

## Statement to the expert's report

31 Mai 2016

### Factual Correction

#### 2.3 Implementing processes

*"In terms of the procedure of the institutional audit, there are no binding stipulations on the course or the responsibilities for the individual procedural steps, in the guidelines for example. It is also unclear whether a decision under conditions is possible here and how the process of fulfilling conditions would proceed."*

The institutional audits correspond in terms of responsibilities, procedural steps and decision-making possibilities to the procedure of the system accreditation.

*"The position of ACQUIN about formal outline of procedures for the audit in Austria being unnecessary because of the low demand, cannot be shared by the panel. ACQUIN should create more transparency here, for example by adding the guidelines and relevant schedules to the QM manual."*

The procedures of the audits in Austria will also correspond to those of the system accreditation (please note the offer of the University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria as an example).

#### 2.4 Peer-review experts

*"Despite demanded, the criteria and procedures for appointing experts for audits in Austria were not available."*

The procedure corresponds to that of system accreditations.

*"During the meeting, representatives of the agency mentioned difficulties in finding experts for programme accreditation in certain subjects. This problem cannot be solved by just one agency. It could be helpful for ACQUIN if in addition to the existent occasional communication, the exchange between standing expert committees and the accreditation commission was intensified. This could also make the accreditation commission's perception of the supervisory function more transparent for example with regular reports of the committees on the practice of appointing the experts in the accreditation commission (see also ESG 3.6)."*

ACQUIN will further systematise the dialogue between the standing expert committees and the accreditation commission after consultation with these bodies.

*“The submitted information demonstrates that in 2015 at least one person from abroad was involved in the majority of the expert groups for system accreditation.”*

In all expert groups for system accreditation at least one person from abroad was involved.

*“However, the declaration of impartiality for experts (Annex 8) does not include a clear enough statement about a consultation of the higher education institution as an exclusion criterion for expert activities.”*

In ACQUIN's point of view the declaration of impartiality for experts does include a clear statement about a consultation of the higher education institution: „Participation in committees or advisory boards, which are directly related to the higher education institutions which are to be evaluated.”

*“With regards to the preparatory briefing of experts, no significant change from the reaccreditation in 2011 can be observed. Even in system accreditations the preparation is limited to a longer meeting before the beginning of the actual site visit. The online training courses mentioned in the self-evaluation report do not play any role in practice yet. Meanwhile, introductory information for experts has been uploaded into the social network Youtube<sup>1</sup>.”*

Since the introduction of system accreditations ACQUIN complies with the practise of the institutional audits by the German Council of Science and Humanities.

## **2.5 Criteria for outcomes**

*“No structural change from the last reaccreditation in 2011 could be ascertained in terms of the committees' communication with each other.”*

The chairmen of the standing expert committees came together in Bayreuth on 29 September 2014 and participated also at the meeting of the accreditation commission.

## **2.6 Reporting**

*“In terms of the international activities, information about 225 internationally accredited study programmes can be found on ACQUIN's website in its own area. A number of entries only include the names of the experts and short reports, such as for the entries on study programmes from Switzer-*

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<sup>1</sup> ACQUIN refers in the position paper dated 31 May 2016 to the following internet address: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GO1yYNwWRfE>

*land. For other procedures the complete report is also made available. In terms of the procedures of institutional accreditation abroad, the entries can only be found if the name of the higher education institution is entered into the search field.”*

The publication of the expert’s reports of study programmes at Swiss Universities of Applied Sciences was not stipulated by law at that time and as a consequence not agreed in the contracts between ACQUIN and the Swiss HEIs.

*“Action is required in regards to the publication of reports. Even though ACQUIN intends to publish the decisions and reports in all procedure formats, gaps remain on the homepage as before.”*

For ACQUIN these gaps are not plausible (any more) as ACQUIN has published all missing reports and optimised its publication process in 2015. This has been approved by the Accreditation Council itself.

*“The term of six weeks stated in the German Accreditation Council’s resolution dated 30 September 2015 for the publication in the programme and system accreditation procedures was described by the agency in the meetings as being ambitious. Nevertheless, it appears to be possible to observe the time guideline, after ACQUIN has internally reorganised the processes for publication and the internal responsibilities. A formal written stipulation is however still pending. A stipulation of this sort would also be appropriate for the remaining fields of activities.”*

The formal confirmation in writing has already been carried out in the QM manual (see attachment 4 of the self-evaluation report). This applies to programme accreditations as well as to system accreditations.

## **2.8 Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education**

*“This text is not published on the agency’s German website, but other formulations can be found in the “Objectives” area. The mission statement can be found on the English language site. Upon request the managing director explains that the agency’s internet presence is currently being revised, adding that the mission statement in the annexes of the self-evaluation report is valid.”*

The incorrect formulation on the website has been corrected in the meantime (<https://www.acquin.org/de/die-akkreditierungsagentur/ueber-acquin/zielsetzung/>).

*“The relevance of the mission statement should be clear, fundamentally easy to implement and transparent at all levels of the agency. The panel sees a need for ACQUIN to make improvements.”*

All standing expert committees, the accreditation commission as well as the managing board have discussed the mission statement as part of the code of ethics. Finally the general assembly has agreed on the mission statement on its meeting on 30 May 2016.

### **3.5 Resources**

*“The number of programme managers continually fell from 20 people in 2012 to 12 in 2014 according to the annual reports.”*

ACQUIN asks for deletion of this paragraph, because it is used incoherently within the context of the financial resources. In the following paragraph the human resources are documented sufficiently. In addition this statement is neither in accordance to the date the self-evaluation report was submitted (31 December 2015) nor to today.

*“In the 2013 quality report (Annex 52) the results of an anonymous survey of the employees of ACQUIN from June 2013 is referenced. They show that a considerable portion of the employees is unsatisfied by the working conditions.”*

ACQUIN asks for deletion as this statement („considerable portion“) cannot be concluded like this from the quality report (annex 52 of the self-evaluation report, page 7 final paragraph).

*“The decline in the number of academic consultants in the last few years to just 12 people in 2014 is recorded in the annual reports.”*

ACQUIN asks for deletion of this sentence, because this statement is neither in accordance to the date the self-evaluation report was submitted (31 December 2015) nor to today.

*“The panel also judged the lack of a detailed schedule of responsibilities, which depicts the responsibilities, tasks and representation regulations, to be making capacitive human resources planning more difficult.”*

A detailed schedule of responsibilities exists, that however needs to be updated on the basis of the structural and staff changes (in accordance with the in March 2016 newly elected works council).

### **3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct**

*“Otherwise, this example also indicates that the structures and allocations stipulated in the QM manual form a guideline for practice only partly.”*

After having updated the schedule of responsibilities, ACQUIN will of course update the QM manual correspondingly.

#### **2.3.2 It is a non-profit organisation and carries out the accreditation procedures on a full-costs basis.**

*“According to the opinion of the panel, GAC should insist on a comprehensible calculation for setting prices, validating the assumptions regarding the amount of work needed and overheads.”*

The current calculation of prices for programme accreditation results from the decision of the general assembly in 2006 based on collected data since ACQUINs very foundation. Since 2006 it is verified annually in form of a product costing analysis on the basis of the profit and loss statement.