

Printed matter AC 60/2016

Resolution on the application by the Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute (ACQUIN e.V.) from 15 September 2015 for accreditation and for assessment of compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

Resolution by the German Accreditation Council dated 22 June 2016

I.

The Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany (Foundation) accredits the Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute (ACQUIN e.V.) pursuant to § 2 Para. 1 No. 1 of the German Law on the Establishment of a Foundation “Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany” in accordance with the following provisions and insofar thereby grants it the authority to accredit study programmes and the internal quality assurance systems of higher education institutions by awarding the seal of the foundation.

II.

The decision comes into effect pursuant to Point I. above on 22 June 2016. However, it shall become void if the agency does not sign an agreement by 30 September 2016 pursuant to § 3 of the German Law on the Establishment of a Foundation “Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany” in the version adopted by the German Accreditation Council on 22 June 2016.

III.

The accreditation and the authorisation pursuant to Point I. above will be granted for a period of five years; the right of revocation pursuant to Point V. below remains reserved.

At the 84th meeting of the German Accreditation Council on 30 September 2015, ACQUIN has been temporarily accredited up to 30 September 2016 in accordance with Section 3.3.1

of the Rules for the Accreditation of Agencies. The duration of the temporary accreditation must be included in the applicable term according to Section 3.2.¹

Pursuant to Section 3.2.1 of the resolution “Rules for the Accreditation of Agencies” from 8 December 2009, in the version adopted on 10 December 2010, the accreditation expires on 30 June 2021.

IV.

The German Accreditation Council notes that ACQUIN has not fulfilled a few quality requirements; these deficiencies have to be corrected within six months according to Section 3.1.3 of the resolution “Rules for the Accreditation of Agencies” dated 8 December 2009 in the version adopted on 10 December 2010. Accreditation is therefore granted under the following conditions:

Condition 1: ACQUIN submits an empirical validation of the calculation of the procedure costs for programme and system accreditation with a breakdown of the workload needed and the proportion of overheads (Criterion 2.3.2).

Condition 2: ACQUIN sets out how the agency continuously matches the order situation and its personnel resources (Criterion 2.4).

Condition 3: ACQUIN submits a process with responsibilities and representation regulations for the prompt provision of the reports in the database of accredited study programmes (Criterion 2.7).

The German Accreditation Council explicitly refers to the recommendations contained in the report.

V.

If ACQUIN does not demonstrate that the conditions have been fulfilled within the respective term or if the conditions prove to be unfulfilled after the respective term has elapsed, the

¹ The temporary accreditation of ACQUIN was not required up to its full term as the accreditation procedure could be concluded by the end of the ordinary accreditation term on 30 June 2016. The standard term therefore remains in place.

foundation may revoke the accreditation according to Section 3.5.3 of the resolution “Rules for the Accreditation of Agencies” dated 8 December 2009 in the version adopted on 10 December 2010.

VI. Rationale

General:

Based on the report and taking into consideration the agency’s position paper, the German Accreditation Council has concluded that the Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute (ACQUIN e.V.) substantially fulfils the criteria pursuant to Chapter 2 of the resolution “Rules for the Accreditation of Agencies” dated 8 December 2009 in the version adopted on 10 December 2010.

Regarding Condition 1:

Pursuant to the criteria of the Accreditation Council, the agencies do not work profit-oriented and conduct the accreditation procedures on a full-cost basis. During the assessment, deficiencies were identified in ACQUIN: the calculation basis for pricing the procedures of programme and system accreditation, or rather for validating the assumptions regarding the workload and overheads were not comprehensible (see the respective section on Criterion 2.3.2 in the report).

Regarding Condition 2:

In accordance with the criteria of the German Accreditation Council, the agencies are functionally adequate and sustainably equipped in terms of human and material resources in all necessary areas. This Criterion (2.4) covers the same requirements as those of ESG Standard 3.5. therefore, the assessment in the report was conducted within the framework of this standard.

The assessment revealed difficulties within ACQUIN in relation to strategic and capacity-related personnel planning which, at least in recent years, resulted in the overload of scientific staff.

Personnel capacities are calculated based on an overly high assumption of the number of working days per year, which does not sufficiently consider holidays, family time, time for further training and sickness leaves. ACQUIN has only determined a parameter for staff workloads for programme accreditation in Germany. In remaining procedure formats, the agency cannot estimate staff workloads. The amount of work for activities across procedures

such as servicing bodies, quality management, further education, conference presentations or maintaining the database has not yet been established as well.

Whether the new positions the agency intended to occupy in the beginning of April 2016 would sustainably alleviate the staff overload, could not be comprehended by the review panel during the site-visit (see the respective section on ESG Standard 3.4 in the report).

The agency must therefore demonstrate how it will bring its personnel resources (staff expansion or reduction, working time accounts or similar) into line with the order situation (more intensive acquisition/rejecting orders or similar).

Regarding Condition 3:

In accordance with the criteria of the Accreditation Council, the agencies publish the reports and decisions about their accreditation procedures (Criterion 2.7). Due to the similar requirements by the ESG Standard 2.6 which refers to publishing reports and decisions of carried out procedures, the assessment was conducted within the framework of this standard.

With regard to the entries in the database of accredited study programmes, it was determined during the assessment that ACQUIN had been entering the data after a considerable delay. The resolution by the Accreditation Council from 30 September 2015 stated a deadline of six weeks for publishing the results of programme and system accreditation procedures. In order to fulfil this requirement, ACQUIN should define internal processes and responsibilities with binding force (see the respective section on Standard 2.6 in the report).

VII. Compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and with the membership criteria of the European Association for Quality Assurance (ENQA).

The Accreditation Council notes that ACQUIN substantially fulfils the “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area” (ESG) and the membership criteria of the “European Association for Quality Assurance” (ENQA).

The following six standards are fulfilled: 2.1, 2.2, 2.7, 3.2, 3.3, 3.7

The following six standards are substantially fulfilled: 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 3.1, 3.6

The following two standards are partially fulfilled: 3.4, 3.5