

Quality Assurance through Accreditation – The German Way –

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- The German Accreditation System
- The (National) Accreditation Council
- The Accreditation Agencies
(e.g. ACQUIN, ASIIN, FIBAA, ZEvA)
- Goals of Accreditation in Germany
- Accreditation at Aalen University
(Programme, Cluster and System Accreditation)
- Accreditation examples and overview

The German Accreditation System

- Organised in a decentralised manner
- Accreditation of study programmes is carried out by **Accreditation Agencies** that are accredited by the *Accreditation Council of the Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany*
- *(Licensed) Accreditation Agencies carry out the accreditation by order of the universities*

The (National) Accreditation Council

- The Accreditation Council is
 - the central decision-making body of the foundation
 - defines the basic requirements of the process
 - defines the quality standards for study programmes, internal quality assurance systems of higher education institutions and agencies
 - takes care that any accreditation is carried out on the basis of reliable, transparent and internationally recognised criteria
 - accredits and re-accredits the agencies,
 - monitors the accreditations undertaken by the agencies.



The Accreditation Agencies in Germany

- ACQUIN - Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute
- AHPGS - Accreditation Agency for Study Programmes in Health and Social Sciences
- AKAST - Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Canonical Study Programmes
- AQ Austria - Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria
- AQA - Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance
- AQAS - Agency for Quality Assurance by Accreditation of Study Programmes
- ASIIN - Accreditation Agency for Study Programs in Engineering, Informatics, Natural Sciences and Mathematics
- evalag - evaluation agency Baden-Württemberg
- FIBAA - Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation
- OAQ - Swiss Center of Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education
- ZEvA - Central Evaluation and Accreditation Agency Hannover

- More information and links can be found [here](#).

Accreditation Agency: ACQUIN



- Founded in 2001 as a consequence of the Bologna process and the upcoming need for assuring the quality of newly introduced undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in Germany.
- A member-based, non-profit organisation located in the South-East of Germany.
- Operates under the licence of the German Accreditation Council and is thus empowered to award its quality seal to study programmes which have successfully undergone accreditation.
- Accredits all types of high education institutions, taking into account all types of programmes and disciplines
- A main objective is to provide guidance and information for students, employers and higher education institutions and to contribute to more transparency in the market of study programmes.
- The main characteristics of ACQUIN are independence, objectivity and high quality.

Accreditation Agency: [ASIIN](#)



- Founded in 1999 as the non-profit association ASII for the accreditation of degree programmes in engineering and informatics, which rapidly expanded to ASIIN in 2002 by including the fields of natural sciences and mathematics.
- Since 2000, ASII or ASIIN has the right to award the accreditation seal of the German Accreditation Council, in addition to the ASIIN quality seal.
- In 2008, there were further expansions of the activities of ASIIN e. V. such as the establishment of panels, criteria, and procedures for the evaluation of QM systems in studying and teaching and the related admission by the German Accreditation Council.

Accreditation Agency: FIBAA

THE QUALITY SEAL
IN HIGHER EDUCATION



- Founded in 1994 (when the Accreditation System was established in Germany)
- Was one of the first agencies to be accredited by the German Accreditation Council and specialises in Business programmes.
- Since 2002, it has been entitled to award the Seal of the Accreditation Council for degree programmes in Germany.
- FIBAA is driven by twin objectives: The verification of quality and the promotion of improved quality. It awards its Quality Seal to programmes of education and education providers which fulfil its quality criteria. Those which achieve outstanding results receive the FIBAA Premium Seal.

Accreditation Agency: ZEvA



- Founded in 1995, member of European associations like ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) and EQAR (European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education)
- Assists higher education institutions in developing and improving quality in all areas related to teaching and learning, including quality management.
- Since the year 2000, ZEvA has accredited more than 1,200 study programs at universities, universities of applied sciences and universities of cooperative education.
- The procedures applied by ZEvA are based on the regulations and structural guidelines of the Accreditation Council and the Standing Conference of State Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK) and are geared to international standards.

ZEvA: International Activities



- International consulting services (evaluation of the higher education system of **Saudi Arabia**, 2008; evaluation of **Vietnamese higher education institutions**)
- Organization and active participations of international workshops (e.g. workshop hosted by the **Technical University of Izhevsk, Russia**, 2006 and **Brasov University, Romania**, 2009)
- Institutional evaluations (Konservatorium Wien Private University, **Vienna/Austria**, 2008/09; Anton Bruckner Private University for Music, Drama and Dance, **Linz/Austria**, 2007)
- Accreditation of study programs at higher education institutions abroad (e.g. **Technical University Izhevsk, Russia**, 2009)
- In the context of a DAAD-funded DIES project (DIES: Dialogue on Innovative Higher Education Strategies) conducted by the University of Hanover and **VIT University Vellore (South India)**, ZEvA was invited to support VIT in accrediting its International Relations Office (IRO) and improving the quality of its work.

German Accreditation Goals

- Reduce long study duration
- Transparency for students and industry
- Internationally comparable degrees
- Enhancing and increasing mobility among students, staff
- Fostering international cooperation

Requirements for Accreditation

- Implementation of *KMK** standards
- Implementation of ECTS
- Study programme structure
- Admission procedures and regulations
- Examination Organisation
- Organisation of internship and consulting offers
- Internationalisation concept,
- Quality management
- [*the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany](#)

Requirements of Accreditation: KMK Standards

1. Study structure and study length
 2. Admission requirements and transitions
 3. Consecutive, non-consecutive and continuing education master programmes
 4. Degrees
 5. Classification of degrees
 6. Modularisation and ECTS
- The KMK standards focus on the Accreditation Counsel and the agencies. At the same time, they serve universities as a guide (orientation) for the planning and conception of study programmes, that will be accredited.

Types of Accreditation at Aalen University

1. Programme Accreditation;
2. Cluster Accreditation;
3. System Accreditation (in application process).

All degree programmes at Aalen University have been accredited with programme or cluster accreditation.

Various degree programmes have already been reaccredited.

Programme Accreditation

- used to study the programme quality (accurate quality assurance)
- a programme could be a degree programme or department
- during accreditation, it is examined whether a degree programme reaches the qualitative minimum standards.

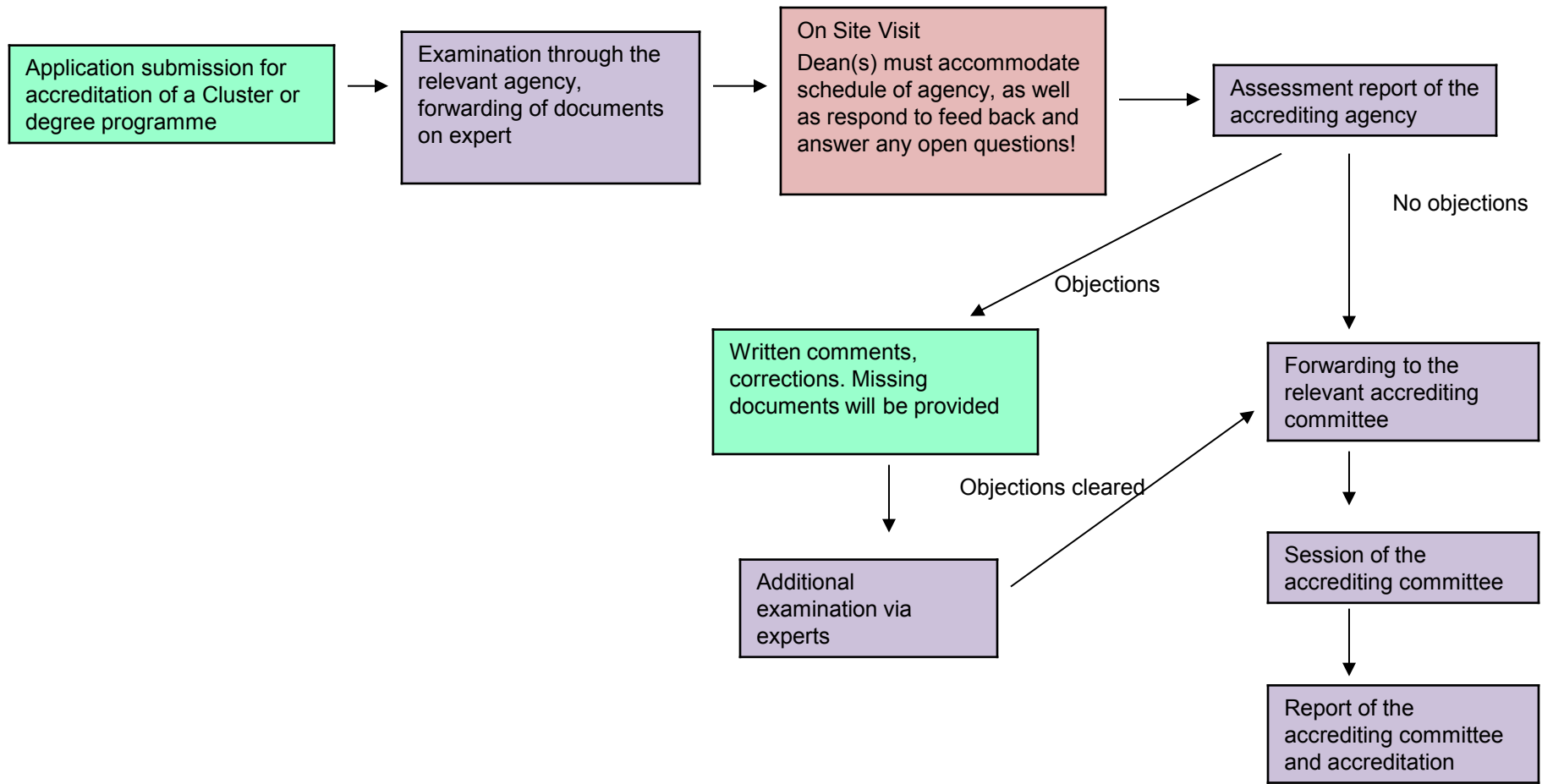
Programme Accreditation Task

- Examination, of whether the internal quality assurance system of the university allows the relative structures and processes of teaching and learning can be controlled, in order for
 - The defined qualification goals to be reached
 - (high) quality stands of the degree programmes can be guaranteed.

Cluster Accreditation

- Similar or intertwined study programmes can be collectively evaluated
- Joint consideration of resources, professional skills, academic feasibility, etc.
- Cost and time effective

Accreditation Process



Example Site Visit (Cluster/Programme Accreditation)

- 08.30 Prelude discussion with university directors
- 09.15 Pause, internal discussion
- 09.30 Interview with deans
- 10.30 Pause, internal discussion
- 10.45 Interview with programme manager(s)
- 11.45 Pause, internal discussion
- 12.00 Interview with programme manager(s) and professors
- 13.00 Lunch, internal discussion
- 13.45 Interview with students of various levels (and departments)
- 14.45 Tour through faculty / study course
- 15.45 Internal closing discussion with expert group
- 17.30 Closing discussion with programme manager(s)
- Ca. 18.00 End

Interview with deans

- Focuses
 - Development plan of the university
 - Place of degree programmes in context of university
 - Profile and development perspectives of the degree programmes
 - Learning and teaching content in the degree programmes
 - Personnel planning
 - Cooperation
 - Amenities
 - Communication and Coordination
 - The degree program in the faculty
 - Quality assurance

Interview with programme manager(s)

- Focuses
 - Education goals
 - Job market relevance
 - Curriculum
 - Course of studies
 - Teaching content and methods
 - Counselling and supervision of students
 - Examination organisation
 - Student success
 - Degree programme marketing

Interview with dean(s) and professors

- Focuses
 - Curriculum
 - Study course
 - Teaching content and methods
 - Counselling and supervision of students
 - Relevance of research for teaching
 - Continuing education for professors
 - Quality assurance

Interview with students

- Focuses
 - Degree programme
 - Study contents, course organisation and procedure
 - Exams
 - Counselling and supervision of students
 - Working conditions
 - Study abroad
 - Internships
 - Excursions
 - Quality assurance

Tour through faculty / study course

- Here, the expert group has the opportunity to ask questions, followers, and get details with members of department.

Closing discussion with dean(s)

- Here, no results will be conveyed, but rather a tendency. Problem areas, and positive as well as negative impressions will be discussed.

Following the Site Visit

- Report is written by the Accreditation Agency; in case of weak points, the university needs to correct them. The accreditation committee meets and decides on accreditation.

System Accreditation

- The whole institution is accredited; Aalen University has applied for it.
- Examination, of whether the internal quality assurance system of the university allows the relative structures and processes of teaching and learning can be controlled, in order for
 - The defined qualification goals to be reached
 - (high) quality stands of the study programmes can be guaranteed.

Results of a positive System Accreditation

- Removes the need of external accreditation for degree programmes that switch over between bachelor/master structures or are newly created
- Newly created degree programmes are “here by accredited” along with older degree programmes.

System Accreditation Requirements



- 1.1 In order to be eligible for SA a HEI must prove that for every 2500 students at least one study program has already been accredited. In addition, at least one “state regulated” program and one program in the area of teacher education must have successfully undergone the program accreditation if such programs are offered by the institution.
- 1.3 The assessment procedure consists of two site visits of a group of five experts (three panel members with expertise in HE management and QA, one student with experience in institutional governance and accreditation, one representative of the employment sector) and an in-depth evaluation of a sample of study programs.
- 1.4 During the first site visit the panel members talk to all stakeholders in the university and to the authors of the self-report in order to gain a proper understanding of the internal governance structure and steering mechanisms of the institution and to find out whether the information provided is sufficient. [...]
- 1.6 During the second site visit the expert panel critically analyzes the report and documentation provided by the HEI and reviews the material on the selected features of the study programs. [...] They draw up a draft report on the institution’s QA/QM system, which will then be handed over to the expert groups in charge of assessing the selected sample of study programs.
- 1.10 The accreditation decision is made on the basis of the panel report and the comments of the HEI. The decision can only be an unconditional “yes” or “no”, even recommendations for improvement are not permitted. However, the accreditation procedure can be suspended for a period of usually 12, maximally 24 months, if the institution needs more time to produce sufficient and satisfactory evidence in some area of assessment. [...]

From: [Künzel, 2009. Changes in Quality Assurance: the Case of Germany](#)

System Accreditation Criteria



Criterion 1: The HEI has defined and published an educational profile for its programs and the institution at large as part of its development strategy. It continually revises the educational goals of its programs.

Criterion 2: The HEI has a steering system in place which guarantees that the educational goals of its study programs include high academic standards, employability, citizenship and personal development. The steering system guarantees that the goals of the Bologna re-form in general and of the National Qualification Framework in particular are met, that all state requirements are fulfilled and that all stakeholders are involved in the reform process and in the enhancement of the quality of the institution's educational processes.

Criterion 3: The HEI applies a system of QA and quality enhancement which meets the ESG for Quality in Higher Education.

Criterion 4: The HEI has a reporting system in place which documents the structural and procedural characteristics of the educational programs as well as the processes, measures, results and effects of the QA/QM system.

Criterion 5: The competences, responsibilities and decision making processes in the QA/QM system for teaching and learning are clearly defined and published.

Criterion 6: At least once a year the HEI informs its commissions for teaching and learning as well as the general public and the owner of the HEI about measures and results of quality assurance and quality enhancement in teaching and learning.

Thank you for your attention.