Quality Assurance in Higher Education –
The Accreditation System in Germany

International Peer Learning Conference
Quality Assurance & Quality Development in Higher Education
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Dr. Olaf Bartz, Managing Director, German Accreditation Council
Content

I. Overview: The Accreditation System
II. German Accreditation Council
III. Agencies
IV. Regulations for the Accreditation Council
V. Quality Approach
VI. Quality Assurance in the international context
VII. Statistical Data
Accreditation process

Accredited study programme

HEI internal accreditation

Decision

Application for accreditation

Peer-review procedure

Application for peer-review

System Accreditation

Programme Accreditation

Alternative Procedures

Accreditation Council

HEI

QA Agency

HEI

Types of Accreditation
New legal basis for Accreditation from 2018

Three major shifts:

QA Agencies: peer-review of study programmes and QA-systems (as before)

Accreditation Council

accreditation regulations

decisions

Länder (States)

review of agencies

European Register (EQAR)
# Development of German Accreditation System

## Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>HRK* and KMK* decisions: introduction of an accreditation procedure for Bachelor’s and Master’s degree programmes</td>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>Establishment of German Accreditation Council</td>
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<td>2018</td>
<td>Ratification of the Interstate Study Accreditation Treaty</td>
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*HRK: German Rectors’ Conference  
*KMK: The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the federal Republic of Germany*
### Interdisciplinary QA Agencies in Germany

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACQUIN</td>
<td>Accreditation-, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AQ Austria</td>
<td>Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria</td>
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<tr>
<td>AQAS</td>
<td>Agency for Quality Assurance through the Accreditation of Study Programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evalag</td>
<td>Evaluation Agency Baden-Württemberg</td>
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<tr>
<td>AAQ</td>
<td>Swiss Agency of Accreditation and Quality Assurance</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZEvA</td>
<td>Central Evaluations- and Accreditation Agency Hannover</td>
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Disciplin-Oriented QA Agencies in Germany

**FIBAA**  
Foundation for Business Administration Accreditation

**AHPGS**  
Accreditation Agency for Study Programmes in Special Education, Care, Health Sciences and Social Work

**AKAST**  
Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Canonical Courses of Studies in Germany

**ASIIN**  
Accreditation Agency specialised in accrediting Degree Programs from the fields of Engineering, Informatics/Computer Science, the Natural Sciences and Mathematics.
# The Foundation Accreditation Council

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accreditation Council</th>
<th>Foundation Council</th>
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<tr>
<td>Takes decisions on all matters of the Foundation. In particular, accredits study programmes (programme accreditation) and quality management systems of HEIs (system accreditation) based on the QA agencies’ external review reports</td>
<td>Monitors the legitimacy and operating efficiency of the foundation activities carried out by the Accreditation Council and the Board</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Board</th>
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<tr>
<td>Executes the resolutions of the Accreditation Council and runs the ongoing affairs of the Foundation</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Head Office</th>
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<tr>
<td>Supports the execution of Foundation tasks</td>
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</table>
Composition of the Accreditation Council  (Art. 9(2) Interstate Study Accr. Treaty)

Eight representatives from HEIs in Germany

One representative from the German Rectors’ Conference (HRK)

Four representatives from the Länder (states)

Five representatives from professional practitioners

Two students

Two foreign representatives with QA experience

One representative from the Agencies (non-voting member)
Composition of the Foundation Council  (Art. 11 (2) Interstate Study Accr. Treaty)

Six representatives from the Länder (states)

Five representatives from the German Rectors' Conference
Legal basis for the Accreditation Council

On the national level

- Interstate Treaty on the organization of a joint accreditation system for Quality Assurance in teaching and learning at German Higher Education Institutions (Interstate Study Accreditation Treaty)

- Act concerning the Foundation Accreditation Council (North Rhine-Westphalia, 01.01.2018)

- Sample decree pursuant to Art. 4 of the Interstate Study Accreditation Treaty (KMK resolution from 07.12.2017)

- Decrees of the Länder (states)
Legal basis for the Accreditation System

On the international level

- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) (Integration of ESG in the sample decree – KMK resolution from 07.12.2017)
- Bologna Process documents (Declarations / Communiqués)
- Lisbon Recognition Convention
- ECTS / Diploma Supplement
The German Accreditation Council fulfils its tasks through following ways:

- accredits study programmes (programme accreditation) and quality management systems of HEIs (system accreditation) based on the QA agencies’ external review reports
- approves the implementation of alternative procedures, which imply new ways of quality enhancement
- promotes international cooperation in accreditation and quality assurance as well as contributes to the realization of the European Higher Education Area
Tasks pursuant to Interstate Study Accreditation Treaty - II

- decides on granting the authorization to the QA agencies on the premise of EQAR- Registration
- reports to the Länder (states) about the developments of Quality in the Higher Education system and about the Quality Assurance and Accreditation on regular basis
- supports the states in further development of the German quality assurance system and submits proposals for the Länder (states’) decrees
Basic Standards and Rules of Procedures

- Sample Decree pursuant to Art. 4 of Interstate Study Accreditation Treaty (KMK Resolution from 07.12.2017)

- single Decrees of the states (*Länder*)
The Quality Approach of Accreditation

The Quality Circle

The Accreditation Council's concept of accreditation is based on the fitness of and fitness for purpose approach: The underlying quality assessment takes into account the intended learning outcomes of a programme identified and made transparent by the higher education institution as well as the question, if the proposed study concept is likely to achieve the valid learning outcomes.
Sample Decree - I

KMK Resolution from 07.12.2017

Sample decree consists of following fields of regulations:

- Applicability (Part 1)
- Formal Standards (Part 2)
- Academic Standards (Part 3)
- Rules of Procedure for Programme and System Accreditation (Part 4)
- Rules of Procedure for Study programmes with special profiles (Part 5)
- Alternative Procedures (Part 6)
Examples for formal Standards

- § 4 Study Programme Profile
- § 5 Admission Requirements and Transfer between different Study programmes
- § 6 Qualifications and Qualification designations
- § 7 Modularisation
- § 8 Credit Point System
Examples for academic standards

- § 11 Qualification goals and levels
- § 12 Coherent study concept and adequate implementation
- § 14 Academic success
Academic Standards for System Accreditation

§ 17 Concept of the internal Quality Management System (goals, processes, instruments)

§ 18 Measures for Implementation of the QM Concept
Alternative Procedures (§ 34)

- The formal and academic standards can be reviewed within alternative ways of evaluation procedures
- The approval by the Accreditation Council is compulsory
- Maximum period of time eight years
- The projects to be planned in the course of alternative procedures have to be monitored by the Accreditation Council and evaluated in a scientific way
Goals and Use of Accreditation - I

- Determination and certification of achieved quality in teaching and learning in German Higher Education Institutions
- Visualisation of quality in order to enable information about the decisions for interested public, students etc.
- „Consumer protection“ with regard to potential students, students and potential employers
- Guaranteeing the equivalence of academic degrees and promoting the diversity of educational contents and of concepts for study programmes
- Promotion of understanding and self-responsibility of HEIs for regular quality enhancement in teaching and learning
- Implementation of governance and managements‘ practice in HEIs for the sake of improvement of study quality
- Focusing the accreditation on the certification of Higher Education QM Systems, aimed constant quality assurance and enhancement
Goals and Use of Accreditation - II

International:

- Increase of mobility both on the regional and international level
- Improve the transparency of provided study programmes and for their QA underlying standards and procedures
- Assure the actual and legal recognition of German study programmes internationally

Instruments:

- ECTS
- Diploma Supplement
- EQF
- ESG
- LRC
Berlin Communiqué, 19th September 2003:

“Quality of higher education has proven to be the heart of setting up of a European Higher Education Area... Consistent with the principle of institutional autonomy, the primary responsibility for quality assurance in higher education lies with each institution itself and this provides the bases for real accountability of the academic system within the national quality framework.”

By 2005 the implementation of a quality assurance system in every signing country should include:

A definition of the responsibilities of the bodies and institutions involved.
Evaluation of programme or institutions, including internal assessment, external review, participation of students and the publication of results.
A system of accreditation, certification or comparable procedures.
International participation, co-operation and networking.
Bergen Communiqué, 19\textsuperscript{th} May 2005:

Ministers “adopt standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area...”, which are:

“designed to be applicable to all higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies in Europe, irrespective of their structure, function and size, and the national system in which they are located.”

Ministers “welcome the principle of a European register of quality assurance agencies...”, and “underline the importance of co-operation between nationally recognised agencies with a view to enhancing the mutual recognition of accreditation or quality assurance decisions.”
Statistics: accredited study programmes

Status: 15.01.2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Programmes Overall:</th>
<th>18,750</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor and Master degree programmes:</td>
<td>17,062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor degree programmes overall:</td>
<td>8,357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accredited:</td>
<td>5,680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master degree programmes:</td>
<td>8,705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accredited:</td>
<td>5,546</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Accredited Study Programmes overall: 11,269
Accredited with conditions: 6,763

Source: Hochschulkompass of German Rectors' Conference and Statistics of German Accreditation Council
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