

Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany

Accreditation Council

**Activity Report
2006**

Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany

Accreditation Council

Printed Matter AR 72/2007

Head office of the Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany
Adenauerallee 73, 53113 Bonn

Tel.: +49 228-338 306-0

Fax: +49 228-338 306-79

E-mail: akr@akkreditierungsrat.de

Internet: <http://www.akkreditierungsrat.de>

Editorial: Franz Börsch M.A., Dr. Achim Hopbach

Bonn, August 2007

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For reasons of readability, gender-neutral language is not used throughout the text. In accordance with the principles of equal treatment, corresponding terms always refer to women and men.

Activity Report 2006

Period under review: January to December 2006

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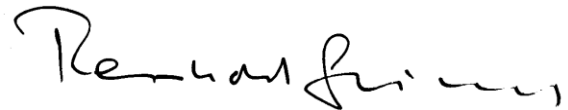
Preface

The Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany is making a key contribution to the current study reform process and is successful in fulfilling its task of ensuring the quality of individual study programmes, together with the accreditation agencies. The new version of the legal bases of the accreditation system and thus also the conversion of the Accreditation Council into a foundation under public law and the following revision of all underlying procedure rules and accreditation criteria have made a considerable contribution to this so that the system and accreditation procedures now have a reliable legal basis.

As regards the fulfilling of its legal tasks, the Foundation can also show positive results. Since the summer of 2005, it has revised all procedure rules and accreditation criteria, thereby giving the accreditation of study programmes in Germany a reliable and transparent basis. The Foundation has also helped raise the quality of agency work considerably with the reaccreditation of three of the six agencies. Nevertheless, the Foundation is faced with great challenges resulting from changing framework conditions for quality assurance. For instance, the Accreditation Council must strengthen its endeavours to guarantee a consistent application of the criteria and procedural rules. Especially in light of the new framework conditions of the Föderalismusreform (federalism reform), the assurance of cross-state comparability and transparency of qualifications or of degrees and degree levels in the higher education area will continue gaining importance as one of the key tasks of the Accreditation Council.

Another challenge is presented by the further development of the accreditation system. In this case, rules for a new accreditation system must be developed according to the relevant decisions of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs ("KMK"), which meet the goal of giving more responsibility to Higher Education Institutions to ensure quality and minimise costs.

With a view to the emerging European Higher Education Area, the Accreditation Council continues to endeavour promoting cross-border recognition of accreditation decisions to simplify the mutual recognition of final degrees.



Bonn, August 2007

Prof. DR. Reinhold R. Grimm

1. Completion of the legal consolidation of the accreditation system in Germany

1.1 Agreements between the Foundation and agencies

In accordance with Article 3 Clause 1 of the Accreditation Foundation Law ("AFL"), the Foundation cooperates with the agencies in a trustful manner and enters with them into agreements that regulate the rights and obligations of the partners in the accreditation system. A corresponding draft agreement was elaborated in close collaboration between the Foundation and the agencies within the meaning of the partner-like cooperation required by the AFL. Following the adoption of the wording of the contract by the Accreditation Council during its 48th meeting on 22 June 2006, the individual agreements were executed and signed by the contractual partners, i.e. by the Foundation and all agencies accredited by the Accreditation Council.

By signing the agreements, the agencies undertook to apply amongst others

1. the "Common structural guidelines of the Länder as set out in Article 9 Clause 2 of the Framework Act for Higher Education (HRG) for the accreditation of Bachelor's and Master's study courses" of 10 October 2003 in the version of 22 September 2005, and structural guidelines amending or replacing them as well as any state-specific structural guidelines,
2. the "Criteria for the Accreditation of Accreditation Agencies (resolution by the Accreditation Council on 15 December 2005),

3. the "Criteria for the Accreditation of Study Programmes" (resolution by the Accreditation Council on 17 July 2006), and

4. the "Decisions of the Accreditation Agencies: Types and Their Effects" (resolution by the Accreditation Council on 15 December 2005).

Moreover, the agreements contain further regulations, for example with regard to the consultation obligations of the Accreditation Council (Article 2), the reporting obligations of the agencies (Article 3), the scope of the agencies' accreditation (Article 4), the withdrawal of a study programme's accreditation in case of non-performance of a condition (Article 6) or withdrawal and/or restriction of a study programme's accreditation in case of the Accreditation Council's objection (Article 7). As a consequence of the contractual regulation of the essential accreditation basics in terms of content and with regard to the procedure in the agreements, legal security in the accreditation system could be enhanced significantly, since the resolutions of the Accreditation Council and the structural guidelines of the KMK now have direct legally binding force.

Appendix 1.1.1 Draft agreement

1.2 Constitution of the Foundation

The Foundation adopted a constitution pursuant to Article 5 AFL, which was resolved by the Accreditation Council during its 4th meeting on 23 June 2006 and approved by the Minister for Innovation, Science, Research and Technology of the state of North-Rhine Westphalia on 14 August 2006. The constitution is published on page 431 of the Ministerial Gazette for the state of North Rhine-Westphalia (MBI. NRW 2006). in accordance with the Accreditation Foundation Law, the constitution specifies the principles of cooperation between the bodies of the Founda-

tion, the tasks and method of working of the Accreditation Council as well as the prerequisites for withdrawing accreditation or reaccreditation.

The principles of cooperation as defined in the constitution especially include mutual notification of the bodies of the Foundation about their respective resolutions and decisions as well as participation of the chairman/chairmen of the Accreditation Council and of the Foundation Council in the meetings of the respective other body in a consultative capacity.

(Re) accreditation of an agency is withdrawn or rejected in accordance with Article 7 of the Constitution, if compliance with the following facts could not or only insufficiently be determined in the course of the accreditation procedure:

1. consideration of the structural guidelines in the meaning of Article 2 Clause 1 No. 2 of the Accreditation Foundation Law;
2. compliance with the minimum requirements in the meaning of Article 2 Clause 1 No. 3 of the Accreditation Foundation Law;
3. committing the agency to the principle of integrity in dealing with the seal of the Foundation;
4. quality requirements for the internal organisation of the agency;
5. agency's reporting obligations to the Foundation.

The Accreditation Council and the Foundation Council each have adopted bylaws with respect to their business areas in accordance with Article 5 of the Constitution. The bylaws adopted by the aforementioned bodies especially govern the issues related to the calling and conduct of meetings each – such as questions regarding the meeting frequency, the quorum, the voting modes or the employment of additional working

groups – as well as the filing of resolutions outside of meetings.

Appendix 1.2.1 Constitution of the Foundation

Appendix 1.2.2 Bylaws of the Accreditation Council

Appendix 1.2.3 Bylaws of the Foundation Council

2. Foundation's activities in 2006: tasks and results

2.1 Reaccreditation of accreditation agencies

One of the key operative tasks of the Foundation to be performed on a regular basis pursuant to Article 2 Clause 1 No. 1 AFL is the accreditation and reaccreditation of accreditation agencies by granting them temporary authorisation to accredit study programmes with the seal of the Foundation.

In early 2006 three of currently six German accreditation agencies - ACQUIN, ASIIN and ZEvA – filed an application for reaccreditation by the Accreditation Council. The reaccreditation procedures instituted by the resolution in lieu of a meeting of 10 January 2006 were for the very first time conducted on the basis of the "Criteria for the Accreditation of Accreditation Agencies" passed on 15 December 2005. By defining these criteria that also include the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, the Accreditation Council went beyond the direct task of accrediting agencies and thus considered the requirement for international compatibility of the German accreditation system comprehensively. Also on 15 December 2005 the Accreditation Council adopted the resolution "Implementing Reaccreditation of the Agencies ACQUIN, ASIIN and ZEvA"¹ that determined the course of the procedure in three steps:

1. Substantiation of the application in writing by the applying agency.

2. Evaluation including on-site visit by a group of experts (a member of the Accreditation Council, a national expert, an international expert, a student member) and review of two sets of procedure documentation by the head office of the Foundation.

3. Decision of the Accreditation Council following the hearing of a representative of the agency.

Contrary to the common practice up to then, in which the Accreditation Council both evaluated the agency to be accredited and filed the final accreditation decision, the Accreditation Council employed a total of three groups of experts for the aforementioned reaccreditation procedures. These groups each consisted of one representative from the Accreditation Council, one national expert, one international expert and one student representative in accordance with the above resolution. The Accreditation Council entrusted the groups of experts with the evaluation of the agencies on the basis of the Criteria for the Accreditation of Accreditation Agencies of 15 December 2005. Accordingly, subject matter of the evaluation essentially was the general institution-related functionality and fitness for the purpose of the agencies as well as the consistent use of the Criteria for the Accreditation of the Study Programmes by the agencies as prescribed by the Accreditation Council.

As an additional component of the reaccreditation procedure, two sets of procedure documentation each per agency were evaluated by employees from the head office of the Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany. The evaluation focused on consistency in decision-making and the process organisation of the agency, particularly in terms of the implementation of the Accreditation Council's regulations and criteria.

¹ The decision was superseded on 22 June 2006 by the decision of the Accreditation Council "General Rules for Carrying out Procedures for the Accreditation and Reaccreditation of Accreditation Agencies"

At its 48th meeting on 22 June 2006, the Accreditation Council opted for the conditional reaccreditation of the accreditation agencies ACQUIN, ASIIN and ZEvA. These decisions were made on the basis of the evaluation reports, the evaluation of two sets of procedure documentation, the responses submitted by the agencies regarding the evaluation reports and the hearing of an agency representative. Appeals were lodged against two decisions in subareas, but these were both rejected by the Accreditation Council.

The resolutions adopted by the Accreditation Council on the individual reaccreditation procedures, including the conditions and time limits linked to accreditation, the evaluation reports, application rationales and responses by the agencies are published on the Foundation website.

Appendix 2.1.1 Resolution regarding the reaccreditation of ACQUIN

Appendix 2.1.2 Resolution regarding the reaccreditation of ASIIN

Appendix 2.1.3 Resolution regarding the reaccreditation of ZEvA

Also at its 48th meeting on 22 June 2006, the Accreditation Council instituted two procedures on reaccrediting the agencies AQAS and FIBAA and appointed experts for the procedure. Having completed the procedure on accrediting the agencies ACQUIN, ASIIN and ZEvA, the Accreditation Council decided on changing the composition of the groups of experts. In accordance with the resolution passed by the Accreditation Council on 22 June 2006 "General Rules for Carrying out Procedures for the Accreditation and Reaccreditation of Accreditation Agencies", the groups of experts are now composed of two members of the Accreditation Council, two representatives of Higher Education Institutions, two international experts in the field of accredita-

tion, one student member and one practitioner from the profession each.

With the application filed by the European Association for Public Administration Accreditation (EAPAA) for accreditation by the Accreditation Council, the Foundation for the very first time has received an application for accreditation by a foreign agency. The Accreditation Council resolved the formal opening of the procedure at its 50th meeting in November 2006. Since in the meantime the EAPAA has withdrawn its application and will possibly file it with the Accreditation Council in 2007 again, no group of experts has been appointed yet.

2.2 Resolutions adopted by the Accreditation Council

In addition to the resolutions regarding reaccreditation of the agencies ACQUIN, ASIIN and ZEvA, the Accreditation Council passed a series of additional resolutions concerning the accreditation system at large in the course of the year 2006.

► Criteria for the accreditation of study programmes (17 July 2006)

The Criteria for the Accreditation of Study Programmes resulting from Part II of the Criteria for the Accreditation of Accreditation Agencies are directed to Higher Education Institutions. As stipulated by the Criteria for the Accreditation of Study Programmes, the applying Higher Education Institution at first must provide information on the Higher Education Institution's system control (criterion 1), on the educational objectives of the study programme concept (criterion

2) and on the conceptual classification of the study programme into the studies system (criterion 3) in the course of the accreditation process. In addition, the Higher Education Institution must demonstrate the imparting of technical and interdisciplinary knowledge as well as of methodic and generic competencies and set forth that the study programme concept is coherent, goal-oriented with regard to defined educational objectives and – especially taking into account the initial qualification to be anticipated -studyable (criterion 4). Criteria 5 to 9 require from the Higher Education Institutions adequate information on the conduct of the study programme, on the examination system, on transparency and documentation, on the compliance with conditions with a view to previous accreditations and in-house quality management procedures.

Appendix 2.2.1 Criteria for the accreditation of study programmes

► **Accreditation Council procedure for monitoring accreditations undertaken by agencies**
(21 September 2006)

In accordance with Article 2 Clause 1 No. 4 AFL, the Accreditation Council has the task of monitoring the procedures for the accreditation of study programmes that are carried out by agencies. The Accreditation Council has developed a control mechanism that ensures continuous monitoring of accreditations in order to perform this task on the basis of a reliable and transparent procedure.

The coexistence of monitoring agencies by the Accreditation Council on the one hand and the trusting cooperation between the Accreditation Council and the agencies on the other hand resulting from the Accreditation Foundation Law is reflected in said resolution of the Accreditation Council. The procedure on monitoring accreditations of study programmes selected by the Ac-

creditation Council is based on the Accreditation Council's trust in the agencies' work and therefore is restricted to spot checks and special-purpose checks of procedures. The spot checks are made four times per year and per agency, and a special-purpose check is made if there is sufficient suspicion that an accreditation procedure has been inadequately carried out and decided. The head office of the Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany, which is commissioned by the Accreditation Council for this purpose, checks the correctness of the procedure and the decision based on the documents presented to it by the agency.

With the regular spot checks, combined with the checking of procedures if there is any suspicion from third parties, the Accreditation Council has chosen a streamlined and efficient checking procedure that meets the demand for trusting cooperation between the Foundation and agencies. At the same time, it also makes a key contribution to public confidence in the effectiveness of the system and the quality of the accreditation procedures.

Apart from its monitoring activities in accordance with Article 2 Clause 1 No. 4 AFL, the Accreditation Council supervises one accreditation procedure per year and per agency by participating in an on-site visit and in a decision-making meeting of the agency body that is responsible for the accreditation decision. The participation serves as an information exchange between the Accreditation Council and agencies, enabling the Accreditation Council to gain an insight into the operational business of the agencies at the same time.

Appendix 2.2.2 Accreditation council procedure for monitoring accreditations undertaken by agencies

► **General rules for carrying out procedures for the accreditation and reaccreditation of accreditation agencies** (22 June 2006)

The Accreditation Council used the experience gained during the three reaccreditation procedures in 2006 to further develop procedural rules in subareas, replacing in the future the evaluation of two of the accreditation procedures carried out by accreditation agencies according to the records with the supporting of an accreditation procedure by the chairperson of the group of experts and an employee from the head office. Furthermore, the group of experts appointed by the Accreditation Council will from now on be composed of two members of the Accreditation Council, two representatives from Higher Education Institutions, two international experts in the field of accreditation, one student member and one practitioner from the profession.

In its resolution "General Rules for Carrying Out Procedures for the Accreditation and Reaccreditation Accreditation of Agencies" the Accreditation Council undertakes to carry out accreditation procedures on the basis of the "Criteria for the Accreditation of Accreditation Agencies" of 15 December 2005 at all times, taking into account the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*.

The evaluation is based on the analysis of the application rationale, an on-site visit during a meeting of the competent decision-making body of the agency, separate conversations with the executive board of the agency, employees, experts and where appropriate, representatives of Higher Education Institutions that have already undergone the agency's accreditation procedure, the participation in an on-site visit of the agency in an accreditation procedure and, where appropriate, the consideration of evalua-

tions made by the Accreditation Council since the last accreditation. Before coming to a final accreditation decision, the agency is given the opportunity to submit a response to the experts' report (without a decision recommendation) and take part in a hearing conducted by the Accreditation Council.

Following the procedure, the Accreditation Council publishes the agency's application rationale, the evaluation report, the agency's response and the decision filed by the Accreditation Council.

Appendix 2.2.3 General rules for carrying out procedures for the accreditation and reaccreditation of accreditation agencies

► **Regulating a procedure in case of inconsistencies between common and state-specific structural guidelines for bachelor and master programmes** (17 July 2006)

Inconsistencies between common and state-specific structural guidelines have frequently led to difficulties in the accreditation practice in the past. The Accreditation Council responded to this problem voiced to the Foundation on the part of the agencies by developing a procedure that requests the federal state in charge or the KMK as the actual addressees to clarify the facts.

The resolution "Regulating a Procedure in Case of Inconsistencies between Common and State-Specific Structural Guidelines for Bachelor and Master Programmes" in conjunction with Article 5 Clause 4 of the agreements entered into by the Foundation and agencies commits the agency to suspend the accreditation procedure in case of inconsistencies between common and state-specific structural guidelines identified by

the agency. Having notified the Accreditation Council accordingly, the Foundation Board forwards the technical or legal question submitted by the agency to the federal state concerned, asking for clarification. If clarification is not possible, the request is forwarded to the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs in a second step, asking for clarification. The Foundation Board refrains from the procedure, if the technical and legal situation is clear contrary to the agency's opinion.

Appendix 2.2.4 Regulating a procedure in case of inconsistencies between common and state-specific structural guidelines for bachelor and master programmes

► **Gender mainstreaming in accreditation** (24 February 2006)

In its resolution on gender mainstreaming in accreditation, the Accreditation Council supports the demands for gender-fair structuring of the accreditation procedure and the accreditation system. Accordingly, verification of the implementation of concepts devised by the Higher Education Institutions to promote gender justice is an indispensable criterion in programme accreditation.

The resolution stipulates that all players in the accreditation system, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs and the German Rectors' Conference ("HRK"), the Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany with all its bodies and the accreditation agencies with all their bodies and players must consider the gender-specific effects of their decisions.

Appendix 2.2.5 Gender mainstreaming in accreditation

► **Improving student participation in the quality assurance of study programmes and teaching in Germany** (20 December 2006)

The Accreditation Council sees in the previous, predominantly honorary work of the student accreditation pool a good basis to implement the targets formulated at the European level in the field of student participation in external quality assurance. However, to achieve these targets, it is necessary to continue to extend the member basis of the student accreditation pool with regard to subject groups, types of Higher Education Institutions and distribution between the sexes.

Against this background, further improvement of student participation in the accreditation system in line with the above resolution is to include the following points:

- The Accreditation Council will moderate a process where appropriate and resilient structures of cooperation are created between the student pool and the agencies.
- The Accreditation Council will assist the student accreditation pool in obtaining sufficient funds in order to ensure that a sufficient number of student experts are available even when the number of procedures increases.

The agencies are requested to participate therein within the scope of their possibilities.

Appendix 2.2.6 Improving student participation in the quality assurance of study programmes and teaching in Germany

► **Allocation of ECTS points in intensive study programmes** (22 June 2006)

An intensive study programme is a study programme that allows acquiring the ECTS points required in the national qualification framework for a bachelor or master degree within a shorter overall period of study as a result of particular

study-related organisational measures in which more than 60 ECTS points per year can be acquired on the basis of a correspondingly increased annual work load.

The above resolution of the Accreditation Council is to ensure that shorter standard periods of study with an increased annual work load will not result in lowering the qualification level of graduates of an intensive study programme with a view to the national qualification framework. Also the higher annual work load may not exceed the limits of studyability.

In particular well-founded individual cases, up to 75 ECTS points per year may be allocated to study programmes with a particular study organisation in accordance with the resolution passed by the Accreditation Council. It must be ensured that one ECTS points equals a work load of an average of 30 hours of time when calculating the work load.

These requirements must be proven in accreditation each.

Appendix 2.2.7 Allocation of ECTS points in intensive study programmes

2.3 Working groups of the Accreditation Council

With the *working groups Weiterentwicklung des Akkreditierungssystems (Further Development of the Accreditation System), ECTS, Fernstudium und E-Learning (Distance Learning and E-Learning)* and *Weiterbildung (Further Education)*, the Accreditation Council appointed a total of four working groups in the course of the year 2006. Due to the large amount of topics related to accreditation either directly or indirectly, it has shown to be basically reasonable to also involve representatives of agencies as well as other external experts in the work of the Accreditation

Council within the scope of several topic-related working groups of the Accreditation Council. Considering various points of view and interests at an early stage does not only lead to enriching discussions in terms of content, but also to a comparatively high acceptance of the resolutions of the Accreditation Council filed on the basis of the working groups' preliminary work; at the same time, the Accreditation Council as a resolution filing body of the Foundation is relieved by the preliminary work of the working groups in terms of content.

Working group Further Development of the Accreditation System: This working group was set up during the 49th meeting of the Accreditation Council in August 2006 as part of the forthcoming elaboration of recommendations for the further development of accreditation in Germany (for details, see Chapter 5).

Working group ECTS: The working group ECTS was set up in lieu of a meeting after the 49th meeting of the Accreditation Council in August 2006. Especially the following topics were identified as subject matters of consultation of the working group: (a) Evaluation of professional practice phases in ECTS points for admittance to non-consecutive master programmes, (b) evaluation of professional experience in ECTS points within the scope of study programmes at Higher Education Institutions, (c) ECTS and modularisation and (d) recognition of study performances abroad.

The working group ECTS will submit a final report including recommendations to the Accreditation Council in 2007.

Working group Distance Learning and E-Learning: The working group Distance Learning and E-Learning was set up during the 50th meeting of the Accreditation Council in Novem-

ber 2006. The working group was assigned the task to check to what extent the specifics of distance and E-learning study programmes require updating Part IV "Special Cases" of the resolution of the Accreditation Council of 15 December 2005 "Criteria for the Accreditation of Accreditation Agencies" or whether the applicable criteria of the Accreditation Council are sufficient to also evaluate these offers of study programmes appropriately.

The consultations of the working group referred to the procedure level on the one hand (in which way must agencies allow for specifics of distance and E-learning study programmes in the accreditation procedure?) and to the curricular level on the other hand (which study programme-related questions, e.g. with a view to the examination system or the determination of the work load, require particular attention by the experts?).

The working group Distance Learning and E-Learning will submit a final report including recommendations to the Accreditation Council in 2007.

Working group Further Education: The working group Further Education was set up during the 50th meeting of the Accreditation Council in November 2006 with the objective to take stock of the agencies' existing practice in the field of accrediting further education study programmes and the problems of quality assurance resulting from the particular orientation of further education study programmes. Similar to the working group ECTS, the working group Further Education was assigned the task to check to what extent the specifics of further education study programmes require updating Part IV "Special Cases" of the resolution of the Accreditation Council of 15 December 2005 "Criteria for the Accreditation of Accreditation Agencies".

In addition, the following subject matters of consultation were identified: (a) Using modules from bachelor programmes in further education master programmes, (b) minimum formats of further education master programmes that remain below the requirements of consecutive master programmes, (c) accrediting individual modules of scientific further education and (d) establishing further education bachelor programmes.

The working group Further Education will submit a final report including recommendations to the Accreditation Council in 2007.

2.4 Future tasks: an outlook

Evaluation of the Foundation: The work of the Accreditation Council is evaluated in regular intervals of about five years in accordance with Article 10 of the Constitution of the Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany. Against this background, the Accreditation Council asked the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs with resolution of 22 June 2006 to initiate an external evaluation of the Foundation, in collaboration with the German Rectors' Conference, and to use an international group of experts to do this. The evaluation is to serve for (a) reviewing performance of legal tasks, (b) reviewing compliance with the membership criteria of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and (c) reviewing compliance with the Code of Good Practice issued by the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA). The evaluation is to be performed on the basis of the regulations of the ENQA resolution "Peer Review System for Quality Assurance Agencies".

Monitoring accreditations: After the Accreditation Council has developed a procedure for monitoring the accreditations undertaken by agencies in September 2006, the head office of the Foundation on behalf of the Accreditation Council will begin to review accreditation procedures and decisions in spot checks and provide a corresponding analysis of the reviews in 2007.

Further Development of the accreditation system: On the basis of the work results obtained by the competent working group, the Accreditation Council will submit recommendations for the further development of the accreditation system in Germany. In line with the task assigned by the KMK the recommendations will propose a simplified accreditation procedure that correspondingly reduces the efforts of Higher Education Institutions when they provide evidence of a reliable internal quality assurance system. Essential objective of such a refined accreditation system will be to increasingly assign the responsibility for quality assurance and development to the Higher Education Institutions themselves and to alleviate the capacity problem resulting from programme accreditation by more efficiently using of available resources. (For details, see Chapter 5).

Foundation's quality policy and mission statement: Quality assurance and continuous quality development are the basis for the work of the Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany. To continuously optimise the processes and instruments relevant for the Foundation's work and to ensure a high quality and at the same time highly efficient performance of the Foundation's legal tasks in this way, the Accreditation Council considers the implementation of a systematic internal quality assurance as reasonable and necessary.

Also the existence and application of an internal quality management is an essential criterion for the national and international recognition of quality assurance agencies. Corresponding requirements are also part of the membership criteria of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and of the Code of Good Practice of the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA).

Therefore, also against the background of the forthcoming external evaluation of the Foundation, the adoption and implementation of a quality policy has a high priority. In addition to objectives, tasks and the understanding of quality, the quality policy will phrase the quality requirements and measures for the Foundation's most important processes.

The mission statement of the Foundation, also a membership criterion of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), will make the objectives and principles of the Foundation's work more transparent and visibly document them to the outside world in accordance with standard 3.5 ESG.

3. International cooperation

The Foundation has the task of promoting international cooperation in the accreditation field in line with Article 2 Clause 2 No. 3 AFL. This also includes the task set out in Article 3 Clause 2 No. 2 AFL of defining the prerequisites for the recognition of accreditations by foreign institutions, taking developments in Europe into account.

The core task in international cooperation is to promote a mutual understanding of the quality assurance systems, and to develop comparable criteria, methods and standards of quality assurance to ensure the mutual recognition of accreditation and quality assurance decisions and, as a result of this, the mutual recognition of final degrees. It also includes improving transparency of the offer of study programmes, thus creating mobility in terms of international freedom of movement. The “Konferenz der Hochschulminister” (Conference of the Ministers for Higher Education) had already determined back in Berlin in 2003 that the quality of higher education is the backbone in the creation of the European Higher Education Area.

The relevant European and international quality assurance networks, of which the Foundation is an active member, are important tools for promoting international cooperation. These networks particularly include the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (IN-QAAHE), the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA), the Joint Quality Initiative (JQI) and the trinational network of accreditation institutions in Germany, Austria and Switzerland (D-A-CH).

The importance of international cooperation is also reflected at a person-related level. The former chairman of the Accreditation Council, Professor Kohler², is a German higher education representative on the Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research at the Council of Europe (CD-ESR), member of the steering committee of the expert commission “Institutional Evaluation Programme” of the European University Association (EUA), chairperson of the (now completed) projects “Quality Culture – Implementing Bologna Structures” and “European Masters New Evaluation Methodology” of the European University Association (EUA) and member of the Steering Committee of the European University Foundation, Luxembourg. Professor Kohler is also co-editor of the *EUA Bologna Handbook*. With Professor Frans van Vught (University of Twente, member of the Board of the European University Association) and Dr. Stephan Bieri (president of the ETH council of the Eidgenössische Fachhochschulkommission (Swiss higher education commission)), the Accreditation Council was able to win qualified experts with international experience in the quality assurance field.

The managing director of the Foundation is a member of the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation and the newly established Appeals and Complaints Committee of ENQA. His international expertise as a member of evaluator expert groups and international groups of experts is also in demand.

The Foundation is also represented by the chairperson, managing director and programme managers in all four working groups of the ECA on the themes of “New Developments in Accreditation”, “Mutual Recognition”, “European

² Prof. Kohler chaired the Accreditation Council from April 2005 to February 2007

Initiatives” and “Information Tool for Accreditation Decisions”.

The international networking is reciprocal. With Peter Findlay from QAA, Ossi Lindqvist from FINHEEC and Jon Haakstad from NOKUT for example, the Accreditation Council has appointed three qualified international experts in its working group for the further development of accreditation in Germany.

At procedure level, the Accreditation Council set a new tone with the cross-border procedure for the reaccreditation of FIBAA, which began in autumn 2006. The project, which was carried out in collaboration with the Dutch-Flemish accreditation institution (NVAO), uses the synergy effects resulting from the organisational merging of two procedures without affecting the clear allocation of responsibility and respective accreditation decisions. In fact, the joint procedure runs according to the criteria and procedure guidelines set out by the Accreditation Council. One of the two international experts appointed in accordance with the resolution of the Accreditation Council is an employee of NVAO, which ensures an adequate information flow. Accreditation decisions are made independently – by the Accreditation Council on the one side and the NVAO on the other side – based on the information generated during the procedure.

The criteria and procedures developed by the Accreditation Council meet European and international standards. By adopting the “Criteria for the Accreditation of Accreditation Agencies”, which cover the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* of the ENQA that were expressly recognised in full by the signatory states in the declaration of Bergen, the Accreditation Council has made a key contribution to the mutual recognition of accreditation decisions and thus also of final degrees in a European context. Hence, it

is assured that the accreditation procedure, in the course of which the Accreditation Council's seal is awarded, is carried out on the basis of internationally recognised standards and guidelines. (See also the table of equivalence of the ESG and the criteria and resolutions of the Accreditation Council).

Appendix 3.1 Table of equivalence

4. Information and communication

4.1 Presentation of the Accreditation Council's work

The Foundation presents an annual activity report, which provides details of the results of the Foundation's work, as well as of current developments in accreditation in a national and international context.

One of the key tools used to publish information for the federal states, Higher Education Institutions, agencies and interested members of the public is the Foundation website. It contains an overview of all rules and regulations concerning the accreditation of agencies and the accreditation of study programmes. The resolutions of the Accreditation Council, as well as relevant documents and resolutions by the KMK and HRK, are available to users as PDF files on the Foundation website. The website also contains information on the German accreditation system, members of the Foundation bodies, agencies accredited by the Accreditation Council, contact persons at the head office and dates of Accreditation Council meetings. To ensure the transparency of the procedures carried out by the Accreditation Council for the (re)accreditation of agencies, all key documents, such as accreditation applications from agencies, the evaluation report, agency responses, Accreditation Council resolutions and other documents submitted by the agencies, are published on the Foundation website.

Extensive revision and redesign of the Foundation website was commissioned in late 2006. As an information platform for agencies, the Foundation website will provide a password-protected area from mid-2007, giving, amongst others, an overview of all unfavourable accreditation deci-

sions and contact persons at the state ministries responsible for career development.

4.2 Information and consultation

Media and interested public: The media and interested public are also informed about current developments, projects and resolutions of the Accreditation Council via the EvaNet newsletter as well as the Informationsdienst Wissenschaft (idw).

On the occasion of presenting the 2005 Activity Report, a press conference took place in Berlin on 13 July 2006 at which the chairman of the Foundation provided information on the accreditation status in Germany, the work of the Accreditation Council and the completed procedures for the reaccreditation of the agencies ASIIN, ACQUIN and ZEvA.

The Foundation sees it as its task to improve the level of awareness about the accreditation system among the relevant interested groups and interested members of the national and international public. On one hand this is achieved by answering a large number of telephone and written enquiries from students, universities, ministries, professional associations and agencies on general aspects of accreditation, resolutions adopted by the Accreditation Council and current accreditation procedures. The Foundation's head office is generally manned from Monday to Friday between 8 am and 6 pm and offers free consulting services. On the other hand, the Foundation is also represented by members and employees from the head office at a wide range of professional conferences, seminars, etc. It contributes presentations on issues of accreditation or quality assurance and study reform in a broad sense.

Appendix 4.2.1 Activities of the Accreditation Council's members

The Accreditation Council is increasingly consulted as an adviser in questions of study reform and the Bologna Process in particular – this goes beyond its direct task area of accreditation. It has therefore established itself as a recognised higher education policy player in Germany whose expertise is in demand. The Foundation is, for example, represented in the working group “Continuation of the Bologna Process” of the KMK and BMBF, in the “Innovative Circle of Academic Further Education” of the BMBF and on the ERASMUS advisory council of the BMBF.

Agencies: In 2006 the agencies were informed about the results of the consultations, about resolutions of the Accreditation Council and their interpretation and about changed positions on resolutions in form of a total of six newsletters on the part of the Foundation chairman. In addition, a continuous information flow between the Accreditation Council and the agencies is ensured by the membership of a representative of the agencies in the Accreditation Council in a consultative capacity.

Members of the Accreditation Council: The head office has issued a newsletter at irregular intervals between meetings, which informs members of the Accreditation Council of developments from the agencies and international networks, results of working group meetings or discussions with the chairpersons and of appointments and upcoming or planned events since November 2006.

Bodies of the Foundation: The individual bodies of the Foundation are required to inform each other of decisions and resolutions of importance in sufficient detail and in good time pursuant to Article 4 Clause 1 of the Constitution. To ensure the flow of information within the Foundation, the chairpersons of the Accreditation Council and the Foundation Council or the vice-chairpersons participate in the meetings of the

respective other Foundation body in a consultative capacity in accordance with Article 4 Clause 2 of the Constitution.

4.3 Publication of accreditation data

An up-to-date database on the Foundation website (www.akkreditierungsrat.de) offers the federal states, those interested in study courses, employers and interested members of the public detailed information on the profiles and evaluations of the currently accredited study programmes. By linking the database to the “Hochschulkompass” (Higher Education Compass, an information directory) of the HRK, only minimum effort is required to ensure a high level of reliability and topicality of the accreditation data. The database can also be used to generate permanently up-to-date statistics, informing database users of the number of procedures completed – grouped by degrees, subject groups, conditions, federal states, accreditation agencies and standard periods of study.

In accordance with Article 10 Clause 2 of the agreements concluded between the Foundation and the individual agencies, the agencies are obliged to enter data on the study programmes accredited by them into the database of the Accreditation Council without undue delay and to update them, where required. In this way, it is ensured that the degree of currency of accreditation data is permanently at a comparatively high level

4.4 Statistical data

By December 2006 the six agencies accredited by the Accreditation Council accredited a total of about 2,100 bachelor and master programmes offered by state or state-recognised Higher Education Institutions in Germany. This means that currently about 35% of the offered bachelor and

master programmes, which in turn make up more than 50% of the study programmes listed in total in the HRK Higher Education Compass, bear the seal of the Accreditation Council. Although the percentage of accredited study programmes of the bachelor and master programmes offered in total has not changed compared to the same period last year (35%), a further increase in the number of study programmes accredited annually can be noticed as the portion of bachelor and master programmes in the study programmes offered in total increased from about 35% to more than 50% within one year.

Of these 2,100 accredited bachelor and master programmes, more than 50% received conditional accreditation, while just 42 study programmes were refused accreditation by resolution of the responsible accreditation commission.

According to the agencies, 47 applications for accreditation have been withdrawn prior to completion of the accreditation procedure to date. The number of accredited degree (Diplom) programmes is negligible with about 23 study programmes.

The Foundation website provides current figures at: www.akkreditierungsrat.de/index.php?id=41

5. Further development of the accreditation system

In a resolution made by the KMK on 22 September 2005 ("Quality Assurance in Teaching"), the Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany was given the task of developing recommendations to improve the accreditation system. The aim of these was to simplify the accreditation procedure and reduce process costs and effort for Higher Education Institutions if they can prove that they have a reliable internal quality assurance system.³

On 24 May 2006, as a result of a board resolution, the Foundation filed a funding application with the "Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft" (Association of Sponsors for German Science) for a project that is to substantiate the development of recommendations of the Accreditation Council to the HRK and the KMK empirically.

To accompany the activities related to the refinement of the system, the Accreditation Council set up a working group and commissioned it with the task to phrase requirements for the German accreditation system with a view to its development potential taking into account (a) the expertise of interested parties (particularly Higher Education Institutions and agencies), (b) the results of the current relevant pilot projects and (c) experiences of accreditation institutions from abroad and elaborate a proposal for recommendations of the Accreditation Council.

The working group consists of members of the Accreditation Council, representatives from the

HRK, the KMK and agencies and three international experts. In the period under review the working group convened for two meetings on 27 September and on 12 December 2006. In addition, the Accreditation Council held an expert discussion about the requirements for further development of accreditation in Berlin on 29 November 2006 in which also international experts participated.

A first resolution of the Accreditation Council on the recommendations for the further development of the accreditation system in Germany is designated for the second quarter 2007. After completion of the project, the results are to be presented during a public conference and published both in German and in English.

³ KMK decision: Quality Assurance in Higher Education of 22 September 2005 and Key Points for the Further Development of Accreditation in Germany of 15 October 2004

6. Resources

6.1 Finances

The Foundation is financed by the 16 federal states pursuant to Article 4 Clause 1 AFL. The Foundation may also levy fees for its tasks according to Article 4 AFL to cover administration expenses. The federal states only offer funding if the administrative expenses of the Foundation are not covered by fees. The fee regulations are currently being decided on.

According to the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs annual funds in the amount of EUR 400,000 are required to perform the Foundation's tasks. In contrast, the Standing Conference of Finance Ministers of the federal states determined an annual allocation requirement of merely EUR 350,000 for financing the Foundation on 1 December 2005. Besides, an additional amount of EUR 10,000 was assigned to the Foundation for the 2006 and 2007 fiscal years each to cover relocation and initial installation costs.

On the basis thereof the Accreditation Council passed the 2006/2007 budget during its 44th meeting on 19 September 2005 to which the Foundation Council agreed during its 3rd meeting on 7 October 2005.

As part of the activities for developing recommendations for the improvement of the accreditation system in Germany, the Accreditation Council has succeeded in obtaining third-party funds of EUR 40,000 from the "Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft" (Association of Sponsors for German Science). The council was able to use this to cover the additional costs for working group meetings, conferences and study visits.

6.2 Personnel, spatial and material resources

Due to the increase of financial means effective from early 2006 and the anticipated improvement of the head office's personnel equipment, a programme manager position (100%) and an assistant position (50%) could be newly established and filled in February 2006. Since February 2006, the head office of the Foundation has consisted of a managing director, one programme manager (100%), one programme manager (75%), another programme manager (75%) and an assistant (50%). This corresponds to four full-time equivalents. The managing director and employees are all higher education graduates and have permanent contracts. They are remunerated in line with the wage terms of the Public Sector Collective Agreement on Länder (TV-L).

The Foundation's new head office has four rented offices at Adenauerallee 73 in 53113 Bonn with a total of around 120 square metres of space. It was occupied at the beginning of the year.

IT facilities include the latest hardware and software; each workplace is equipped with a computer (Pentium IV), flat screen, telephone, and internet connection.