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# Readiness and Challenges of Indonesian Health Higher Education Independent Accreditation Institutions

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#### Abstract:

This research is intended to examine the readiness and challenges faced by the Indonesian Health Higher Education Independent Accreditation Institute (LAM-PTKes) as an independent accreditation institution with authority to carry out the accreditation of study programs in the science and health professions fields in Indonesia. Based on the case study method, LAM-PTKes generally has the infrastructure and resources to carry out its role as LAM which has the authority to accredit these study programs. The research results show that this institution still has two types of challenges. First, internal challenges include inadequate study program accreditation teams who can understand the technical aspects of accreditation and a need for more supporting IT staff who can help with the accreditation system of these study programs. Second, external challenges, namely the lack of understanding from field study program managers regarding the stages, processes, and documents needed in accreditation and the management system for accreditation supporting documents in general, still need to be better integrated. Despite these challenges, this institution strives to become an influential accreditation body in the national and global arena. To achieve this, this institution needs effective, adaptive and resilient accreditation management and an executive leadership team to manage accreditation issues developing in the digital era.

Keywords: Independent Accreditation Institution, Quality Management, Higher Education

#### Abstrak:

Penelitian ini dimaksudkan untuk mengkaji seperti apa kesiapan dan tantangan yang dihadapi oleh Lembaga Akreditasi Mandiri Pendidikan Tinggi Kesehatan Indonesia (LAM-PTKes) sebagai lembaga akreditasi mandiri yang memiliki kewenangan dalam menjalankan akreditasi prodi-prodi bidang keilmuwan dan profesi kesehatan di Indonesia. Dengan berbasis metode studi kasus, LAM-PTKes secara umum memiliki infrastruktur dan sumber daya untuk menjalankan perannya sebagai LAM yang memiliki kewenangan untuk mengakreditasi prodi-prodi tersebut. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa lembaga ini masih memiliki dua jenis tantangan, yaitu; pertama, tantangan internal mencakup tim akreditasi prodi yang kurang memadai yang mampu memahami aspek teknis akreditasi, dan kurangnya staf IT pendukung yang dapat membantu sistem akreditasi prodi-prodi bidang tentang tahapan dan proses serta dokumen yang diperlukan dalam akreditasi, dan sistem manajemen dokumen pendukung akreditasi pada umumnya masih kurang terintegrasi. Meski menghadapi

tantangan tersebut, lembaga ini terus berupaya untuk menjadi lembaga akreditasi berpengaruh dalam kancah nasional dan global. Untuk mencapai hal ini, maka lembaga ini perlu memiliki tim manajemen dan kepemimpinan organisasional akreditasi yang efektif, adaptif dan tangguh resiliensi untuk mengelola isu-isu akreditasi yang berkembang di era digital.

Kata Kunci: Lembaga Akreditasi Mandiri, Manajemen Mutu, Perguruan Tinggi

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#### INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian Health Higher Education Independent Accreditation Institute (LAM-PTKes) is one of the independent accreditation institutions that currently have authority from the Government to accredit science and health professional study programs in Indonesia. This authority, prior to 2015, was carried out by a government agency that had so far handled the accreditation of these study programs, namely the National Accreditation Board for Higher Education (BAN-PT). As an independent accreditation institution, LAM-PTKes has several challenges in exercising its authority to accredit these study programs. This article is intended to examine what kind of challenges are faced by LAM-PTKes as an accreditation body that has the authority to accredit these study programs and how far they are prepared to accredit these study programs.

The author believes a study on this matter is essential for the following reasons. First, the quality of higher education held by tertiary institutions is one of the essential things that concern people in various parts of the world. Higher education quality assurance is carried out internally by each tertiary institution and its study programs and external institutions (Isaksson et al., 2007; Sameena, 2020; Wahyudin et al., 2020). External agencies often call quality assurance accreditation (Buzdar et al., 2018; Saleem et al., 2019; Khojah & Shousha, 2020). The existence of good study program accreditation is a form of higher education accountability to the public, including the professional community (Jarvis, 2014).

Second, accreditation is an external quality assurance system (SPME) in higher education administration that is mandatory for every university or study program (Cheung, 2015; Goldenberg, 2018; Hanh et al., 2020). In contrast to the internal quality assurance system (SPMI), SPME is generally carried out by an external non-university institution that is given the task or authority by the Government/State through a set of laws and regulations related to the implementation of higher education (Yulianingsih, 2015; Idrus et al., 2018; Widagdo et al., 2019; Fadhli, 2020). Third, as in other countries, accreditation is essential in Indonesia. A sound accreditation system is needed to improve the quality of study programs held by each tertiary institution (Burger et al., 2015; Thoyib, 2022; Raya, 2022). We can find specific rules regarding accreditation in Permendikbud Number 5 of 2020 concerning the Accreditation of Study Programs in Higher Education.

Fourth, the issuance of BAN-PT regulation No. 9 of 2020 strengthens the authority to administer the accreditation system for science and health

professional study programs, which was initially owned by BAN PT to switch to the Indonesian Health Higher Education Independent Accreditation Institute or which is often abbreviated as LAM-PTKes. Fifth, several studies discussing the history of the development of study program accreditation systems in higher education and also the challenges they face have been carried out by many experts and researchers in management (and) education science. One of them is Jarvis (2014). According to him, accreditation as part of the quality assurance system has developed since the late 19th century, especially in the United States. In this country, the accreditation system and also the accreditation organizations that run the accreditation system continued to develop until the 20th century. Even since 1990, accreditation as an external quality assurance system has been massively adopted by higher education institutions and university study programs. In various parts of the world (Jarvis, 2014; Hernandez-Fernandez et al., 2021; Manimala et al., 2020).

Various types of institutions can facilitate the accrediting study programs held by each tertiary institution. According to Haakstad (2021), these kinds of institutions can be grouped into the following four categories, namely: a) national accreditation bodies appointed by or developed by the government or ministries; b) professional associations from tertiary institutions and study programs in tertiary institutions; c) each tertiary institution and study programs in tertiary institutions; and d) non-governmental and non-university institutions originating from the private/professional sector that are given the authority to carry out accreditation and obtain a mandate to develop the quality of education and reputation of tertiary institutions and study programs in tertiary

Frank et al. (2012) suggest an accreditation system can be developed based on the following three approaches. The first approach is an accreditation system based on market orientation (market-driven approach) and professional practice (professional practice-based). This approach has been practised in England for a long time by professional bodies/institutions, especially those that regulate a standard set of professional knowledge and skills that specific fields of professional life must own. These bodies or institutions are generally independent and professional entities outside universities that have the authority to carry out the accreditation process for tertiary institutions and study programs in tertiary institutions (Frank et al., 2012). This approach is considered to have several areas for improvement. This approach triggers tension between academics managing study programs who uphold academic freedom and leaders and managers of institutions who tend to require specific standards of knowledge and professional skills to be met by these academics (Frank et al., 2012).

The second approach is an accreditation system based on authority owned by the government. The government gives this authority to several experts from academics with the knowledge, skills and experience to run the accreditation system. Approaches run in many countries. One of them is in Poland (Frank et al., 2012). In this approach, the government determines the number of specific accreditation standard criteria that must be met by state and private universities as well as study programs at these universities. However, this second approach also has weaknesses. One of the most prominent areas for improvement is a disconnect between the material and the process of providing education carried out by each study program and the demands and needs of the market for study program graduates (Frank et al., 2012).

In contrast to the two approaches above, the third approach is an accreditation system carried out by special independent agencies outside the government that have been approved or mandated by the Government/State (the state-approved independent agencies) (Frank et al., 2012). An accreditation approach with this model gives more freedom to each university and study program at the university to design and develop the educational model and curriculum and the learning outcomes it wants. The accreditation approach with this model flexibility for each university and study program to determine which accreditation institutions suit their needs. However, this approach also often raises problems because no standard can be used by each university and study program at the university as a joint guide in determining the quality of the education they manage (Frank et al., 2012).

The three accreditation approach models presented by Frank et al. (2012) are similar to those of Hernandez-Fernandez et al. (2021). Like Frank et al. (2012), Hernandez-Fernandez et al. (2021) divide the accreditation model into three. The first model is an accreditation system based on authority from the State/Government (the state-centred model). This model is characterized by solid control from the Government/State in determining accreditation standards for universities and study programs, thereby reducing academic freedom (Hernandez-Fernandez et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the second model is accreditation based on internal governance determined by the academic community at each university and study program (the academic self-governance model) with supervision from the State/Government. This second model is the state-supervising model. In contrast to the first model, this second model emphasizes the importance of increasing the ability or capacity of each university or study program to be self-regulatory so that they can more fully meet the educational achievement targets and outcomes they are targeting (Hernandez-Fernandez et al. al., 2021). The third model is an accreditation system based on market orientation (the market-oriented model).

Unlike the first and second models, this third model was developed to strengthen the capacity of each university or study program so that they are better able to deal with problems that exist in the job market and meet the demands and needs of the traditional knowledge and skills of graduates desired by users of graduates or the job market (Hernandez-Fernandez et al., 2021). Departing from this, this study aims to analyze the readiness and challenges faced by the Indonesian Health Higher Education Independent Accreditation Institute (LAM-PTKes) as an independent accreditation institution with authority to carry out the accreditation of study programs in the scientific and health professions fields in Indonesia.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

By considering the concepts presented by the experts above, the author, through this article, wants to examine the readiness of LAM-PTKes as an independent accreditation institution for study programs in the scientific and health professions in Indonesia and what the challenges faced he faced. The authors use a qualitative research method based on descriptive case studies to evaluate this issue.

The type of qualitative research method the authors chose in this study is the case study research method. This method, the authors use for the following reasons. By using this method, researchers can collect various types of data sources. The data source in question is any source that can produce relevant data to achieve research objectives. This method-based research also allows researchers to process these data to produce conceptual findings (Yin, 2014).

The authors use data and documents from the following three types of data sources in this study. First, data related to the LAM-PTKes was sourced from the LAM-PTKes website. Second, data related to higher education and professional associations that initiated the establishment of LAM-PTKes can be accessed openly through the associations' websites. Third, the data comes from presentation material delivered by the Chairman of the LAM-PTKes Management Board at the Hearing Meeting (RDPU) held by Commission X DPR RI on September 27 2022. The author initially wanted to use interview data from respondents -key respondents who are representative to analyze the readiness of LAM-PTKes as an independent accreditation institution and strategies undertaken in overcoming challenges when carrying out its role as an independent accreditation institution for study programs in the scientific and health professions fields in Indonesia. However, the authors rely on the three data types above due to the limited resources and time needed for this research. The authors then use these three types of data to describe the challenges faced by this institution and also the readiness of this institution to carry out its role as an independent accreditation institution for the study programs above.

The three types of data sources above were analyzed using traditional thematic qualitative analysis methods as presented by Boyatzis (1998), Butler-Kisber (2010) and Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis in this study was carried out by the authors in the following stages: a) familiarization with the data to be studied; b) formulation of initial codes from the data studied; c) search for themes that emerged from the researched data and review these themes; d) reformulation and re-labelling of the themes; and e) writing research reports according to research objectives (Boyatzis, 1998; Butler-Kisber, 2010; Braun & Clarke, 2006). The findings of the research results by analyzing through the stages mentioned above are as follows.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The Indonesian Health Higher Education Independent Accreditation Institute (LAM-PTKes) is Indonesia's oldest independent accreditation institution. This institution was established in March 2015. The establishment of this institution was facilitated by the Directorate General of Higher Education, Ministry of Education and Culture through a project entitled 'Health Professional Education Quality Project' (HPEQ Project).

Until now, LAM-PTKes, as shown in Table 2, currently also has 919 assessment teams consisting of 845 assessors, 58 validators, nine accreditation boards and 7 division heads. They were all prepared to become an assessment team to facilitate the accreditation of 4,106 study programs in the scientific and health profession fields. Of these study programs, 3,405 have been accredited, and the rest have not. In addition, this institution, since 2019, as shown in Table 3, has also continued to develop accreditation instruments for these study programs. This institution also continues to prepare itself to facilitate new study programs in the scientific and health profession fields. As presented in Table 4, the number of study programs as of March 17 2022, has reached 115 study programs.

LAM-PTKes has been trying to achieve its vision of becoming a global standard accreditation body for the past two years. These efforts include the following: First, follow up on the international recognition of LAM-PTKes by WFME and APQN (APQR). Second, get international recognition for every field of science; As for those who have received this recognition are in the medical field, namely from WFME. Third, carry out accreditation abroad which will be carried out in November 2022 at Hill's Medical College Vanuatu. Fourth, holding international assessor training on 6-12 August 2022 in collaboration with GMC. Fifth, preparing for internationalization programs through the preparation of accreditation guidebooks for study programs and assessors and recognition of medical study programs abroad (Vanuatu, Balkarian, Malaysia). Sixth, developing promotions at the ASEAN level through the Bali Meeting, which is planned to be held in early December 2022 and also through the SEARAME/LAM-PTKes biannual meeting in 2023. Seventh, developing international standard accreditation instruments for other study programs outside medicine (KG, KP, FR, KB, KM, GZ). Eighth, being an active member of an international organization. Ninth always actively participate in international meetings (AQAN, Asia Forum, APQN).

Until now, LAM-PTKes has strived to improve its capabilities as an independent accreditation institution. Compared to other independent accreditation bodies such as LAMEMBA and LAMDIK, this institution is only one of the oldest. However, it can also be said to be the most prepared as an independent one. However, this institution still faces the following four challenges. First, the managers of scientific and health professional study programs need more understanding regarding the stages and processes and the documents needed in the accreditation process. Second, the study program accreditation team is generally too big and needs more time. They also often need more focus on understanding the technical aspects of accreditation. Third, the need for IT staff who can help with the accreditation supporting documents from these study programs still needs to be integrated.

	Accreditation Status and Rating									
Level		7 Stan	dard			Not				
	Α	В	С	Total	Excellent	Very well	Good	Total	Accredited	
Medical	247	118	10	375	74	29	14	117	0	
dentistry	44	32	1	77	22	15	2	39	0	
Nursing	90	622	164	876	25	267	82	374	2	
Midwifery	36	404	174	614	9	111	184	304	3	
Pharmacy	25	163	123	311	35	39	67	141	2	
nutrition	30	72	19	121	9	19	12	40	0	
Public health	53	179	34	266	21	52	26	99	1	
Other Health	59	159	78	296	12	50	43	105	1	
Veterinary Medicine	4	3	0	7	17	3	1	21	0	
Grand Totals	588	1752	603	2943	224	585	431	1240	9	
Percentage	20.00%	59.50%	20.50%	100%	18.10%	47.20%	34.80%	100%		

 Table 1. Number of Study Programs accredited by LAM-PTKes from 2015 to August 2022

Source: Presentation material delivered by the Chairman of the LAM-PTKes Management Board at the Hearing Meeting (RDPU) held by Commission X DPR RI on 27 September 2022

No	Division	SIMAK Study Program	Study Program Not yet accredited	Total study program	Asse ssor	Valida tors	Assem bly	Head of Division	Total Assessment Team
1	Medical	483	37	520	174	7	1	1	183
2	dentistry	81	5	86	30	4	1	1	36
3	Nursing	795	107	902	229	10	1	1	241
4	Midwifery	750	151	901	152	10	1	1	164
5	Pharmacy	418	98	516	69	6	1	1	77
6	KesMas	330	88	418	56	6	1	1	64
7	nutrition	152	46	198	52	6	1	1	60
8	Other Health	378	139	517	76	8	2	-	86
9	Veterinary Medicine	18	30	48	7	1	_	-	8
	Total	3405	701	4106	845	58	9	7	919

Table 2. Jumlah Prodi dan Ketersediaan Tim Penilai (Assesor) Tahun 2022

Source: Presentation material delivered by the Chairman of the LAM-PTKes Management Board at the Hearing Meeting (RDPU) held by Commission X DPR RI on 27 September 2022

No	Knowledge	Number of Instruments*	Developed**							Not
INU	field		Dip	S	Pro	Sp	Μ	D	Total	Developed
1	Medical	61			1	35	12	2	50	11
2	dentistry	14			1	8	3	1	13	1
3	Nursing	11	1		1	5	1	1	9	2
4	Midwifery	6	1	1	1		1		4	2
5	Pharmacy	21	5	3	3		4	1	16	5
6	nutrition	21	6	2			6	2	16	5
7	Public health	8	1	1	1		1	1	5	3
8	Other Health	28	16		1		1		18	10
9	Veterinary Medicine	12	1		2		2	2	6	6
	Total	182	31	7	10	48	31	10	137	45

Table 3. Development of Study Program Accreditation Instruments for 2019-2020

Source: Presentation material delivered by the Chairman of the LAM-PTKes Management Board at the Hearing Meeting (RDPU) held by Commission X DPR RI on 27 September 2022.

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KNOWLEDGE	New Study Program								
FIELD	D3	D4	<b>S1</b>	Profession	S2	<b>S</b> 3	Specialist	Total	
Medical				1	2	2	3	8	
Dentistry								0	
Nursing		1		1	1			3	
Midwifery		1		17				18	
Pharmacy	4		1	2	3	1		11	
Public health		5	11		7	2		25	
Nutrition		1	13					14	
Sub Total 7 fields of Science	4	8	25	21	13	5	3	79	
Other Health	1	14	21					36	
Grand Totals	5	22	46	21	13	5	3	115	

Source: Presentation material delivered by the Chairman of the LAM-PTKes Management Board at the Hearing Meeting (RDPU) held by Commission X DPR RI on 27 September 2022

In the accreditation process, the following problems often arise and are faced by this institution. First is the need for more understanding from study programs in scientific and health professions and their teams about forms and SIMAK. Second, the accreditation team is often too big and needs more focus. Third, the accreditation team often involves officials who need more time to understand the technical aspects and have enough time. Some team members still need more confidence to make decisions. Fourth, those who become Persons in Charge (PIC) from the accreditation team sometimes move or leave the team. Fifth, the need for IT staff who work regularly. Some still need to improve and have good filing system skills, which causes the supporting documents for accreditation to be poorly organized. As a result, filling in accreditation forms is still not optimal, and those who are team members are less able to prepare supporting documents properly.

Although still facing a number of the problems above, LAM-PTKes continues to develop several efforts to maintain the quality of study programs that have been accredited. These efforts are carried out by carrying out the following activities, namely organizing online accreditation clinics regularly (a), socializing accreditation for study programs that need it (b), conducting online consultation classes (c), especially for study programs that need and monitoring and post-accreditation evaluation (d). In addition, this institution also conducts regular surveys to obtain the necessary feedback for improving work systems (e). This institution also reports the performance of LAM-PTKes every year to the Minister through BAN-PT (f). In addition, this institution re-certifies ISO 9001-2015 (g) and tries to maintain the financial performance of LAM-PTKes through the supervision of a Public Accountant Office (KAP) (h). The last three attempts were quite successful. This institution has received the WTP title 6 times since 2016.

The existence of an accredited institution has a vital role in maintaining the quality of the implementation and management of study programs, including study programs in the fields of science and health professions in Indonesia. Although this institution is essential, accreditation bodies often need help with the following two problems. The first is how to guarantee the accreditation quality of study programs in tertiary institutions accredited by accreditation bodies. Second, what kind of institution can carry out the accreditation process and guarantee the accreditation quality of study programs in the tertiary institution? (Zhang & Patil, 2017).

The quality of the accreditation of study programs, including study programs in science and health professions, can be guaranteed if the accreditation is carried out by an authorized institution with adequate capabilities. According to Haakstad (2021), there are four types of institutions of this kind. First, a national accreditation agency appointed by or developed by the Government or ministry. Second, accreditation institutions or units are developed by professional associations from tertiary institutions and study programs in tertiary institutions. Third, accreditation institutions. Fourth, nongovernmental or non-university or independent accreditation institutions from the private/professional sector are given the authority and mandate to carry out accreditation. The results of this study indicate that LAM-PTKes is a type of accreditation institution that has developed in Indonesia since the 2015s and can be categorized as the fourth type of accreditation institution. Kaplan et al. (2017) said that each type of accreditation agency that has or is given the authority to accredit study programs in tertiary institutions generally has characteristics that are somewhat different from other types of accreditation institutions. Apart from having a different history of establishment and accreditation standards, each accreditation institution needs help carrying out or increasing its capacity to accredit these study programs (Kaplan et al., 2017).

As an independent non-government accreditation institution, the existence of LAM-PTKes is unique. The characteristics of this institution are different from BAN-PT, which is a government accreditation institution. The legal status of LAM-PTKes is as an association institution. With its institutional status as an association, this institution can be categorized as an independent accreditation agency. Until now, this institution is ready to become an independent accreditation institution. This cannot be separated from BAN-PT and the Ministry of Education and Culture/Government, which helped facilitate the establishment of this institution. The development and performance of this institution are still being monitored and supervised by BAN-PT. Concerning the thoughts of Frank et al. (2012) and Hernandez-Fernandez et al. (2021), this indicates that this institution is an accreditation agency that can be categorized as a state-approved independent agency and the state supervising model.

By referring to the thoughts of Frank et al. (2012) and Hernandez-Fernandez et al. (2021), the authors argue that the accreditation system for study programs in tertiary institutions, including study programs in the scientific and health professions fields in Indonesia, has changed drastically compared to the accreditation system for these study programs before 2015. Since March 2015, the accreditation institution established by the State/Government (the state-centred model), BAN-PT. On the other hand, the accreditation system of these study programs has transformed what was initially referred to as the accreditation model that was entirely run by State/Government agencies (the state-centred model) to an accreditation system managed by independent institutions authorized by the State/Government. The state-approved independent agencies), whose establishment is supervised by the State/Government (the state supervising model).

As an independent accreditation institution, LAM-PTKes generally has a better readiness level than other independent accreditation institutions in Indonesia, such as LAMEMBA, LAM Engineering, LAM Infokom and LAMDIK. However, this institution is still receiving monitoring and evaluation by the National Accreditation Board for Higher Education (BAN-PT). This monitoring and evaluation are carried out by BAN PT every year. This institution is generally better prepared and established than other independent accreditation bodies. As the oldest independent accreditation institution, this institution has even become a reference and role model for other independent accreditation institutions.

The data described above also shows that this institution still has several challenges. This institution also has several external challenges, namely the need for more understanding from study programs in the science and health profession fields and their teams about forms and SIMAK. In addition, this

institution also faces several internal challenges, such as the accreditation team is often too large and lacks focus, the accreditation team often involves officials who do not understand the technical aspects and do not have enough time, and some team members are still lacking confidence in making decisions, those who bring a Person in Charge (PIC) of the accreditation team sometimes moves or leaves the team, and there is a lack of IT staff working regularly. The IT staff's support level must adequately manage the accreditation process and system. Therefore, this institution needs to recruit IT staff who can manage the accreditation database system alone and participate in developing an effective accreditation IT governance system and increase the competitive capabilities of accredited study programs. Amid digital transformation, the adaptability of these institutions to recruit IT staff and develop such a governance system is very important (Primadewi et al., 2020).

Internal and external challenges indicate that this institution needs a more effective, adaptive and resilient management team (Addas, 2018) and leadership of an accreditation organization (Hasbun & Rudolph, 2016). Such a team is needed not only to increase the capacity of this institution in carrying out the accreditation process alone but also to increase the effectiveness of its performance in carrying out the process of accrediting study programs in the scientific and health profession fields. Such a team is also needed to manage the process and system for assessing the indicators used in accreditation, prepare the necessary supporting resources and IT systems, and plan and implement the accreditation process or stages. This team can also train lecturers and professionals who carry out accreditation or assessors. This team can also provide training to the leaders of the study programs to be accredited and equip the staff with the knowledge and skills needed by the managers of the study programs (Hasbun & Rudolph, 2016: 7). With the support of such a team, it is easier to achieve the ability of this institution to support accredited study programs so that they are superior and competitive (Sinz, 2009, p. 332).

## CONCLUSION

In general, this institution is ready as an independent accreditation body for study programs in the health sector in Indonesia. However, this institution still faces two internal and two external challenges. Two internal challenges are the need for an accreditation team that is too large that has enough time and focus on understanding the technical aspects of accreditation and the need for IT staff to assist the accreditation system. Two external challenges, namely the lack of understanding of the stages and processes and the documents needed in accreditation and the management system for supporting documents for accreditation, still need to be integrated. Despite these four challenges, this institution strives to become an accreditation institution for study programs in the scientific and health professional fields that are influential nationally and globally. The author believes that this institution needs to have an effective, adaptive and resilient accreditation management and executive leadership team that is capable of managing actual accreditation issues that have the potential to develop in the digital era.

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