

CRITERIA FOR INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION BY AQAS (DECISION OF THE ACCREDITATION COMMISSION ON 29.08.2016)

AQAS is an independent organisation that has been accredited by the German Accreditation Council (GAC) since 2001. It is therefore a notified body for the accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and programmes in Germany. AQAS is also a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) which confirms that our procedures comply with a common set of principles for quality assurance in Europe.

While the criteria and procedure for accreditation in Germany are defined by GAC, the agency uses the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG), on which all Bologna countries agreed, as a basis for accreditation procedures abroad. The ESG are a set of standards and guidelines for internal as well as for external quality assurance in Higher Education. The core idea of an institutional accreditation by AQAS is to check if the quality assurance system of a university/faculty/college is in line with the ESG (version 2015). Since the demands of the ESG are formulated in general terms, AQAS developed its own criteria and indicators on the basis of the ESG which allow the panel of experts to focus on more concrete aspects of the teaching and learning processes. These core processes which exist to secure a high level of the learning and teaching process are the subject of the assessment. AQAS follows the main idea that an external assessment should focus on the sufficiency of mechanisms that an institution has chosen to secure the quality of its programmes. Of course, individual targets set by the institution in the self-evaluation report (SER) are also drawn into consideration. In the accreditation procedure, the experts assess whether the institution is able to achieve the defined targets.

The following questions are crucial for the assessment of the institution:

- Which policies exist and are in use?
- Which processes are implemented?
- Who is responsible?
- Who is involved and informed about the results?
- In which document are these processes laid down?

In cases where the panel of experts comes to a positive evaluation at the end of an accreditation procedure, the decision of the Accreditation Commission of AQAS will confirm that the teaching and learning processes at an institution are aligned with the ESG.

1. Policy and Procedures for Quality Assurance

Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders. [ESG, 1.1]

2. Design and approval of programmes

Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. [ESG, 1.2]

3. On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes

Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned. [ESG, 1.9]

4. Learning, Teaching and Assessment of Students

Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach. [ESG, 1.3]

5. Student Admission, Progression, Recognition, and Certification

Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student "life cycle", e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification. [ESG, 1.4]

6. Teaching Staff

Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their academic staff. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff. [ESG, 1.5]

7. Learning Resources and Student Support

Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided. [ESG, 1.6]

8. Information

Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities. [ESG, 1.7]

Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible. [ESG, 1.8]