To make sure that the identified needs are in consistency with their professional practice and the final scope is improvement of health service and patients health;
- To evaluate level of accomplishment of his/her professional needs based on the change of knowledge, skills and professional practice.
- To make sure that the activities are not used for commercial purposes.

**Responsibilities of providers of continuing education activities are the following:**

- To declare to the accredit institutions and participants any interest or commercial support of the planners, lecturers/trainers or facilitators/moderators of the activity.
- To report to the accreditation institutions and participants any support, sponsorship or funding from forprofit health organizations and make sure that they do not influence the structure and content of the activity.
- To ensure the existence of measurable efficiency indicators in the accomplishment of the objectives of the activity related to change of knowledge, competencies and skills.
- To ensure that the educational objectives are defined in terms of knowledge, skills or competences, and are suitable for the entire group of respective professionals.
- To ensure that the used pedagogical methods are suitable for the declared objectives.
- To be able to demonstrate that they have evaluated the quality of previous activities, and have made improvements where necessary.

## ANNEX 1

### APPLICATION FEE\* FOR ACCREDITATION OF CONTINUING EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

Type of activity	Number of participants	Duration in days	Accreditation fee
Conferences/Congresses	<100	-	10000
Conferences/Congresses	>100	-	20000
Trainings//Workshops/Seminars	<50	1-3	5000
Trainings//Workshops/Seminars	<50	4-6	8000
Trainings//Workshops/Seminars	<50	7-15	12000
Trainings//Workshops/Seminars	<50	15-30	15000
Trainings//Workshops/Seminars	<50	>30	20000

\* The fee paid by the provider during the application phase covers NCEE's operative expenses during the process of evaluating continuing education activities and is nonrefundable whether the activity is accredited or not. The completion of the evaluation file during different phases of evaluation, as well as the reevaluation in case of appeals are included in the initial fee paid by the provider.

\* All public health institutions which organize continuing education activities for their staff only, will be exempt from fees for accreditation.

## ANNEX 2

### **SPECIFIC PROCEDURES FOR ACCREDITATION OF CONTINUING EDUCATION ACTIVITIES PROVIDED BY PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTIONS FOR THEIR STAFF**

In this annex will appear only those elements where the process of accreditation of continuing education activities offered by public health care institutions differs from procedures included in the “Regulatory framework for the accreditation of continuing education activities for health professionals”. For each element not dealt with in this Annex, the definitions of the above accreditation regulatory document remain in effect.

The purpose of this annex is to facilitate the process of accreditation for continuing education activities provided by public institutions for their staff.

### **TYPES OF CONTINUING EDUCATION ACTIVITIES**

Activities that can be organized by public health institutions for their staff may include:

- *Seminar*
- *Clinical Meeting*
- *Study Case*
- *Educational activities in small groups (lessons, case studies etc)*
- *Trainings*
- *On the job training*

## CONTINUING EDUCATION ACTIVITY PROVIDERS

These activities are organized by public institutions that provide health care such as:

- *Public primary health care centers*
- *Regional or local public hospitals*
- *QSUT and other university hospitals*
- *Ministry of health and its subordinate institutions (PHI, RHA, etc.)*
- *Regional directories of public health*

## PARTICIPANTS IN CONTINUING EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

Only members of the institution(s) offering the activity can participate in continuing education activities provided by public health institutions for which the special accreditation procedures apply.

Public institutions' professionals participation in these activities should be free of charge.

## EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION PROCESS

### • **Request for accreditation**

The request for accreditation of continuing education activities by public health care providers must be carried out in two phases:

*Phase One:* The provider completes the application form (see Guidelines for internal evaluation of the activities of continuing education), prepares an annual program of activities ongoing education and sends it to NCCE.

- One application form should be submitted for all activities scheduled to take place during the year.

- In the annual program, the provider must determine:

- a) Topics,
- b) Relevant lecturers for each activity
- c) Activity date (estimate).

- The provider must send the application form together with the relevant annual program from December of the previous to January of the following year. (For example, for the activities that will be planned for 2013, the providers should apply from December 2012 until the end of January 2013)

*Second phase:* In this phase, the provider sends to NCCE detailed documentation as specified in the form of internal evaluation. This documentation consists of:

- i) Detailed program of any activity that is part of the annual program of activities, which should determine the length of presentations, discussions or practical work that will take place during the event;
- ii) a summary information (abstract) for each scheduled training topic;
- iii) a professional background summary of professionals that will be in the role of lecturers;
- iv) promotional materials or references (if any) that will be distributed to participants..

- In the case the programs of the planned activities are the same in format and duration (e.g. lectures lasting 1 hour and 30 minutes followed by 30 minutes of discussion), the provider may submit only one program for all activities organized by him.

- In case the provider plans to develop different formats activities such as: seminars, training in the operation, lectures, etc., he should send separate programs for each activity according to the format and length planned

- The provider must send at least 1 week prior to each event the necessary documentation for that activity, as listed above.

- After each activity, the provider has the obligation to send near NCCE a list of participants for each activity. The list must include the institution's seal and signature of the holder.

- Above-mentioned providers of these activities are exempt from the payment for the accreditation procedure.

### • **Evaluation and improvement**

At the end of the annual activities, the provider must send a summary of the evaluations by the participants on the organization of these activities. In this review the provider must submit the opinion of the participants about the organization of the activity, its effectiveness, and submit their suggestions for improvements in the future.

**• External evaluation and Accreditation**

The NCCE reviews the documentation submitted and if it considers that professional materials that will be presented at the activity are:

- a) preaccredited;*
- b) materials prepared and presented in scientific publications certified at home or abroad;*
- c) protocols or guidelines developed by MoH or its subordinate institutions, or University Hospital Centers, then it performs their accreditation based solely on 1 external evaluation report (see regulatory document for accreditation of continuing education activities, section III.C)*

In other cases, external evaluation procedures will be carried out as specified in the regulatory document.

The NCCE determines the number of credits for each activity, in particular, based on a detailed program or programs of activities for the whole year, on the basis of 1 hour - 1 credit criterion.

The NCCE should conduct external evaluation process and disclose its decision within 45 days after final completion of the documentation for all planned activities in an application folder.

**MONITORING**

The NCCE has the right to monitor the activities offered in public health institutions to ensure the implementation of quality standards and criteria. The NCCE has the right to review the number of credits or revoke accreditation in case violations, defined in Document regulatory and accreditation, are encountered, such as:

- Different participation group than declared in the application
- Participation fee applied.