

Tender issued by the Accreditation Council for the trial of new approaches to quality assurance and improvement in teaching and learning (trial clause)

Resolution of the Accreditation Council as of 17/09/2014

I. Objectives and Guiding Principles

It is the responsibility of higher education institutions to ensure that learning and teaching are of a high quality. The quality of study programmes depends greatly on the objectives set by higher education institutions and their internal culture of quality. Part of the institutions' responsibility is to continually ensure that the quality of study programmes is maintained, that programmes are improved and that the results are made transparent for the public.

Both programme and system accreditation allow higher education institutions to meet their responsibilities in regard to quality enhancement and accountability, and both have been evaluated positively by the German Council of Science and Humanities (Wissenschaftsrat) as well as by international experts. At the same time, the German Council of Science and Humanities (Wissenschaftsrat) in its "Recommendations for Accreditation as an Instrument for Quality Assurance" recommends that other approaches of external quality assurance shall be trialled to also consider alternatives to well-established practices.

In accordance with the recommendations made by the German Council of Science and Humanities (Wissenschaftsrat), the Accreditation Council therefore offers higher education institutions the opportunity, through this tender, to develop innovative and possibly heretofore unknown methods of external assessment and to submit a proposal for the practical trial of such methods. The Accreditation Council hopes to provide a valuable impulse for the entire field of quality assurance and enhancement in higher education and for the further development of the quality of study programmes offered by German higher education institutions.

II. Conditions of Participation

The culture of quality as demanded by the German Council of Science and Humanities (Wissenschaftsrat) requires higher education institutions of their own accord and without exception to prioritise the quality of learning and teaching when designing and developing their study programmes. The conditions for participation in the trial clause are derived from

this: higher education institutions set themselves particularly ambitious and innovative quality objectives which reach far beyond the standards – that must also be maintained – stated within the Common Structural Guidelines of the Länder, or set by the Accreditation Council and the ESG. This may concern, for example, objectives for students' support, research-based learning and teaching or further areas of performance (course administration/services, research, further training, general administration, etc.).¹

III. Selection Criteria

Throughout the process of selecting the projects to be promoted, the following criteria will be taken into account:

- The higher education institution must comply with the existing standards. This can be verified by successful programme or system accreditation or by other suitable means.
- The higher education institution fulfils the conditions listed under Section II: The quality objectives defined by the higher education institution go beyond the existing standards.
- The proposed project suggests that the quality of study programmes will be improved. The higher education institution illustrates how reviewable processes will contribute to this improvement of study programmes which is aligned to the quality objectives set by the institution
- The internal and external quality assurance mechanisms already established in the higher education institution give reason to believe that the higher education institution will - in the medium and in the long term - reinforce its responsibilities with regard to quality assurance and enhancement, at least in the field of teaching and learning.
- The proposed project fits into the higher education institution's overall concept. The project is supported by the institution's members, this is documented.
- The higher education institution illustrates that the submitted project will be assessed and evaluated by an external establishment in the sense of Part 2 and Part 3 of the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" (ESG). This assessment must be completed within three years of submission of the application.
- Higher education institutions may, in particular, consider agencies accredited by the Accreditation Council, establishments registered in the EQAR and/or member agencies of ENQA as well as other internationally recognised and independent quality assurance agencies external establishments. In any case the establishment must be

¹ [German Council of Science and Humanities \(Wissenschaftsrat\): Recommendations for the use of Accreditation as an Instrument for Quality Assurance. Drs. 2259-12. Bremen, 25/05/2012](#), P. 83.

proven to regularly carry out external quality assurance procedures and that the relevant interest groups, particularly representatives of the sciences, students and practitioners from the profession will be involved in the assessment as part of the trial clause.

- If the higher education institution plans to work, or is already working, in co-operation with national and international partners, this co-operation must be outlined in the proposal.
- The proposed project can be implemented with the staff, material and financial resources available. There is a realistic plan in terms of time, staffing and budgeting.
- The higher education institution outlines the advantages of the project or the value which will be added by the project, in comparison to the programme and/or system accreditation process.
- The planned project factors in guarantee for gender equality.
- The report written as part of the assessment of the project will be published.

IV. Successful outcome

Implemented projects assessed positive in the sense of that named in the trial clause will - analogously to programme or system accreditation - result in study programmes that are accredited.

V. Entitlement, Procedure, Deadline

Applications may be submitted by state or state recognised higher education institutions. The formless applications are to be submitted to the Accreditation Council by the presidency of the higher education institution.

Applications must be submitted to the Accreditation Council by

31/10/2015.

Group applications as well as applications from individual higher education institutions are welcomed. Only one application may be submitted per higher education institution or per group of higher education institutions.

The maximum total length of the application including the cover sheet and any attachments is twenty pages (format Arial, size 11, line spacing 18 points).

The application must contain a description of the project in view of the objectives stated in the tender (see [Section I](#)), proof that all conditions necessary for participation have been met (see [Section II](#)) and should pertain to the eligibility criteria (see [Section III](#)). A realistic schedule for implementation of the project, described in terms of milestones, as well as a

detailed timing and costing plan should be submitted along with the application. In addition, those responsible for the project/contacts should be clearly named.

The application must be submitted in electronic and in paper format to the Chairperson of the Accreditation Council:

Professor Dr. Reinhold R. Grimm
Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany
Adenauerallee 73
53113 Bonn
akr@akkreditierungsrat.de

VI. Appraisal and Selection

The Accreditation Council will set up a working group responsible for the appraisal of applications. The working group will consider the applications submitted and, bearing in mind the objectives set out in the trial cause as well as the eligibility criteria, will recommend up to five trials to the Accreditation Council. On the basis of the recommendations made by the working group, the Accreditation Council will decide which trials to accept. The Accreditation Council guarantees that all "*stakeholders*", including the state, will be involved in this selection process and in the implementation of the tender. The Accreditation Council will announce which trials have been accepted.

Details concerning the implementation of trials selected will then be arranged in an agreement between the higher education institution, the Accreditation Council, the external establishment responsible for the review and the federal state. The Accreditation Council will accompany trials accepted. Depending on the extent of the trial, costs are expected to total between 3,000 and 12,000 euros. As is stated in the agreement, these costs are to be paid by the applicant.

VII. Decision making

For each trial accepted, the external establishment responsible for the review must provide the Accreditation Council with a review report including an assessment on whether the trial is to be considered successful. On the basis of this report, the Accreditation Council will determine the analogy to be made with the programme or system accreditation. Further details will be confirmed within the agreement.

VIII: Questions, E-mail, Internet

Questions regarding the tender will be answered by the managing director of the Accreditation Council, Dr. Olaf Bartz (bartz@akkreditierungsrat.de) and by Ms Friederike Leetz (leetz@akkreditierungsrat.de) - Tel: + 49 0228 338306-0. The tender can be accessed online at the following address: www.akkreditierungsrat.de.