

Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany

Accreditation Council

**Activity Report
2011**

Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany

Accreditation Council

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Activity Report 2011

Report Period: January to December 2011

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For reasons of readability, gender-neutral language is not used throughout the text. In accordance with the principles of equal treatment, corresponding terms always refer to women and men.

Preface

For the eighth time, the ministers of education from the member states participating in the Bologna Process met to discuss the current status of the reform and to agree on priorities for the upcoming years. At their joint Communiqué, they emphasised the special public interest in higher education and the realisation of the European Higher Education Area with due consideration of internal and external quality assurance.

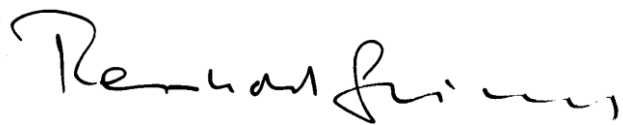
As a national actor and international partner, the Accreditation Council carries significant co-responsibility for the implementation of the reforms in Germany. The demand for greatest possible transparency is a continuous and indisputable emphasis of its activity. The Accreditation Council has underlined this in a number of resolutions affecting the comprehensibility of the procedure, its basis, and its results. The Council has supported e.g. clear separation between the awarding of its quality seal and other seals, full publication of reports for all accreditation procedures, and has also taken measures for reporting on the introduction of system accreditation. In the sum of its decisions, the Accreditation Council has thereby strengthened cooperation beyond national borders, a requirement for transparency of external quality assurance.

The Accreditation Council has additionally fulfilled its further assigned tasks. These include, in particular, the reaccreditation of accreditation agencies, the further development of existing guidelines for the accreditation of study programmes, and the random sample assess-

ment of a total of 22 accreditation procedures carried out by the agencies last year.

In retrospect, it can be established for the year 2011 that the Accreditation Council was able to successfully perform the tasks in its responsibility, also with regard to international impulses. Whether this positive assessment will withstand an external, critical assessment will not lastly be decided by the results of the evaluation of the Foundation for which the Accreditation Council is currently preparing.

On behalf of its members, I would like to thank the partners of the Accreditation Council. I look forward to continued good work together.



Bonn, June 2012 Prof. Dr. Reinhold R. Grimm

Overview

1st Quarter 2011

66th Meeting of the Accreditation Council on 16.02.2011 in Berlin

Certification of the agencies ASIIN and ZEvA for procedures for programme- and system accreditation

First positive decision for system accreditation

Random sample assessment of the agencies

Final workshop for EDULINK project Afriq'Units in Kampala

3rd Meeting of the AG "Internal quality assurance" on 21.02.2011 in Berlin

2nd Quarter 2011

67th Meeting of the Accreditation Council on 08.06.2011 in Berlin

11th Meeting of the Foundation Council on 02.03.2011 in Berlin

Certification of the agency ACQUIN for procedures for programme- and system accreditation

Resolution of the Accreditation Council on accreditation suitability of study programmes with the degree Master's/Diplom or Bachelor's/Diplom

Kick-off meeting for the Tempus project Qualycert in Tunis

Round-table meeting with the agencies on 11.05.2011 in Bonn

3rd Quarter 2011

68th Meeting of the Accreditation Council on 23.09.2011 in Frankfurt a.M.

Opening of the procedures for the accreditation of the agencies AQAS and FIBAA

Resolution of the Accreditation Council on awarding an own seal and third-party seals by the agencies

Briefing of the experts for agency accreditation procedures

Application with ENQA for the external evaluation procedure

4th Quarter 2011

69th Meeting of the Accreditation Council on 07.12.2011 in Berlin

Resolution of the Accreditation Council on special rules for concept accreditation

The managing director of the Accreditation Council is elected as ENQA President

Working group "Evaluation" prepares external evaluation

Random sample assessment of the agencies

Establishment of the business plan for the years 2012/2013

Round-table meeting with the agencies on 09.12.2011 in Berlin

1. System accreditation: a first review

As the first German higher education institution, the Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz received the seal of the Accreditation Council for its internal quality assurance system in learning and teaching in March of this year. With the University of Applied Sciences Münster, the Baden-Wuerttemberg Cooperative State University, and the FOM University of Applied Sciences for Economics and Management, three further higher education institutions followed that had successfully completed the system accreditation procedures. After an initial phase of preparation, the number of system accreditation procedures is now rising with increasing dynamics, and further decisions regarding the quality of internal quality assurance systems of higher education institutions will be made in the immediate future.

With greater experience and knowledge on the part of higher education institutions and also of the agencies and the Accreditation Council, the fundamental concept and practical structure of the procedure can be assessed in a qualified manner. In its supervisory function, the Accreditation Council plays a special role in this: At the time, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder (KMK) expressly asked the Council to actively support the process of introduction and to submit an evaluable report to the KMK by the year 2012. The Accreditation Council itself had also set the objective of evaluating the practicability of the criteria and rules of procedure, as well as their impact, based on an analysis of the first six procedures. The findings were to be utilised to modify and further develop the criteria and rules of procedure.

For this purpose, and as part of the certification of agencies for system accreditation in autumn 2008, the members of the Accreditation Council agreed to respectively accompany the first two system accreditation procedures of the agencies certified for these procedures. From among its members, the Accreditation Council appointed project officers who were to participate as observers in all significant procedural steps, e.g. the opening of the procedure, the two on-site visits, the decision-making meeting of the responsible commission, and possibly one of the programme random samples. The project officers summarise their observations in a report that gives information on the sequence of the procedure, the effectiveness of the individual procedural elements, the agencies' structuring of the procedure, the briefing of experts, and the quality of the reports all based on the relevant rules of the Accreditation Council.

The Accreditation Council will use the results of these reports and also the experiences made by the agencies, higher education institutions and experts involved to review the applicability, effectiveness and efficiency of its rules and criteria, and to recognise possible revision requirements at an early stage. Finally, this is to help achieve the central and overarching aim of system accreditation, namely a consistent strengthening of the higher education institutions' responsibility for quality.

As the first six system accreditation procedures will likely be completed in spring 2012, the presentation of first results of the analysis may be expected in autumn 2012.

2. Activity of the Accreditation Council in 2011: Tasks and results

2.1 Accreditation of agencies

The certification of accreditation agencies is one of the primary tasks of the Accreditation Council and was a large part of the Accreditation Council's work in 2011. The certification (accreditation or reaccreditation) is based on established criteria and rules of procedure also oriented on the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*. For a limited term of maximum five years, a successful accreditation authorises agencies to accredit Bachelor's- and Master's study programmes or internal quality assurance systems of higher education institutions and to award them the quality seal of the Accreditation Council. The certification is thereby also to be understood as a kind of quality control that ensures a high degree of comparability, transparency and reliability of the procedures carried out by the certified agencies, and which also presents an important requirement for the international recognition of the accreditation decisions. If the accreditation of an agency is tied to conditions, the Accreditation Council will assess fulfilment of the conditions to be demonstrated by the agency.

In the previous year, the Accreditation Council had opened the reaccreditation procedures for ACQUIN, ASIIN and ZEvA. The decisions to reaccredit all three agencies for programme- and system accreditation procedures were made by the Accreditation Council at its meetings on 16.02.2011 and on 08.06.2011. Currently, a total of ten agencies are certified to award the quality seal of the Accreditation

Council. Also during the report period, the fulfilment of conditions for two of the three accreditation procedures was assessed. The Accreditation Council established the timely fulfilment of three conditions for ASIIN and two conditions for ZEvA. An objection was made to a further condition and submitted to the independent Appeals Commission of the Foundation for consultation. At the commission's recommendation, the Accreditation Council rejected the complaint. The Accreditation Council extended the term for the fulfilment of the remaining conditions in both procedures. The procedure for the assessment of condition fulfilment by the ASIIN has not yet been completed. Currently, legal proceedings have been instituted in one reaccreditation procedure.

At its 67th meeting in June 2011, the Accreditation Council opened the reaccreditation procedures for AQAS and FIBAA. In this process, the Accreditation Council also referred to the respective progress reports on the activities of the agencies during the expired accreditation term, which had proven to be helpful in the procedures of the previous year. The decisions for the opened procedures for reaccreditation are planned for spring 2012.

The exact wording of the decisions for completed and opened procedures, the content of conditions, and the status of condition fulfilment can be viewed in the decision texts published on the website of the Accreditation Council. (www.akkreditierungsrat.de)

2.2 Assessment of accreditation procedures

In addition to the cyclical accreditation of agencies by the Accreditation Council, the regular assessment of the accreditations car-

ried out by the agencies serves continuous quality control in the German accreditation system. The Accreditation Council performs this task on the basis of a procedure that is transparent and comprehensible for the agencies and which provides for random sample and specific-purpose assessments of accreditation decisions. In addition, the Accreditation Council carries out observation audits in which it accompanies individual accreditation procedures. This gives the Accreditation Council direct insight into the procedural practices of the agencies and, from its external perspective, the Council can share its observations and findings with the agencies.

The random sample assessment normally comprises four programme accreditation procedures annually per agency; system accreditations will not be assessed by random sample until 2012. A specific-purpose assessment is undertaken when there are indications of deficient performance of a procedure and / or the decision of an accreditation agency represents a violation of the rules. The procedures are assessed on the basis of files. The head office of the Accreditation Council receives procedural documentation including the self-evaluation report of the higher education institution, information on the selection and appointment of expert groups, information on performing the on-site visit, the agency's assessment report, the statement of the higher education institution, and the accreditation decision of the agency. If defects in the procedure are discovered in the assessment, the Board of the Accreditation Council decides the further proceedings. The spectrum of possible decisions ranges from the instruction to change the procedural practice of an agency, to the obligation to change a concrete accreditation decision, to the imposing of a fine, or – in the case of long-term and grave violations of the criteria and

rules of procedure of the Accreditation Council – to revocation of the accreditation. To ensure sufficient information, the agency receives the opportunity to make a detailed statement regarding the assessment procedure.

During the report period, the Accreditation Council assessed 22 accreditation procedures selected on a random sample basis. For reasons of capacity, the head office had to reduce the number of procedures. One specific-purpose assessment procedure was carried out in addition. Many procedures could be completed without complaints. In some assessment procedures, the complaints led to the subsequent issuing of a condition or necessitated a new assessment of the study programme with consideration of individual criteria of the Accreditation Council. Only in one case did the Accreditation Council find itself forced to oblige the agency to revoke the accreditation for a study programme. The Accreditation Council only makes use of this measure in the case of gravely wrong decisions in order to prevent negative consequences for the students affected. In three cases, agencies appealed the decisions from the assessment procedures. After the intensive consultation of the three-member Appeals Commission of the Foundation of the Accreditation Council, these appeals were rejected.

The assessment procedures of the Accreditation Council essentially pursue two aims: In the case of gravely wrong decisions of an agency, they lead to a revision of the accreditation decision, thereby preventing negative consequences for the students involved; at the same time, they target avoidance of errors in future procedures and thereby a quality increase of the procedures as a whole. During the report period, problem areas were identified in the assessment of study programme accreditation – e.g. with regard to implementation of the Lis-

bon Recognition Convention on recognition of credits earned in a foreign country – also leading to a revision of the accreditation rules. Particularly these findings were included in the Accreditation Council's consultations regarding the further development of the assessment procedures: In 2012, individual criteria and rules of procedure are to be assessed in a larger number of procedures for the first time in a pilot phase. This is to place the assessment procedure findings regarding the practice of an agency on a broader basis and, as a result, to sustainably improve the procedural practice in decisive points. The trial of this procedure will be guided by the working group "Internal quality assurance" (see [Chapter 2.4](#)).

2.3 Resolutions of the Accreditation Council

In addition to the accreditation of the agencies ASIIN and ZEvA (see [Chapter 2.1](#)) and its resolution on the consistent publication of reports, also for system accreditation (see [Chapter 4.2](#)), the Accreditation Council adopted a number of further resolutions and revised existing resolutions during the report period:

► Awarding of own seal and third-party seals by the agencies

In accordance with its tasks, the Accreditation Council develops rules of procedure and criteria for the awarding of its quality seal and is responsible for their enforcement. In particular, the accreditation of the agencies serves to demonstrate that the rules of the Accreditation Council are correctly and consistently applied, and no deviations or even contradictory requirements are used as a basis. As a consequence of these principles, the Accreditation Council decided at its 68th meeting on

23.09.2011 that only the quality seal of the Accreditation Council may be awarded for the accreditation of study programmes and system accreditation. Awarding other seals in the same procedures or on the basis of the same assessment is not permitted. With this resolution, the Accreditation Council ensures the unrestricted application of the accreditation criteria and prevents a narrowing of the higher education institutions' freedom to structure through further guidelines. This resolution targets the result of a clear and expressly transparent separation between awarding the quality seal of the Accreditation Council and other seals. In addition, it promotes fair competition among the certified agencies, the securing of which is another task of the Council.

Pursuant to the letter of the Chairperson of the Accreditation Council of 11.10.2011 to the agencies, this resolution is to be applied for all procedures opened starting on 1st January 2012. Currently, legal proceedings regarding the legal admissibility of the resolution have been instituted.

► Special rules for concept accreditation

In its statement on the further development of the accreditation system of 14.01.2011, the Accreditation Council established that in procedures for first-time accreditation of new study programmes (concept accreditation), a valid assessment of academic feasibility, relevance for employability and functioning of quality management is only possible to a limited extent due to the lack of empirical data. As a consequence, the aim for restructuring programme accreditation was to develop a procedure that considers the conceptual content status of the study programme to be assessed and that also has a procedural structure that is suitable for the findings that may be anti-

pated.

At its 69th meeting on 07.12.2011, the Accreditation Council adopted special rules of procedure for concept accreditation that take the experiences of the agencies into consideration: In accordance with the character of study programmes for which there is a concept at the time of application but which are not yet offered, no empirical findings on academic feasibility and effectiveness of the internal quality assurance is to be presented or assessed. While discussions are carried out in every case with the management of the higher education institution, instructors, and student representatives of the higher education institution, an on-site visit is only carried out on the corresponding decision of the experts.

To not endanger the international recognition of the procedure, the special rules of procedure are also oriented on the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education* and also consider comparable approaches in other European countries.

► State-specific structural guidelines

The compilation of the common- and state-specific structural guidelines of the Länder into binding guidelines for accreditation is one of the major tasks of the Accreditation Council in regulating the procedural basis. Two years prior to this, the Council carried out a Länder survey that assessed the respective state-specific guidelines and then adopted a corresponding framework document that not only contains the relevant state-specific guidelines but also refers to contradictions between guidelines in the Higher Education Acts of the Länder and the Common Structural Guidelines of the Länder. The increase in new state-specific guidelines and thereby in the heterogeneity of the frame conditions prompted the

Accreditation Council to update this framework document. However, in this context, by resolution of 08.06.2011, the Accreditation Council established that study programmes that provide for the optional awarding of a Bachelor's- or Master's degree and a Diplom degree contradict the Common Structural Guidelines of the Länder and may therefore not be accredited. In this context, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder will also need to consult regarding the state-specific guidelines based on the survey of the Accreditation Council.

All resolutions of the Accreditation Council are published at: www.akkreditierungsrat.de

Annex 2.3.1 *Awarding of own seals and third-party seals by the agencies (23.09.2011)*

Annex 2.3.2 *Special rules for concept accreditation (07.12.2011)*

Annex 2.3.3 *Accreditation-suitability of study programmes with the degrees Master's/Diplom or Bachelor's/Diplom (08.06.2011)*

2.4 Internal quality assurance

The central concern of the internal quality assurance of the Foundation is the continuous assessment and enhancement of all internal processes. Likewise, the systematic internal quality assurance allows the Accreditation Council concrete and comprehensive feedback on the fulfilment of its statutory tasks. The Accreditation Council fulfils this inherent task on the basis of its comprehensive quality assurance system. In addition to the quality requirements for the individual processes, this includes corresponding quality measures and feedback mechanisms that fully comply with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality As-*

urance in the *European Higher Education Area* (ESG) and thereby simultaneously secure the international recognition of the Foundation's work.

An integral element of the quality assurance system is a permanent working group that ensures the long-term and consistent implementation of the defined measures. As an independent committee, the working group "Quality Assurance" reports annually to the Accreditation Council and prepares recommendations for further developing its work methods and procedures. Every year, the working group "Quality Assurance" examines the quality of the performance generating processes (accreditation of agencies, definition of the criteria and rules of procedure, and assessment of the work of the agencies), as well as the support processes (strategic planning, finance planning, personnel recruiting and qualification, and committee support). During the report period, it placed particular focus on the efficiency, consistency and transparency of procedures for the accreditation of agencies and of the processes tied to the resolutions of the Accreditation Council. With regard to the assessment of the agencies' work, it additionally presented a concept for a new assessment procedure that is to allow a more intensive analysis of the agencies' procedures following the random sample assessment in system accreditation (see [Chapter 2.4](#)).

In addition, the head office of the Foundation prepared a comprehensive assessment of possible differences between the procedural- and decision-making practices of the agencies. For this purpose, all decisions, guidelines and procedure manuals for programme accreditation published by the agencies were evaluated. The results of this analysis were discussed with the agencies and considered in the revision of the agencies' own materials.

The working group "Quality Assurance" will present its third quality report to the Accreditation Council in the first half of 2012. This report will provide information on the implementation of the measures defined in the quality policy.

2.5 Working groups of the Accreditation Council

As a full member of the *European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education* (ENQA), the Accreditation Council is obliged to demonstrate compliance with the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education* (ESG) and to undergo external evaluations at regular intervals for this purpose (see [Chapter 2.7](#)). The basis of this external quality assurance procedure is a comprehensive self-evaluation of the Foundation.

To prepare the corresponding self-evaluation report, the Accreditation Council appointed a six-member, internal working group at its 69th meeting on 07.12.2011 involving higher education institutions, Länder, students, practitioners of professions, and international members with respectively one representative each. The managing director of the Foundation is also a member of the working group, which obtains statements from the Foundation Council, the agencies, and further interest groups for preparation of the self-evaluation report.

The adoption of the self-evaluation report by the Accreditation Council is planned for the end of 2012.

2.6 Events of the Accreditation Council

As with the programme- and system accreditation procedures, the certification of agencies is based on an assessment by independent, ex-

ternal experts. This year, the Accreditation Council simultaneously opened two procedures for the reaccreditation of agencies and appointed a respectively five-member expert group at the opening of the procedure at its 67th meeting on 08.06.2011 to ensure a comprehensive assessment of both agencies. As preparation for the procedures, the Council carried out a training event for all participating experts. Through the intensive discussion of the procedure contents and its sequence, a common understanding of the criteria and assessment rules of the Accreditation Council, the quality requirements for preparation of reports, and the own role as expert was achieved in the course of the full-day seminar. The introduction to the German accreditation system was particularly intended for the international representatives involved, which the Accreditation Council appoints for every expert group. Special emphasis was also placed on the *European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)*. As one of the fundamental documents for the structuring of accreditation in Germany, it is inherent in the rules of procedure and criteria of the Accreditation Council. In addition, all agencies certified by the Accreditation Council have also applied for membership in the *European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)* and to be registered in the *European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR)*. In close coordination with the two European organisations, the Accreditation Council carries out the assessments required for their decisions.

The limited financial resources did not allow the Accreditation Council to hold its regular expert meeting during the report period, which the Accreditation Council uses annually for exchange with external experts.

2.7 Future tasks: an outlook

External evaluation of the Foundation: With the establishment of the working group for self-evaluation of the Foundation, the Accreditation Council created the basis for preparing its external evaluation. It thereby fulfils its statutory obligation to regularly carry out such evaluations. In addition, it intends to use this evaluation as a basis to apply for the confirmation of full membership with the *European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)*. As an internationally recognised institution for external quality assurance, the Accreditation Council must demonstrate here that it complies with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*. However, at the same time, the external evaluation is also an opportunity for critical self-reflection of the Foundation, the results of which are also assessed by an independent expert group. The Accreditation Council will use the findings tied to the internal and external evaluation to improve its work approach and processes.

By resolution of the Accreditation Council of 23.09.2011, the Chairperson has already applied for the evaluation procedure with the ENQA Board.

Impact analysis: The introduction of accreditation in Germany was tied to a number of highly varying objectives. Among other things, these included the demand to ensure the quality of the individual study programme, to shorten reaction times in the development of new study programmes, to transfer responsibility for quality to the higher education institutions and, by doing so, to strengthen quality awareness at the higher education institutions, to finely balance variety and comparability of study offers, and to ensure the reciprocal, in-

ternational recognition of degrees and the accompanying need to guarantee highest possible transparency. However, the question of to what extent a direct impact correlation exists between the selected measures and the quality of the accredited study programmes or quality assurance systems of higher education institutions has, to date, been demonstrated primarily on the basis of assumed but not empirically proven developments. In this context, the members of the Accreditation Council agreed to commission an impact analysis at its 66th meeting with the aim of illuminating the correlation between the criteria and procedural rules of the Accreditation Council and quality of teaching and learning. This more than challenging undertaking is to be realised as part of a research project. The project design and concrete questions are to be established first.

Further development of the accreditation system: The recent questions regarding the general and legal structure of the accreditation system have emphatically influenced the debate regarding its further development. Already in the previous year, the Accreditation Council itself took this as an occasion to concretely examine the needed developments for accreditation and expressed this in a statement. The adopted revisions in system- but also programme accreditation (see Chapter 2.3), and the Council's active participation in the relevant discussions emphasise the significance it attaches to the further development. With interest, the Council awaits further impulses from the statement of the Science Council and the decision of the Federal Constitutional Court regarding this matter. Then the stabilisation of the legal basis and further development with regard to the effective and efficient structuring of accreditation and its instruments will need to be discussed.

3. International cooperation

Pursuant to § 3 para. 2 no. 2 of the Accreditation Foundation Law, promoting international cooperation in the field of accreditation is one of the central tasks of the Accreditation Council. Consistently contributing to the development of comparable criteria, methods and standards of quality assurance, improving transparency of study offers and promoting reciprocal understanding of the various systems of quality assurance is achieved by the Accreditation Council as an active member of the international network and through its participation in common projects. Structurally, the international networking is also ensured through the permanent representation of several international experts in the Accreditation Council, as well as the certification of international agencies in Germany. Not as an end in itself but with the purpose of supporting reciprocal recognition of qualifications and thereby student mobility, the Council contributes to a further progression of the realisation of the European Higher Education Area and of cooperation with non-European partners.

In the international context, the Accreditation Council's cooperation is shown in the following overview of example activities of the Council and its members:

ENQA: As a full member of the *European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education* (ENQA), the Accreditation Council also participates in the working groups and projects of the organisation. The head office of the Foundation took part in the fifth meeting of the *Internal Quality Assurance Forum* on 16./17.06.2011 in Helsinki. The annual discus-

sion forum serves regular exchange on questions and methods of internal quality assurance in the various European agencies. The head office also took part in the fourth *Audit Spring Seminar* on 06./07.06.2011 in Oslo, a networking meeting of international agencies for exchange on methods of institutional evaluation and accreditation.

The *European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education* (ENQA) confirmed the managing director of the Accreditation Council, Dr. Achim Hopbach, in his office as president at its general assembly on 06.10.2011 in Bucharest. In this function, he will be able to make an important contribution to further intensification of relations on the national and European level.

ECA: The development of common standards for reciprocal recognition of accreditation decisions and thereby also of qualifications is one of the core aims of the *European Consortium for Accreditation* (ECA). Its focus is also placed on the accreditation of joint programmes and the development of the European database *Qrossroads* (www.qrossroads.eu), which already now contains extensive information on the accreditation systems, quality assurance institutions and accredited study programmes of many countries represented in the ECA (see [Chapter 4.2](#)).

With regard to consultants during the report period, the Accreditation Council was represented in the three working groups of ECA for the subjects *Mutual Recognition and Joint Programmes*, *Qrossroads and Information Strategies* and *Mutual Learning and Best Practices*.

Tempus project in Tunisia: The Accreditation Council takes part in the international Tempus project “QualityCert” as an expert for external quality assurance for establishment of a system of quality assurance and certification in the Tunisian higher education area. Together with the Dresden University of Technology, seven universities from France, Italy, Czech Republic and Tunisia, along with further project partners, the Accreditation Council will guide the development of quality standards for learning and teaching, and train experts for quality assurance in the higher education area. Under the direction of the head office of the Accreditation Council, two studies on the current status of quality assurance in the EU countries participating in the project and in Tunisia were written during the report period and illuminate initiatives particularly in the areas of engineering and applied linguistics.

EDULINK project in East Africa: The Accreditation Council participates as partner in the EDULINK project *Afriq’Units* (“Sustainable Quality Culture in East African Institutions through Centralised Units”), which supports the establishment of central quality assurance institutions at three higher education institutions in Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya. The Accreditation Council contributed its expertise to the development of internal and external quality assurance mechanisms from the national and, in particular, European perspective, in various workshops, seminars and training courses. The project was successfully completed in April 2011. From the results, e.g. guidelines for the development of a sustainable quality culture in the higher education institutions of East Africa were developed.

International networking: The reciprocal understanding of the quality assurance systems in the international context is not only promoted by the mentioned networks, but also through the participation of members of the Accreditation Council in commissions, experts groups and quality assurance institutions in foreign countries, or also through informal contacts as part of conferences and workshops. These international contacts and partnerships allow the Accreditation Council to contribute its expertise internationally and to learn from foreign partners at the same time. For example, the Chairperson of the Accreditation Council is also Deputy Chairperson of the university council at the University of Vienna. The managing director of the Accreditation Council is president of ENQA, member of *Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications* (HKCAAVQ) and member of the advisory board of the ERASMUS-MUNDUS programmes. Both contribute their international expertise as members of expert groups and international expert groups.

At the European level, Germany is represented in the BFUG working group qualification framework through the managing director of the Accreditation Council who also functions as *National Correspondent* for qualification frameworks.

Last year, the head office of the Accreditation Council received a foreign delegation from China (25.10.2011) and was also invited as part of the *International Symposium on Quality Assurance and International Standards of Engineering Education* in Japan to report on accreditation of engineering study programmes in Germany and the development of quality as-

surance in the European higher education area.¹

The members of the Accreditation Council are regularly informed of new developments in accreditation and quality assurance in the international context at the meetings of the Council.

4. Information and communication

4.1 Presentation, information and consultation

The Accreditation Council views it as a central element of its work to regularly and comprehensively inform the public of the activity of the Foundation, its decisions and the further development of the accreditation system in Germany. For this purpose, it primarily employs electronic media, along with presentations at conferences, events and in various national and international working groups.

In addition to the publication of press releases via the Informationsdienst Wissenschaft (idw), the interested public is comprehensively informed of the accreditation system, criteria and procedures for the accreditation of study programmes, accreditation agencies and system accreditation, as well as decisions of the Accreditation Council and the agencies accredited by the Accreditation Council on the regularly updated website of the Accreditation

¹ Further events included (selection): ENQA Training of Experts on 10.-11.02.2011 in Helsinki, NQF Network Meeting on 25.03.2011 in Strasbourg, Nationale Bologna-AG on 08.04.2011 in Berlin, QualyCert-Workshops on 20.-22.04.2011 in Tunis and on 24.-28.09.2011 in Montpellier, ECA Workshop on 20./21.06.2011 in Barcelona, ENQA-Workshop Quality Assurance and Lifelong Learning on 16./17.05.2011 in Bonn, DIES-Conference on 22.09.2011 in Bonn.

Council (www.akkreditierungsrat.de). All important documents can be accessed in German and English on the barrier-free website of the Accreditation Council. The Activity Report, which annually provides information on the activities of the Accreditation Council within the report period, is also published as a PDF file and is available in German and English. For the first time, a newsletter has also been initiated that informs of developments in German and international quality assurance at regular intervals.

With accreditation procedures, the Accreditation Council meets its high demand for transparency: On completion of a procedure for the accreditation of accreditation agencies, the decision of the Accreditation Council and also the application for accreditation, the report and possibly the statement of the agency are published on the website. Also for study programme accreditation, the accreditation decision and the names of the experts involved are published. After a trial phase for programme accreditation, the Accreditation Council has now also established this practice for system accreditation. With this extensive publication practice, the Accreditation Council not only complies with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG) and thereby the common practice in Europe, but also improves the comprehensibility of the procedures and thereby the transparency of the accreditation system.

In addition to providing information, the Accreditation Council strives to further improve the knowledge level of the relevant interest groups and of the national and international public regarding the accreditation system. It fulfils this task by answering a large number of telephone- and written enquiries from students, higher education institutions, ministries, or-

ganisations and agencies regarding general matters tied to accreditation and the decisions of the Accreditation Council. The head office of the Accreditation Council is normally open Mondays to Fridays from 8:00 to 18:00. The Accreditation Council is also consulted as an advisor for questions relating to the study reform and, in particular, for the Bologna Process, extending far beyond its direct task area of accreditation. In this context, both formal and informal communication structures play an important role. Through its managing director, the Accreditation Council is e.g. represented in the national Bologna workgroup, in the programme advisory committee "Quality Management" of the Donors' Association for the Promotion of Sciences and Humanities in Germany, the working group for preparing the "German Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning", and in the ERASMUS Mundus advisory board of the BMBF. Exchange of information also takes place through active participation in symposiums, expert meetings and workshops in which members of the Accreditation Council and the staff of the head office contribute with presentations on questions relating to accreditation, quality assurance or the study reform in the broader sense. The numerous discussions held by the Chairperson of the *Foundation* with higher education institutions, faculty conferences, associations, professional organisations and church representatives have also proven to be fruitful and to support the objectives. Informal conversations of this kind are also suitable, among other things, for discussing different possibilities and modes of cooperation.

4.2 Publication of accreditation data

All study programmes awarded the quality seal of the Accreditation Council after completed

accreditation are published in the database of accredited study programmes. This database, which is linked with the Higher Education Compass of the German Rectors' Conference, can be accessed on the website of the Accreditation Council (www.akkreditierungsrat.de) and offers information on accreditation deadlines, possible conditions tied to the accreditation, the experts involved, and the assessment undertaken by the experts. The publication of the full report, which now applies to system accreditation and programme accreditation, significantly contributes to greater transparency.

In addition to the accreditation data related to the study programme, the Accreditation Council also provides statistics on accredited study programmes providing information on the number of currently accredited study programmes categorised according to the study duration, qualification designation, subject groups, type of higher education institution, federal states and standard periods of study (see Chapter 4.4). The accreditation data is entered and updated in the database by the certified agencies. The data sets are released after being formally audited by the head office of the Accreditation Council.

Together with the German Rectors' Conference, the Accreditation Council takes part in the European database project *Qrossroads*. With participation of the accreditation institutions of the countries Belgium (Flemish Region), Denmark, Germany, France (study programmes for engineering), Norway, Austria (without state universities), Poland, Spain, Switzerland, Slovenia, Hungary and the Netherlands, the database provides the user with comprehensive information at www.qrossroads.eu on accredited study programmes, as well as the higher education and accreditation systems of the participating countries.

4.3 Communication with the agencies

The partnership-based collaboration between the Accreditation Council and the agencies is a fundamental element of the German accreditation system. This comprises the involvement of the agencies in the work of the Foundation and the regular and reciprocal informing of all actors. The participation of the agency representatives in the various work groups of the Accreditation Council, round table meetings of the Accreditation Council with the agencies, and the membership of an agency representative in the Accreditation Council have proven to be effective instruments. The member appointed by the agencies with an advisory vote has the task of representing the agencies and, following the meetings of the Accreditation Council, to inform of the results of consultations. Before resolutions of fundamental significance for the accreditation system and accreditation procedures are adopted, the Accreditation Council consults the agencies. This allows an appropriate consideration of the experience of agencies from their accreditation practice without challenging the Accreditation Council's regulatory authority. The Accreditation Council informs the agencies of new or amended resolutions of the Accreditation Council, as well as of amendments to the state-specific or common structural guidelines of the Länder in a timely manner in circular letters or e-mails.

In 2011, the members of the Accreditation Council and the agencies met at two round table meetings on 11.05.2011 and 09.12.2011. Subjects of the meeting included the further development of programme accreditation and assessment procedures, the awarding of various seals in accreditation, the accreditation of teacher-training study programmes, and the

publication of reports from accreditation procedures. During the constructive discussion, a common understanding of the criteria of the Accreditation Council and the Common Structural Guidelines of the Länder was strengthened. On the invitation of the agencies, the managing director of the Foundation also took part in a further meeting of all agencies on 30.05.2011, which included a discussion regarding intensified cooperation in public relations.

The Accreditation Council's accompaniment of accreditation procedures (see **Chapter 2.2**) was a source of valuable knowledge both for the Accreditation Council and the agencies, and thereby led to better understanding of the various perspectives of the actors mentioned.

4.4 Statistical data

At the end of December, 2011, a total of 6,840 Bachelor's- and Master's study programmes offered by state or state-recognised higher education institutions in Germany carried the quality seal of the Accreditation Council.² Compared to the previous year, the number of accredited study programmes only slightly changed with approx. 50% of all offered Bachelor's- and Master's study programmes. As the statistics of the Accreditation Council are fed from the database of the accredited study programmes at the time of the enquiry, the number of 6,840 accredited study programmes does not indicate the total number of accreditation procedures carried out by the agencies.

² The figures stated here are based on the collected data in the database of the Accreditation Council. All accredited study programmes or study options are listed in this database provided they have been entered to the database by the accreditation agencies.

Of the 6,840 Bachelor's- and Master's study programmes accredited by December 2011, 78% were accredited with conditions, whereas in 61 cases, the accreditation was refused by the decision of the responsible accreditation commission. Compared to the figures of the previous year, the share of study programmes accredited with conditions has slightly risen. If a study programme is accredited with conditions, it has not fully met the quality requirements of the Accreditation Council in individual criteria. In these cases, the higher education institution demonstrates fulfilment of the conditions and thereby further develops its study programme in terms of quality improvement.

The current figures can be found on the website of the Accreditation Council at:

www.akkreditierungsrat.de

5. Resources

5.1 Finances

The Accreditation Council is financed pursuant to § 4 para. 1 of the Accreditation Foundation Law (ASG) by the 16 Länder. In addition, the Accreditation Council charges fees pursuant to § 4 ASG to cover its administrative expenses for fulfilment of the individual tasks. The Länder only grant funding to the extent that the administrative expenses of the Accreditation Council are not covered by fees. For the fiscal years 2008 to 2011, the Standing Conference of Finance Ministers set the annual appropriations of the Länder to the Accreditation Council at 330,000 EURO. Beyond this sum, fees up to 40,000 EURO remain with the Accreditation

Council; surplus income is to be paid to the Länder.

For the year 2011, the annual accounts of the Accreditation Council show income to the amount of 440,034.02 EURO and costs of total 425,032.61 EURO. After payment of surplus fees to the Länder, a negative balance of 4,025.19 EURO remains.

The business plan presented for the years 2012 and 2013, which considered the increased need for staff and materials due to the greater number of agencies and the introduction of system accreditation, along with additional funds for the area of public relations, was rejected. Instead, by decision of the Standing Conference of Finance Ministers (FMK), the income from fees will remain to the full amount with the Foundation with reference to a stronger incentive effect for achieving income.

5.2 Human-, spatial- and material resources

The staffing of the head office of the Accreditation Council comprises a managing director (100%), three consultants (2.5 full-time equivalents) and a secretary (50%); from external funds and as a compensatory measure for the ENQA presidency of the managing director, a temporary position has been established from special funds; the staff members are all higher education graduates. With one exception, the employment contracts are permanent; remuneration is made pursuant to the wage regulations of the framework collective agreement for the federal states (TV-L).

With the head office on Adenauerallee 73 in Bonn, the Accreditation Council has four leased offices with a total area of approx. 120 sq m.

The EDP equipment of the currently six workplaces comprises, respectively, one Pentium III or Pentium IV computer or higher, a flat screen monitor, a telephone and Internet connection.

Annexes

- Annex 0.1 Members of the bodies and committees
- Annex 0.2 Meeting dates
- Annex 2.3.1 Awarding of own seals and third-party seals by the agencies
- Annex 2.3.2 Special rules for concept accreditation
- Annex 2.3.3 Accreditation-suitability of study programmes with the degree Master's/Diplom or Bachelor's/Diplom

Members of the bodies and committees

► Members of the Accreditation Council

Chairperson

Professor Dr. Reinhold R. **Grimm**

Vice-chairperson

State secretary Professor Dr. Thomas **Deufel**

Representatives of higher education institutions

Professor Dr. Stefan **Bartels**, Lübeck University of Applied Sciences

Professor Dr. Reinhold R. **Grimm**, Friedrich-Schiller-University of Jena

Professor Dr. Ute of **Lojewski**, Münster University of Applied Sciences

Professor Dr. Reinhard **Zintl**, Otto-Friedrich-University of Bamberg

Representatives of the Länder

State secretary Professor Dr. Thomas **Deufel**, The Thuringian Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

State secretary Dr. Michael **Ebling**, Rhineland-Palatinate Ministry of Science, Further Education, Research and Culture

State secretary Dr. Josef **Lange**, Ministry for Science and Culture of Lower Saxony (starting 09/2011, successor for Mr. Tappeser)

Ministry head of department Dr. Adalbert **Weiß**, The Bavarian State Ministry of Sciences, Research and the Arts (starting 06/2011, successor for Mr. Rothenpieler)

Ministry head of department Dr. Wilhelm **Rothenpieler**, The Bavarian State Ministry of Sciences, Research and the Arts (until 06/2011)

Ministry head of department Klaus **Tappeser**, The Ministry for Science, Research and Art of Baden-Wuerttemberg (until 09/2011)

Representatives of professional practice

Ernst **Baumann**, former member of the executive board of BMW AG

Petra **Gerstenkorn**, member of the federal executive board of ver.di

Dr. Regina **Görner**, IG Metal chairperson

Principal Günter **Hefner**, Hessian Ministry of the Interior and Sports (starting 06/2011, successor for Mr. Vollmer)

Thomas **Sattelberger**, member of the executive board of Deutsche Telekom AG

Principal Hans-Christian **Vollmer**, Lower Saxony Ministry of the Interior, Sports and Integration (until 06/2011)

Students

Julian Hiller, University of Hannover (starting 06/2011, successor for Mr. Proske)

Dominique **Last**, Dresden University of Technology (starting 06/2011, successor for Mr. Maikämper)

Moritz **Maikämper**, Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus (until 06/2011)

Tobias **Proske**, Hochschule Wismar, University of Applied Sciences Technology, Business and Design (until 06/2011)

International representatives

Dr. Sijbolt **Noorda**, President of the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (university association – VSNU)

Professor Dr. Andrea **Schenker-Wicki**, University of Zurich

Representatives of the agencies (with advisory vote)

Professor Dr. Holger **Burckhart**, University of Siegen (starting 02/2011, successor for Mr. Zechlin)

Professor Dr. Lothar **Zechlin**, University of Duisburg-Essen (until 02/2011)

► Members of the Foundation Council***Chairperson***

State secretary Dr. Cordelia Andreßen (starting 03/2011)

Vice-chairperson

Professor Dr. Wilfried Müller (until 12/2011)

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Representatives of the Länder

State secretary Dr. Cordelia **Andreßen**, Schleswig-Holstein Ministry of Science, Economic Affairs and Transport

State secretary Helmut **Dockter**, North Rhine-Westphalia Ministry for Innovation, Science and Research (starting 12/2011, successor for Mr. Othmer)

State secretary Martin **Gorholt**, Brandenburg Ministry for Science, Research and Culture

State secretary Ingmar **Jung**, Hessian State Ministry for Science and Art (starting 11/2011, successor for Mr. Michalik)

State secretary Udo **Michalik**, Ministry of Education, Science and Culture Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (until 11/2011)

State secretary Dr. Knut **Nevermann**, Berlin Senate Administration for Education, Science and Research

State Councillor Bernd **Reinert**, Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, Ministry of Science and Research (until 05/2011)

State Councillor Carl **Othmer**, Senate for Education and Science Bremen (until 12/2011)

State secretary Marco **Tullner**, Ministry of Science and Economic Affairs of the state Saxony-Anhalt (starting 05/2011, successor for Mr. Reinert)

Representatives of the higher education institutions

Professor Dr. Ursula **Gather**, Rector of the Technical University of Dortmund (starting 12/2011)

Dr. **Kathöfer**, General secretary of the German Rectors' Conference

Professor Dr. Dieter **Lenzen**, President of the Freie Universität Berlin

Professor Dr. Wilfried **Müller**, Rector of the University of Bremen (until 12/2011)

Professor Dr. Micha **Teuscher**, Rector of the University of Neubrandenburg

Professor Dr. Margret **Wintermantel**, President of the German Rectors' Conference

► Members of the board***Chairperson***

Professor Dr. Reinhold R. **Grimm**

Members

State secretary Professor Dr. Thomas **Deufel**, The Thuringian Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Professor Dr. Reinhold R. **Grimm**, Friedrich-Schiller-University of Jena

Dr. Achim **Hopbach**, Managing director of the Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany

► Members of the further committees***Appeals Commission***

Professor Dr. Dietmar of **Hoyningen-Hüne**

Julian **Hiller**, Leibniz University of Hannover (starting 09/2011, successor for Mr. Proske)

Tobias **Proske**, University of Wismar (until 06/2011)

Professor Dr. Reinhard **Zintl**, Otto-Friedrich-University of Bamberg

Working Group Quality Assurance

Professor Dr. Reinhold R. **Grimm**, Friedrich-Schiller-University of Jena

Dr. Regina **Görner**, IG Metall Executive Board

Dominique **Last**, Dresden University of Technology (starting 09/2011, successor for Mr. Maikämper)

Moritz **Maikämper**, The Brandenburg Technical University of Cottbus (until 06/2011)

Meetings

Meetings of the Accreditation Council 2011

66th Meeting on 16 February 2011 in Berlin

67th Meeting on 08 June 2011 in Berlin

68th Meeting on 23 September 2011 in Frankfurt a.M.

69th Meeting on 07 December 2011 in Berlin

Meetings of the Foundation Council 2011

11th Meeting on 02 March 2011 in Berlin

Awarding of own seals and third-party seals by the agencies

(Accreditation Council resolution of 23.09.2011)

In procedures for the accreditation of study programmes and system accreditation, exclusively the quality seal of the Accreditation Council is awarded. The awarding of other seals in the same procedures or on the basis of the same assessment is not permitted.

Special rules for concept accreditation

(Resolution of the Accreditation Council on Rules for the Accreditation of Study Programmes and for System Accreditation of 08.12.2009 in the version 07.12.2011)

If a study programme is accredited for which a concept has been presented on application and which is not yet offered then rules 1.1 to 1.5 are to be applied with the following deviations:

1.6.1 An on-site visit pursuant to Clause 1.1.5 only takes place on a corresponding decision of the experts. However, in every case, the experts carry out separate discussions with the management of the higher education institution, with instructors, and with student representatives of the higher education institution.

1.6.2 In accordance with the character of the concept accreditation and with regard to the criteria 2.4 and 2.9, no empirical findings on academic feasibility and effectiveness of the internal quality assurance are to be presented or assessed.

Accreditation-suitability of study programmes with the degree Master's/Diplom or Bachelor's/Diplom

(Resolution of the Accreditation Council of 08.06.2011)

The Accreditation Council establishes: Study programmes that provide for the option of awarding a Bachelor's- or Master's degree and a Diplom degree contradict the Common Structural Guidelines of the Länder and are therefore unsuitable for accreditation. Accreditation is to be revoked from previously accredited study programmes that, after their accreditation, opened the option of awarding a Diplom degree.