

Statement by the Executive Board of the Accreditation Council on AI

“This would be the worst possible time to lose our ability to think critically. In an age of deepfakes and disinformation that can be tailored to each individual, the ability to distinguish truth from falsehood is becoming an indispensable life skill.” (Bill Gates, FAZ, September 2, 2026)

Artificial intelligence (AI) is having a profound impact on our social and private lives. Even as they begin their studies, young people are already quite accustomed to the practical application of AI. They expect universities to be well-prepared for this. The demands of the job market are also shifting rapidly from traditional skills to hybrid forms that incorporate AI.

It is impossible to predict the extent to which—and within what limits—AI will transform established processes. This also affects the higher education system directly and at an enormous pace, and, in a specific way, the quality development of higher education. The Accreditation Council is involved in this process as part of its responsibilities. Against this backdrop, the Executive Board of the Accreditation Council reaffirms the following guiding principles for its work.

Higher education prepares students for scholarly work and for appropriate employment in the labor market. These two objectives go hand in hand and are framed by the personal development of the students. AI has an impact on all of these objectives.

However, the fundamental objectives of every higher education program remain unchanged. Rather, we observe that they are once again coming into focus and gaining in significance.

The ability to form critical, independent judgments is indispensable as a central skill for shaping the future.

The ability to deal constructively and confidently with the possibilities of AI—including an understanding of its limitations and risks—is a fundamental prerequisite for employability—perhaps in every academic field without exception.

Actively and critically engaging with AI as a factor influencing one’s own personal development and the social dimension is becoming urgent.

Higher education institutions must confront the rapid development of AI and incorporate it into their academic programs in a timely, creative, and responsible manner. The accreditation system must support them in this effort and appropriately accompany these changes.

In July 2026, the German Science Council published a widely acclaimed report on intellectual sovereignty, in which it addressed the use of generative AI in higher education¹. The report recommends targeted training for faculty and students². We wholeheartedly welcome this proposal. It is up to those responsible for the degree programs to decide how they wish to implement this objective. The quality assurance system of German universities is prepared and designed to identify and address the latest developments in science and society and to implement them appropriately within degree programs. Faculty members, external peers, and students—with the participation of the quality assurance agencies—form the forum for determining and evaluating the appropriate implementation of AI as a methodological tool and a subject for reflection.

The assurance and development of quality in academic studies and teaching are guaranteed by a wide range of initiatives and procedures at the universities themselves, as well as by quality processes of other stakeholders built upon them. Here, the impact of AI and AI-based work is expected to bring about significant and very rapid changes in all areas of teaching and learning processes.

The Executive Board of the Accreditation Council views AI-related developments as a major opportunity for higher education institutions to adapt to these challenges in a highly conscious and flexible manner. Of course, the pace of the current upheaval does not correspond to the routine 8-year cycle of (program) reaccreditation.

This timeframe does not imply a “freeze” on currently approved structures, content, or methods. This must be emphasized now. By awarding the Accreditation Council’s seal to degree programs, internal university quality management systems, and alternative procedures, the high expectation that universities will be able to embrace the innovative possibilities of AI with an open mind, that they will dynamically update the competencies to be taught in their degree programs, that they will actively test suitable new teaching methods, and that they will take the various aspects of AI into account when assessing learning progress.

¹ German Science Council (2026): Intellectual Sovereignty: Recommendations for Higher Education in the Age of Generative AI; Cologne. <https://doi.org/10.57674/1evx-t906>

² Reference is also made to the MIT AI Report, August 2026: <https://aiandeducation.mit.edu/report/> (September 15, 2026)

With their entire staff—in teaching, research, and administration—universities are the best places for a critical, informed engagement with and further development of AI.

Guidance for all appropriate changes is provided by the model and state regulations, as well as the Qualifications Framework for German Higher Education Degrees ³(Higher Education Qualifications Framework/HQR) incorporated into them.

The Executive Board of the Accreditation Council Foundation emphasizes the considerable leeway that exists for reporting significant changes in program accreditation, which also applies to disruptive upheavals caused by AI. Thus, changes to the content of a degree program need only be reported if the accredited overall framework undergoes structural changes, whereas, for example, content updates in modules or adjustments to the examination concept are not subject to mandatory reporting. We also continue to recommend reporting such changes retrospectively and refer to FAQ 18 on significant changes, as adopted by the Accreditation Council, particularly FAQs 18.06 and 18.09.⁴

For institutions with system accreditations and alternative procedures, their own provisions apply.

We expressly encourage all responsible colleagues to actively take into account the new challenges and opportunities presented by AI and, not least, to empower students to use it critically, independently, and confidently.



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³ Qualifications Framework for German Higher Education Degrees (Developed in collaboration with the German Rectors' Conference and the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs, in consultation with the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, and adopted by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs on February 16, 2017). See https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/veroeff-fentlichungen_beschluesse/2017/2017_02_16-Qualifikationsrahmen.pdf (September 15, 2026)

⁴<https://akkreditierungsrat.de/faq-kategorie/wesentliche-aenderungen/> (September 15, 2026)