

# “Three Stakeholders, One Objective (?) – The Roles of Higher Education Institutions, Agencies, and the Accreditation Council in System Accreditation”

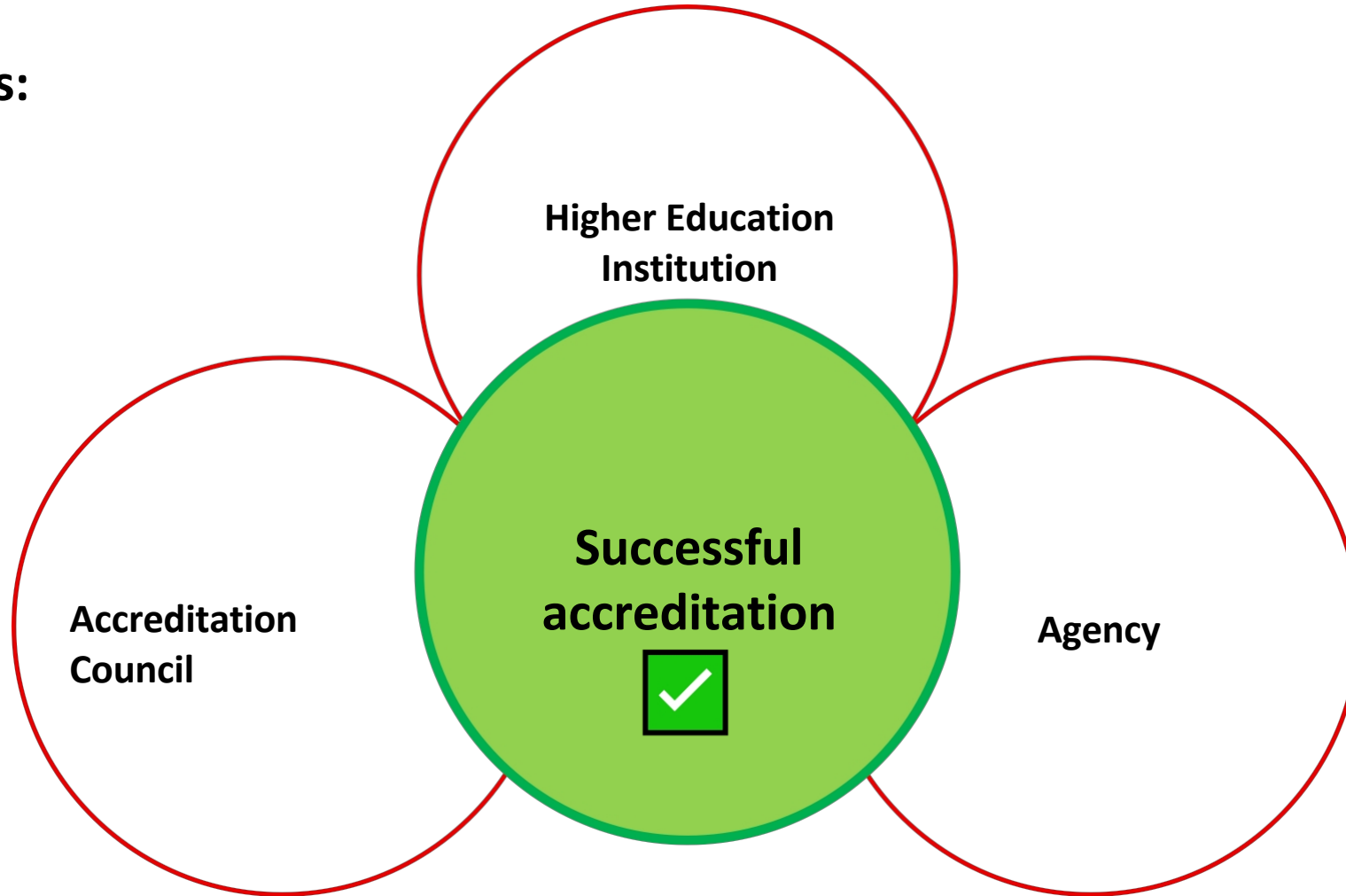
## Procedural Flow and Roles in System Accreditation

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# Procedural Flow and Roles in System Accreditation: *Three Key Players*

## Three Key Players:



ACQUIN



AQAS

evalag  
EVOLUTIONSBEREICH FÜR  
BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG



aaq  
schweizerische Agentur  
für akkreditierung  
und qualitätssicherung



AQ  
Agentur für  
Qualitätssicherung  
und Akkreditierung  
Austria

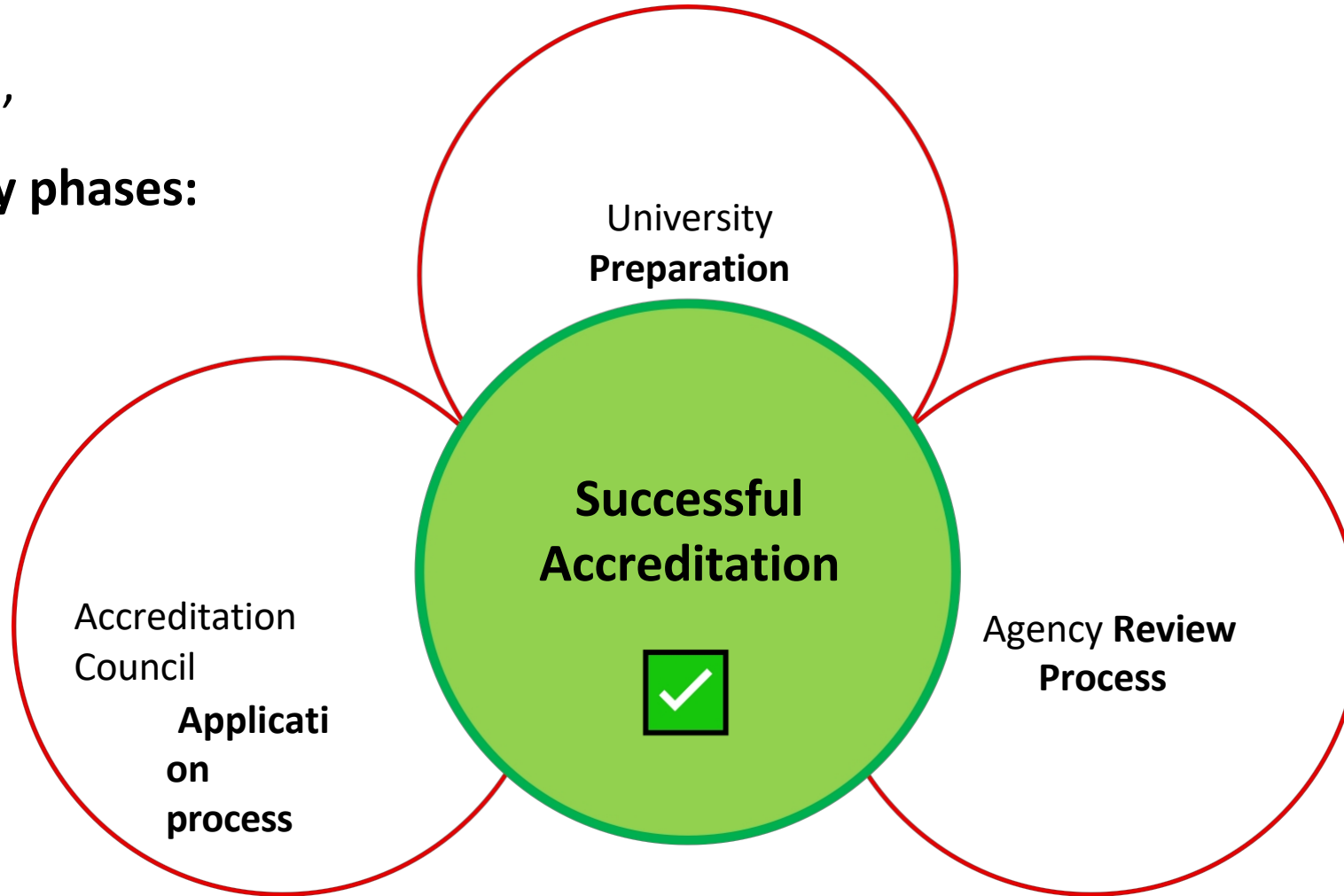
AKAST



# Procedural flow and roles in system accreditation: *Three key phases*

Three key players,

**Three key phases:**



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Austria

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MUSIQUE  
Plus Quality Enhancement  
IN

### Three key phases:

- Preparation (1)
  - Design or revision of the internal system, pilot procedure if necessary
- Assessment process (2)
  - Support from the agency, on-site visits including spot checks, quality improvement loop if necessary
- Application process (3)
  - Submission of application to the Accreditation Council, accreditation decision, fulfillment of requirements if necessary

### Preparation (initial accreditation) (1a):

- Analysis and decision-making phase
  - Intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation, pros and cons, objectives and expectations, Engagement with MRVO, ongoing consultation, communication
- Design of internal system
  - New development vs. building on existing structures, implications, understanding of quality
- Implementation / pilot program
  - Implementation, processes and structures, planning of pilot program
- Selection of an agency for the evaluation phase
  - Award process

Preparation (reaccreditation) (1b):

- Analysis phase
  - Alignment of current requirements, accompanying consultation
- Adaptation / sampling
  - Processes and structures, planning of spot checks if necessary
- Selection of an agency for the assessment phase
  - Award process

### Assessment procedure (2):

- Coordination and procedural planning with the agency (a)
  - Timeline, profile of the assessment team, specifics of the procedure
- Self-assessment report (b)
  - Preparation
- Site visits (c)
  - Two site visits
- Accreditation report (d)
  - Quality improvement cycle, if necessary

### Coordination and procedural planning with the agency (2a):

- Kickoff meetings and informational sessions
  - Coordination, Information, Communication
- Timeline
  - Process duration: up to 24 months in some cases
- Profile of the review panel
  - Profile of the institution, profile of the quality management system, expected input
- Specifics of the procedure
  - Background, pilot procedures/sampling, third-party support

Self-report (2b):

- Documentation of the internal quality management system for academic programs and teaching
  - Evidence of compliance with the relevant criteria
- Additional procedure-related documents
  - e.g., university profile, academic programs, quality criteria that go beyond the MRVO
- Check for completeness by the agency
  - Qualified feedback
- Documents to be submitted later, if necessary
  - Often after the first site visit, but also as part of a quality improvement cycle

### Site visits (2c):

- Two site visits
  - Information and in-depth assessment
  - Schedule: from a few weeks to one year
  - One of the two site visits can be conducted online
- Samples
  - Program-based sampling / Criteria-based sampling / Regulatory sampling
  - Involvement of third parties, if applicable
  - Additional expert reviewers, if necessary
- Inspection report
  - Pilot procedure or completion of all bachelor's and master's degree programs

## Accreditation report (2d):

- Quality improvement loop, if applicable
  - Opportunity to address formal and/or subject-specific criteria that have not been met or have been met only partially
- Final accreditation report
  - Submission of application to the Accreditation Council

=> *Move on to Phase 3: “Submitting the Application”*

Feel free to discuss the following questions with the person next to you:

- What information in the presentation so far surprised you?
- What is the central question the following presentation aims to answer?

## Process flow and roles in system accreditation: *Application process* – overview



Do you agree with the accreditation report?

The accreditation report should...

- be factually correct
  - **Are the processes correctly described? Does the accreditation report refer to the latest version of the documents, e.g., the evaluation regulations?**
- be complete, and
  - **Is any important information missing? Have all criteria of the MRVO been addressed, and in the appropriate ?**
- Make clear statements.
  - **Does the evaluation by the review panel in the text correspond to its proposed decision?**

Are the proposed decision and the evaluation consistent? The

following considerations may be helpful in assessing this:

- Key phrases, e.g.:
  - must... / should...
  - it must be ensured that... / it must be guaranteed that...
  - urgently... / absolutely...
  - there is no question that...
- Ambiguities
  - “The expert panel was unable to form a clear picture of xyz, but assumes that...”
  - “The review panel believes that...”
  - “The panel of experts doubts that ... is true, but is certain that ...”

In the event of inconsistencies or the need for additional information, the following options are available:

- Consultation between the agency and the institution to adjust the accreditation report—without attempting to influence the evaluation or the proposed decision!
- Use the statement to the Accreditation Council to
  - supplement information,
  - correct misrepresentations,
  - Update references to the document status,
  - communicate differing assessments, and
  - to highlight any changes that have been implemented in the meantime or measures planned for the future with regard to the proposed decision.

The application includes:

- Self-assessment report (including attachments and any subsequently submitted documents)
- Accreditation report
- Statement from the university to the AR (optional)

Target audience: Diverse readership.

Therefore, it is advisable to include:

- List of attachments
- Document status clearly indicated
  - Older versions distinguishable from revised regulations
  - Distinction between a statement to the agency and a statement to the AR
- See also FAQs 1.5 and 1.6 AR

The application is submitted via the Electronic Application and Information System (ELIAS).

The ELIAS team at the Accreditation Council's office can assist with any issues.

The ELIAS team offers online training on ELIAS – it is helpful for the institution to contact them early on.

The preliminary review by the ELIAS team includes:

- Accuracy of the data.
- Entering the brief profile and quality assessment for the database entry.
- Verification of the accreditation period.
- Are an accreditation report and self-documentation documents available (no check for completeness)?

## Evidence-based review of the application in ELIAS:

- Were all criteria presented and evaluated in the accreditation report?
- Were the random samples conducted properly?
- Was the evaluation conducted with the participation of all designated stakeholder groups? Was at least one on-site visit conducted?
- Does the proposed decision stem from the accreditation report?
- What does the statement say?
- If applicable: Can statements in the accreditation report be substantiated by the other application documents?

If necessary, the Secretariat will contact the institution to request additional information or clarifications regarding the application documents.

The Secretariat then prepares a proposed decision for the Accreditation Council. This is followed by a cross-check within the Secretariat.

The report is prepared by a member of the Accreditation Council with expertise in the relevant field.

The rapporteur reviews:

- Does the proposed decision of the Secretariat correspond to their own assessment?
- Have any facts been overlooked?

Possible outcomes of the report:

- Approval of the Secretariat's proposed decision.
- Formulation of a different proposed resolution.

Regardless of whether there is consensus or disagreement between the Secretariat and the report, the application will be considered individually at the meeting of the Accreditation Council.

The Accreditation Council makes its decision at its meeting, taking into account:

- of the application documents, in particular the accreditation report
- of the proposed resolution

Decisions are made by majority vote. The following outcomes are possible:

- Accreditation without conditions
- Accreditation with conditions
- Denial of accreditation (negative decision)
- Return of the accreditation application
- Postponement of the decision
- Approval of the Secretariat's proposed resolution
- Formulation of an alternative proposed resolution

If the Accreditation Council's decision differs from the proposed decisions of the agency and the review panel, the decision is provisional.

Initiation of the comment procedure following a preliminary decision:

- Four-week deadline from receipt of the preliminary decision.
- Possibility...
  - for clarification,
  - to file an objection,
  - to provide evidence of measures implemented in the meantime, and
  - submission of additional documents.

The Secretariat will draft a new resolution proposal. A new report will be submitted.

Referral to the Accreditation Council at the next meeting. The decision becomes effective; notification is sent via ELIAS.

Deadline for fulfilling the requirements: generally twelve months from receipt of the notification. Evidence from the institution that the measures related to the monitoring requirements have been implemented.

An explanatory cover letter is helpful.

New resolution proposal by the Secretariat. New report.

Renewed consideration at the meeting of the Accreditation Council:

- Confirmation of compliance with requirements.
- If necessary, extension of the deadline for compliance with requirements (usually six months).
- Withdrawal of accreditation.

Possibility to file a complaint regarding the conduct of the proceedings and to object to decisions. Possibility to file a lawsuit against the decision.

“The Accreditation Council was not involved.”

