Stiftung zur Akkreditierung von Studiengängen in Deutschland

Akkreditierungsrat ▮▮

**Activity Report
2007**

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Content   **Page**

Preamble

An import task of the *Foundation for Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany* is to design the nationwide and Higher Education Institution crossing accreditation system in Germany and thereby to contribute to the assurance and development of quality of study and education on German Higher Education Institutions. The Accreditation Council thereby always needs to abide by the dictum that Higher Education Institutions are responsible for the quality mainly themselves. An important step on this way to a stronger self-responsibility of Higher Education Institution was undertaken by the Accreditation Council with the development of a system accreditation, which has drawn a lot of university political attention in the last year. The subject of the system accreditation is evaluating the internal quality assurance systems on Higher Education Institutions and enabling the Higher Education Institutions in the future to choose between the accreditation of individual study programmes (programme accreditation) and the accreditation of their internal quality assurance system (system accreditation).

After the Accreditation Council weighed up the pros and cons for a system accreditation in the last one and a half years and developed respective criteria under inclusion of all interest groups as well as international experts, its main attention will now focus on the specific accreditation praxis. As a result of the here obtained information the Accreditation Council will revise its body of regulation in a foreseeable time in order to also continually optimize the system accreditation with regard to quality development.

Apart from the further development of the accreditation system the Accreditation Council has of course also dedicated itself to the tasks that belong to the operative business of the *Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes.* This includes especially the re-accreditation of Accreditation Agencies, the revision and streamlining of the existing body of regulations as well as random controlling of a total of twelve accreditation procedures that were carried out by agencies in the past year.

A look at the past year shows that the Accreditation Council was able to contribute to a further improvement of the system quality with a high amount of efficiency and despite its limited funds. Whether this positive assessment can withstand a critical external evaluation will not at last be shown by the results of the running evaluation of the Accreditation Council. That an "external view" must especially include the international perspective is made clear by the explicit consideration of the *European Standards and Guidelines at the evaluation of the Accreditation Council.* Quality assurance can only become an important contribution to the European Higher Education Area if the two-way recognition of national quality assurance procedures can be warranted on basis of a mutual quality understanding.

1. Implementation of System Accreditation

1.1 Requirements for the further Development of the Accreditation System

Since the implementation of the programme accreditation in the year 1999 over 3000 Bachelor and Master study programmes of German Higher Education Institutions have meanwhile passed successfully through the accreditation procedure. The resulting reform performance of the Higher Education Institutions, that is visibly reflected in the comprehensive revision of existing as well as in the development of new and innovative study programmes, should despite the still to be accomplished challenges not be underestimated. As not to be expected differently for the implementation of essential and far reaching novelties, the accreditation, as a new instrument of quality assurance, was confronted from the beginning with critics from very different directions. Herby the central and permanent stated critic point was and still is mainly referring to the amount of resources the Higher Education Institutions have to provide for the frequently to be carried out accreditation and re-accreditation procedures.

Although the Accreditation Council reacted to this not entirely unfounded critic with the implementation of a bundled accreditation of several study programmes and this way contributed to a significant increase in procedure efficiency, the further optimisation of the accreditation was demanded by the opponents of the programme accreditation. Here the advice with regard to the during the Bologna process pursuit strengthening of autonomy and self-responsibility of Higher Education Institutions played an important role. The demand for rationalisation and acceleration of accreditation procedures was also embraced by the Conference of German Cultural Ministers . In their resolution of 15/10/2004[1] they described the accreditation of individual study programmes indeed as still the rule but announced the possibility to facilitate the accreditation procedure upon existence of reliable quality assurance systems at Higher Education Institutions. One year later the Conference of German Cultural Ministers [2] demanded the development of a concept that made it possible long-term to supplement the programme accreditation by a system accreditation or an institutional accreditation and asked the Accreditation Council to develop respective suggestions.

The Accreditation Council showed itself open-minded for a far-reaching further development of the accreditation instrument with the goal to put the responsibility of the Higher Education Institutions for the quality assurance in study and education even stronger into the centre than the programme accreditation could ever do because of its sectoral evaluation character. Here the Accreditation Council let itself guide by the principle that a further development of the accreditation system with the goal of an effort minimisation may in no case be carried out at the cost of the quality of the procedure and the from the accreditation resulting qualification level. Especially in consideration of the international recognition of accreditation decisions the central task of the Accreditation Council lays in guaranteeing the value of the accreditation seal permanently and thereby to ensure the reputation of German study programmes nationally and internationally. But at the same time it must be in the interest of the Accreditation Council to develop an instrument that encourages the assumption of quality responsibility by the Higher Education Institutions, prevents unnecessary overcharge for Higher Education Institutions and promotes their controllability with the goal of a continued quality development.

Indeed the results of the university internal quality assurance procedure has already been considered for the previous accreditation procedures: The Higher Education Institutions must in accordance with criteria

9 of the criteria for the accreditation of study programmes[3] prove the existence of a university internal quality management and its consequent application. The proposed supplementation of the programme accreditation by the accreditation of institutions, processes and university internal quality management systems however aims at an essential and far-reaching modification of the German accreditation system. In contrast to the programme accreditation, that constitutes a direct verification and certification of the quality of a specific study programme and where therefore the subject of the evaluation and the subject of the certification are one, the evaluation of superior university internal processes and structures in the system accreditation have to deal with a much more complex cause-and-effect mechanism. Here it is about the question if controlling processes and structures envisioned by the Higher Education Institutions are appropriate to guarantee the quality linked to the specified criteria of each of the Higher Education Institutions developed and offered study programme permanently and reliable.

The further development of the accreditation system in this here designed sense does not only require the development of appropriate procedures and criteria but also confronts the Accreditation Council with the task to guarantee the acceptance of such a modified accreditation system by students, employers and the public.

When the Accreditation Council devoted itself in mid 2006 to the task of developing recommendations for the further development of the accreditation system it did this in consideration of some essential contemplations:

► The further development of the accreditation system must build upon the already existing national and international experiences, where the experiences in Germany should be essentially with regard to the relevant pilot projects in the area of accreditation and quality assurance.

► At the further development of the accreditation system participating interest groups (Higher Education Institutions, students, Federal States, profession and agencies) as well as international experts have to be included from the beginning. This approach does not only benefit the acceptance but also the quality of the system, because the expertise as well as the different point of views of the interest groups participating in the development process are considered early and comprehensively.

► The efficiency increase is an important but not the exclusive goal of the further development of the accreditation system. The rationalisation efforts must not lead to a decrease in procedure and result quality.

► The implementation of a system accreditation or institutional accreditation in the meaning of the resolution of the conference of the ministers of education supplements the existing programme accreditation and does not constitute an essential system change.

To accompany this further system development the Accreditation Council has in 2006 established a working group which task it is to verbalize the requirements to the German accreditation system with regard to its development potential and to work out a proposal for a recommendation for the Accreditation Council. The working group *Further Development of the Accreditation System* met in the period from

September 2006 to September 2007 for a total of seven sessions. Already the composition of the working group, which was not only appointed of members of the Accreditation Council but also of representatives of the conference of university principals, Conference of German Cultural Ministers , the profession and the students as well as three international experts makes the intention of the Accreditation Council clear to include the expertise of the interest groups as well as the experience of international accreditation institutions in the process of the further development of the German accreditation system at an early stage.

The working group first attended to the development of a strength-weakness-analysis of the existing accreditation system from which central requirements on the further development of the German system could be deducted. Additionally the working group created a typology of possible in international environment and in different occurrence applied accreditation systems with the goal to evaluate their ability to supplement and further develop the German accreditation system. On the part of the branch of the Accreditation Council study visits to the *Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education* (QAA) and to the *Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education* (NOKUT) were carried out in order to include the obtained experiences with institutional or process-related components of the accreditation in the discussion.

On the basis of analytic preliminary work the answers to the following questions and challenges with regard to the conceptual further development of the accreditation system had to be found:

Autonomy of Higher Education Institutions: The dynamic quality approach based on the accreditation in accordance with the central goals of the Bologna processes implicates the intention to transfer the responsibility of quality assurance and development increasingly to the Higher Education Institutions themselves. In this context the question arises how far and in what way the accreditation can enhance the understanding and self-responsibility of the Higher Education Institutions for a continuing increase of quality of study and education.

Strengthening of the Controllability of Higher Education Institutions: Quality assurance and development constitute increasingly the basis for strategic and operative decision activity of the Higher Education Institutions as independent players, not at last with focus on the resources assignment. This is a new understanding of quality assurance that becomes, with the goal of quality development and incensement, a central element of strategic Higher Education Institution development. The accreditation of study programmes can, because of its programme centring, only meet this demand in a limited way. Even if the efficiency with regard to individual study programmes is high, their addition does still not, also with regard to its background with financial and time impact, result in a sufficient amount of information in order to increase the controllability of the entire institution.

Bulk Question: The programme related accreditation approach ensures that the quality of each individual study programme of a Higher Education Institution - either in the scope of a single or in the programme of a bundled process, will be verified. While the advantage of this study programme related accreditation approach lies in the "area-wide" character of the quality verification of all study programmes offered by governmentally and non-governmentally recognized Higher Education Institutions, the number

of the still to be accredited, and especially the successive frequently to be re-accredited study pro-grammes, are challenging the system and its capacities in quantitative regards immensely, especially with focus on the furthermore to be guaranteed ensuring of the qualitative decision consistency.

1.2 Recommendations by the Accreditation Council

The Conference of German Cultural Ministers has asked the Accreditation Council to develop recom-mendations for a further development of the accreditation system which envisions a simplified accredita-tion procedure and reduces the process efforts for the Higher Education Institutions upon proof of a reli-able Higher Education Institution internal quality assurance system. Also upon request of the Conference of German Cultural Ministers and as an advance to the recommendations of a further development, the Accreditation Council should provide a preliminary report that should make it possible for the Conference of German Cultural Ministers to already pass a landmark decision about the implementation of a system or process accreditation on their 318. plenary session mid June 2007.

The Accreditation Council has honoured this request and provided with resolution of 08/05/2007 on the basis of the preliminary work of the working group *Further Development of the Accreditation System* rec-ommendations for the implementation of procedures for the system accreditation. The "Recommenda-tions for the further development of the accreditation system"[4] aim at a tentative supplement of the cur-rent system for the accreditation of study programmes with a system for the verification of Higher Educa-tion Institution internal quality assurance systems. The accreditation procedure should verify and certify the institutional and procedural precautions sufficiently with regard to definition, assurance and perma-nent increase of quality of their study programmes. Also the Accreditation Council recommends the Con-ference of German Cultural Ministers to accompany the trial phase with a respective monitoring.

The recommendations of the Accreditation Council initially describe the corners for the trial of the system accreditation without already going into details of the specific design of possible procedures and criteria. The centre of the model for the system accreditation proposed by the Accreditation Council envisions to award the study programmes of a Higher Education Institution by means of an external evaluation of the Higher Education Institution internal quality assurance procedure a temporary accreditation. Thus a Higher Education Institution with a positive system accreditation should be certified, that its quality assur-ance system in the area of study and education is appropriate to reach the qualification goals and to war-rant the quality standards of its study programmes. This option of accreditation should be next to the ex-isting programme accreditation.

In detail the recommendations survey the accreditation subject (the internal quality assurance system of the Higher Education Institution in the area of study and education), the prerequisites for admission for the agencies as well as for the applying Higher Education Institution, the procedure components and re-sults of the system accreditation as well as the criteria for the evaluation of the internal quality assurance system. Additionally a trial phase is proposed, after whose end the first results of the system accreditation will be evaluated by the Accreditation Council and the Conference of German Cultural Ministers . Preced-

ing the recommendations are guidelines that reveal the expectations and goals in connection with the implementation of the system accreditation. Thus the Accreditation Council advises -particularly with focus on the goals in connection with the Bologna process- explicitly that the Higher Education Institutions are capable themselves to warrant a high quality in study and education and are therefore responsible for the assurance and continued improvement of quality and study programmes. The further development of the accreditation system must therefore strengthen the self-responsibility of the Higher Education Institutions and provide them, in accordance with their responsibility for the quality assurance, with a bigger leeway at the choice of the accreditation procedure. Additionally the further development of the accreditation system must comply with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education* Area (ESG) and therefore warrant its European acceptance. In summary the further development of the accreditation system should remove the weaknesses of the programme accreditation but keep its strengths and warrant a further continuation of the accreditation procedure in Germany.

In their resolution from 13/06/2007 "Further Development of the Accreditation System" the Conference of German Cultural Ministers declared that the recommendations for the further development of the accreditation system passed by the Accreditation Council on 08/05/2007 basically constituted an appropriate basis for the implementation of a system accreditation in addition to the programme accreditation. In this spirit they assigned the Accreditation Council the task to submit concrete preconditions and criteria for the system accreditation in time for the conference of ministers on 15.11.2007. Also the resolution stresses that programme and system accreditation were different approaches to the quality assurance in study and education on Higher Education Institutions and would be carried out parallel long-term. The task of the Accreditation Council should be to accompany this process continually and to submit an evaluation-capable report to the Conference of German Cultural Ministers after five years.

1.3 Resolutions of the Accreditation Council with regard to System Accreditation

As a result of the resolution by the Conference of German Cultural Ministers for the further development of the accreditation system dated 13/06/2007 the for this function responsible working group of the Accreditation Council met again to counsel about the preconditions and criteria for the system accreditation. In September 2007 the working group *Further Development of the Accreditation System* submitted a respective resolution recommendation to the Accreditation Council on whose basis the Accreditation Council passed the "Criteria for the System Accreditation" and the "General Rules for the Implementation of Procedures for the System Accreditation" on 29/10/2007. Already on 08/10/2007 the Accreditation Council also had passed the criteria for the admission of the currently accredited Accreditation Agencies for the implementation of the system accreditation.

As the subject of the system accreditation the "Criteria for the system Accreditations" name the internal quality assurance system of a Higher Education Institution in the area of study an education. In the course of the system accreditation the relevant structures and processes for study and education should be tested upon their suitability for the achievement of qualification goals and the warranting of high quality

whereas the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG), the specifications of the conference of the ministers of education and the criteria of the Accreditation Council are applied. Additionally the system evaluation should be supplemented by profile evaluations of study-related characteristics (characteristic sample) and deepened evaluation of selected study programmes (programme samples). A positive system accreditation certifies a Higher Education Institution, that its quality assurance system in the area of study and education is appropriate to reach the qualification goals and to warrant the quality standards of its study programmes. Study programmes that are introduced after the system accreditation or which were already subject to the internal quality assurance in accordance to the standards of the accredited system should also in the future have the official seal of the Accreditation Council for the period related to the system accreditation. In special circumstances a Higher Education Institution should be able to apply for the system accreditation for the internal quality assurance system of one or more study organisational sub-divisions of the Higher Education Institution, if these have the controlling competence and operative responsibility for study and education, that is design and implementation of its offered study programmes and for the quality assurance in study and education.

With these resolutions the Accreditation Council has created the basis for the implementation of the system accreditation in Germany. The resolution however was passed with the proviso of the suspension by the chairman of the Accreditation Council in order to be able to react to resolutions by the Conference of German Cultural Ministers for the implementation of the system accreditation.

On its 320. session on 13/12/2007 the Conference of German Cultural Ministers discussed the resolutions by the Accreditation Council for the implementation of the system accreditation from 29/10/2007 and passed a corresponding resolution. In it the Conference of German Cultural Ministers largely followed the resolution passed by the Accreditation Council. At the same time the ministers of education asked for individual modifications and concretions with regard to the admission of Higher Education Institutions to the system accreditation, to the number and selection of the to be carried out random controlling as well as to the implementation of programme samples in the middle of the accreditation period. Because the resolution of the Conference of German Cultural Ministers made a new discussion and resolution by the Accreditation Council necessary, the Chairman of the Accreditation Council suspended the "Criteria for the System Accreditation" as well as the "General Regulations for the Implementation of Procedures for the System Accreditation" on 17/12/2007 in writing and proposed a new resolution for the next session of the Accreditation Council on 28-29/02/2008.

Because the "General Regulations for the Implementation of Procedures for the System Accreditation" are of central importance for the design of the procedures by the agencies, the admission of agencies for the implementations of procedures for the system accreditation can not be granted before the final resolution by the Accreditation Council. The decision about the admission of the agencies will therefore likely be made on the 56. session of the Accreditation Council on 23-24/06/2008.

With the passing of the resolution for the implementation of the system accreditation the necessity to adjust current resolutions of the Accreditation Council with regard to the modified basic conditions arose.

This adjustment was used by the Accreditation Council as a motive to simplify the regulation body, to increase its comprehensibility and remove redundancies.

After the final resolution by the Accreditation Council the procedure of the system accreditation will likely be introduced in mid 2008 and appear in addition to the current programme accreditation. This way the Higher Education Institution can choose in the future whether they let their study programmes accredited individually like before (programme accreditation) or whether they let their system of internal quality assurance in study and education be verified (system accreditation).

After the passing of the resolution for the implementation of the system accreditation and the involved successful completion of the efforts of the Accreditation Council for the further development of the accreditation system, the results will be presented on a conference on 13/03/2003 in Berlin and afterwards be published in German and in English.

2. Activities of the Foundation in the year 2007: Tasks and Results

2.1 Re-accreditation of Accreditation Agencies

One of the most important operative and frequently to be carried out tasks of the Accreditation Council is in accordance with § 2 (1) No 1 ASG to accredit or re-accredit Accreditation Agencies. Related to the accreditation by the Accreditation Council is the authorization to award Bachelor or Master study programmes of public or publicly recognized German Higher Education Institutions the official seal of the *Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany.*

Already on its 48. session on 22/06/2006 the Accreditation Council started the procedure for the re-accreditation of the *Agency for Quality Assurance by accreditation of study programmes e.V.*(registered association) (AQAS) and of the *Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation* (FIBAA) and appointed experts for the procedures. Both procedures were carried out in compliance to the "Criteria for the Accreditation of Accreditation Agencies"[5] and the "General Regulations for the Implementation of Procedures for the Accreditation and Re-Accreditation of Accreditation Agencies"[6].

On the basis of the evaluation reports submitted by the respective expert group and following the separately carried-out hearings of the agency representatives, the Accreditation Council re-accredited the AQAS as well as the FIBAA for a period of five years on its 51. session on 14-15/02/2007. If the *European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education* (ENQA) resolves until 31/12/2009 that an accreditation with a period of more than five years is permissible in compliance with the European Standards of Accreditation then the accreditation period will be extended according to the then valid European standards but not longer than for an additional three years. Because at the time of the resolution the AQAS as well as the FIBAA could not comply with some of the quality requirements, that were categorized as not essential according to §1 (3) of the resolution "Decisions of the Accreditation Council: Types and Effects" from 15/12/2005, the re-accreditation of both agencies was respectively conditionally granted.

The agencies AQAS and FIBAA were not the only agencies that the Accreditation Council has conditionally re-accredited, already in 2006 the agencies ACQUIN, ASIIN and ZEvA were respectively conditionally accredited. Hence the necessity arose in 2007 to discuss the respective compliance with the conditions by the mentioned agencies and to pass a respective resolution:

ACQUIN: The re-accreditation of ACQUIN on 22/06/2006 was implemented with three conditions of which one was withdrawn by resolution of the Accreditation Council from 30-31/08/2006. On its 51. session on 14-15/02/2007 the Accreditation Council confirmed the compliance with the conditions by ACQUIN after detailed discussion.

AQAS: The re-accreditation of AQAS was implemented on 14-15/02/2007 with a total of twelve conditions. The deadline for the compliance with the conditions was, with exception, set to 30/10/2007 and was extended by the Board of the Foundation until 27/11/2007. One condition was made with a deadline until 31/12/2007. A resolution about the compliance of the condition regarding the procedure for the re-accreditation of AQAS is intended for the 55. session of the Accreditation Council on 28-29/02/2008.

ASIIN: The re-accreditation of ASIIN was implemented on 22/06/2006 with a total of seven conditions. On its 51. session on 14-15/02/2007 the Accreditation Council confirmed the compliance with the conditions by ASIIN after detailed discussion.

FIBAA: The re-accreditation of FIBAA was implemented on 14-15/02/2007 with a total of nine conditions. On its 54. session on 08/10/2007 the Accreditation Council has recognized the compliance with the conditions by the FIBAA with one exception and has assigned the Chairman the task of the final clarification regarding the last remaining condition. After a conversation of the Chairman with the Management of the FIBAA and due to some modifications carried out by the agency after the conversation all conditions for the accreditation of the FIBAA are now met.

ZEvA: The re-accreditation of ZeVa was implemented on 22/06/2006 with a total of eleven conditions. On its session on 14-15/02/2007 and on 18/06/2007 the Accreditation Council has accepted the compliance with eight conditions. The resolution about one of the remaining condition compliances is intended for the 55. session of the Accreditation Council on 28-29/02/2008; for two further remaining condition compliances the ZEvA has applied for an extension of the deadline until 01/01/2009. The application was granted by the Foundation Board.

The resolutions of the Accreditation Council for the individual re-accreditation procedures including the conditions and deadlines involved in the accreditation, the evaluation reports, the application reasons as well as the statements by the agencies are published on the *Foundation for the Accreditation of Study programmes* Website.

Because the criteria for the accreditation of Accreditation Agencies passed by the Accreditation Council include the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG), the accreditation or re-accreditation of agencies by the Accreditation Council also effects their acceptance by ENQA. If an agency was unconditionally accredited or if it complied with the conditions of its

accreditation it will be granted a ENQA full membership after a formal examination without any further procedure. The requirement is however that the evaluation report by the Accreditation Council can prove the compliance with the ESG explicitly. Due to this acceptance regulation the ASIIN was granted the ENQA full membership after compliance with the conditions in February 2007. The ENQA full member-ship was also confirmed this way for both ACQUIN (in September 2007) and for FIBAA (in December 2007)

2.2 Controlling and Monitoring

According to the Accreditation Foundation Law (ASG) the central task of the Accreditation Council is the controlling of the procedures for accreditation of study programmes implemented by the agencies. Scope and procedure of the controlling as well as the selection of the to be controlled accreditation procedures are regulated by resolutions by the Accreditation Council. The resolution "Controlling Procedures by the Accreditation Council for the Controlling of Accreditation carried out by Agencies"" from 21/09/2006 envi-sions random controlling as well as motive related controlling. The random controlling is carried out in four cases per year and agency, the motive related controlling occurs upon existence of sufficient initial suspi-cion of poor implementation and decision of an accreditation procedure. Beyond the controlling in accor-dance to § 2 (1) No. 4 ASG the Accreditation Council accompanies one accreditation procedure per year and agency by attending the local inspection and the decision session of the organ responsible for the agency's accreditation decisions. The participation serves the information exchange between the Accredi-tation Council and the agencies and at the same time allows the Accreditation Council to gain insight into the operatives business of the agency. The resolution for the "Design of Controlling Procedures" from 18/06/2007[7] envisions that the Accreditation Council commissions the Foundation's Head Office with the controlling of accreditation procedures as well as with the procedure attendance as a general rule. The selection of the random controlling occurs by drawing, a note about the results of the controlling will be prepared, which the agency receives upon indication of defects at the statement. If the indications of de-fects are not cleared doubtlessly by the agency's statement the Board of the Foundation makes a final decision (see chapter 2.3)

Random Controlling: On the basis of above mentioned resolutions the Accreditation Council has con-trolled a total of 24 randomly selected accreditation procedures on file base in the report period. Twelve of the 24 procedures have been completed, another twelve procedures are currently still under examination. The random controlling lead in nine out of twelve procedures to specific indications of possible defects and therefore to the request of a statement by the affected agency; hence there were no objections to three accreditation procedures. Two controlling procedures could be closed immediately after the state-ment by the agency. In a total of seven cases the results of the controlling were submitted to the Board of the Foundation for a final decision. Because, due to the statement of the agencies, the indications of pos-sible defects turned out to be partly baseless or partly not very significant an objection of the procedures in the sense of §7 (1) of the Agreement between the Foundation and the Agency could be abandoned.[8]

The Board of the Foundation has however in several cases encouraged a modification of the procedure, which will be subject for future random controlling. The indications of possible defects were mostly related to the non-consideration or at least not documented consideration of individual criteria. The evaluation reports showed depending on agency and procedure partly significant differences mainly with regard to scope of evaluation, reasons depth and the presentation of the documented content. The evaluation reports did in some cases give only few or no indication of actual consideration of all criteria in the scope of the evaluation procedure. Additionally empty wording or purely protocolary passages resulted in not many cases in less significant evaluations. The results of the random controlling were essentially confirmed by a cursory review of all evaluation reports and decisions to the accredited study programmes in the first half of 2007 carried out by the Foundation's Head Office. The agencies reacted mostly constructively to the advices issued by the Accreditation Council and accepted the random controlling explicitly as a possibility to review their own procedures and modify them if applicable. Because already a few random controlling suffice to detect defect patterns the random controlling turned out to be an effective instrument of the procedure controlling. If the error sources, that the defect pattern are based on, are corrected due to the objection by the Accreditation Council it can also be assumed that the number of defect procedures will decrease within a relatively short period of time.

Motive related Controlling: On the basis of the above mentioned resolutions the Accreditation Council has carried out a total of six motive related controlling of accreditation procedures in the year 2007, of which five could be closed in the report period. The controlling of two out of the five accreditation procedures did not result in any indication for defects. In another controlling procedures one defect was detected and a modification of the practice for accreditation procedures was advised. One accreditation procedure showed some formal defects that however did not result in any disadvantage for the Higher Education Institution so that an objection in accordance with §7 (1) of the Agreement between the Foundation and the Agencies could be abandoned.[9] Despite the for the agency positive results it submitted an objection to the Foundation Board of the *Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany* against the decision or the statement of a formal defect by the Accreditation Council The Foundation Board did however confirm the legitimacy of the decision by the Accreditation Council and rejected the objection by the agency. The last of the five closed controlling procedures resulted in an objection. In accordance to §7 (1) of the Agreement between the Agency and the Accreditation Council the agency was instructed to issue a retro-active condition in respect to the content of the objection for it's implemented accreditation procedure.

Audition: In 2007 the employees of the Head Office attended to a total of six accreditation procedures in form of a participation in the evaluation and commission sessions. The attendance to accreditation procedures proved its value with regard to the mutual information exchange between the players in the accreditation system. Because the participation in evaluation and commission sessions offers the possibility to learn about the not documented components of a procedure - e.g. the discussion within the evaluation group or the preparation of the evaluation report - the audition is a sensible supplement to the sample controlling of accreditation procedures on the record.

The procedures for the controlling and attendance at accreditation procedures carried out by the Accreditation Council have not only resulted in a gain on insight and experience for the Accreditation Council but also to a productive if not always strain-free exchange between the Council and the agencies. While the Accreditation Council gained insight into the challenges and difficulties confronting the agencies in the daily accreditation practice as a result of the specific characteristics of each single accreditation procedure, the critic points verbalised by the Accreditation Council were at least partly considered as a constructive encouragement for the further development and improvement of its own procedures by the agencies. Especially considering the background of the fact that the Accreditation Council has to warrant the comparability of accreditation procedures, the controlling of the procedures on the basis of frequently carried out random controlling proved to be helpful for the accreditation system in all. Thus defect patterns - for example with regard to the documentation of the evaluation or the consideration of state-shared structural conditions - as well as disparities with regard to the consequent application of criteria by the Accreditation Council could be detected and respective need for action could be suggested in the course of the controlling of the accreditation procedures.

The consequences of the controlling procedures by the Accreditation Council can be roughly sub-divided into two groups: While for the motive related controlling the objections submitted by a third party generally take the centre stage, which require a justified decision by the Accreditation Council in an individual case, the random controlling of the procedures served previously mainly as an instrument of readjustments that is focussing on the quality of future accreditation procedures by the agencies. The readjustment of an accreditation decision by an agency due to an objection by the Accreditation Council in accordance with §7 (1) of the Agreement constitutes in contrast the possibly momentous interference in an accreditation procedure so that this possibility should only be used upon existence of significant quality defects that lead to a false accreditation decision. This fact was considered by the Foundation's Board in all its previous decisions and only in one case in the scope of a motive related controlling the retroactive issuing of a condition was required.

2.3 Resolutions of Accreditation Council

Beyond the resolutions for the implementation of the system accreditation and the recommendations for the further development of the accreditation system (see chapter 1.2 and 1.3) as well as the re-accreditation pf the AQAS and FIBAA agencies (see chapter 2.1) the Accreditation Council has passed a series of further resolutions in 2007. Because the resolutions for the implementation of the system accreditation made the modification of current resolutions necessary anyways, the Accreditation Council used this opportunity to deregulate and streamline the current regulation body and revise the criteria for the accreditation of accreditation agencies and the criteria for the accreditation of study programmes. Modifications were also made to the resolutions "Decisions of the Accreditation Council: Types and Effects" and "Decisions of the Accreditation Agencies: Types and Effects"[10].

Furthermore the Accreditation Council agreed on a new structure for the essential resolutions for the accreditation system. For the future three types of accreditation decisions (1) Accreditation of Agencies, (2) Programme Accreditation and (3) System Accreditation the underlying criteria and -separately- the underlying procedure regulations will now be defined in two separate resolutions.

The blending of criteria with different recipients that resulted from the integration of criteria for the programme accreditation in the current resolution "Criteria for the Accreditation of Accreditation Agencies" could thus be cancelled. As a result of the clean separation between criteria and procedure regulations for the three accreditation types the transparency of the system was overall increased. The passing of the "General Rules for the Implementation of Procedures for the Programme Accreditation"[11] will furthermore improve the procedure transparency particularly for the applying Higher Education Institutions.

The following statement gives an overview about the passed or revised resolutions of the Accreditation Council in 2007[12]:

► **Revision of Criteria for the Accreditation of Agencies** (15/12/2005 in the version of 08/10/2007)

For a better overview the previous chapters: "II. Content related quality Elements of the Programme Accreditation", "III. Procedure related Elements of the Programme Accreditation" and "IV. Exceptions" were split up into separate resolutions. The revised resolution "Criteria for the Accreditation of Accreditation Agencies" now exclusively includes the previously under section I summarized agency specific criteria. The check fields and criteria of previous resolution versions were joint and are now represented by a total of seven criteria. The criteria for the accreditation of agencies in the version of 08/10/2007 will come into effect on 01/01/2008.

► **Revision of Criteria for the Accreditation of Study Programmes** (17/07/2006 in the version of 08/10/2007)

The "Criteria for the Accreditation of Study Programmes" from 08/10/2007 differ only insignificantly from the original version of the criteria from 17/07/2006. The modifications affect the verification of the ability to study the programme, which in the future considers the real work load, the exam organisation, current consulting and support supply, the design of practice part and the recognition regulations for externally performed achievements; furthermore the study programme concept must include an adequate selection procedure and realize the Higher Education Institution's concept for gender equality. And the criteria will also consider the interests of disabled students in the future. Criteria 8 (condition compliance) was cancelled because the compliance with conditions is no quality related criteria but an obligation of the Higher Education Institution to the agency related to the accreditation of a study programme. The condition compliance will incidentally be regulated in the § 5 of the Accreditation Council's resolution : "Decisions of the Agencies: Types and Effects" from 15/12/2006 in the version from 22/06/2006. The criteria for the accreditation of study programmes in the version of 08/10/2007 will come into effect on 01/01/2008.

► **Decisions of the Accreditation Council: Types and Effects (**15/12/2005 in the version of 08/10/2007)

The resolution "Decisions of the Accreditation Council: Types and Effects" will be supplemented with the verbalisation for the admission of the system accreditation. For §1 (1) it is envisioned, that the decisions of the Accreditation Council can relate to the programme accreditation as well as to the system accreditation. To increase the readability and comprehensibility of the resolutions the resolution text was facilitated and shortened.

► **Decisions of the Accreditation Agencies: Types and Effects (15/12/2005 in the version of 08/10/2007)**

In the course of the suspension of resolutions for the implementation of system accreditation (see chapter 1.3) the resolution "Decisions of the Accreditation Agencies: Types and Effects (15/12/2005 in the version of 08/10/2007) was suspended by the Chairman of the Accreditation Council. A new resolution is intended for the session of the Accreditation Council in February 2008.

► **General Rule for the Implementation of Procedures for the Accreditation and Re-Accreditation of Study Programmes** (08/10/2007)

In the course of the suspension of resolutions for the implementation of system accreditation (see chapter 1.3) the resolution "General Rule for the Implementation of Procedures for the Accreditation and Re-Accreditation of Study Programmes" from 08/10/2007 was suspended by the Chairman of the Accreditation Council. A new resolution is intended for the session of the Accreditation Council in February 2008.

► **Design of the Controlling Procedures** (18/06/2007)

In addition to the resolution "Controlling Procedures by the Accreditation Council for the Controlling of Accreditation carried out by Agencies" On the basis of these resolutions, that define the subject and the procedure of the random and motive related controlling of accreditation procedures in a transparent way, the Accreditation Council complies with its legal obligation of the controlling of accreditations carried out by agencies.

► **Mission Statement** (18/06/2007)

In consideration of the Foundation's purpose defined in the Accreditation-Foundation-Law and in view of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG), that demand the publishing of tasks and goals for quality assurance agencies (Standard 3.5), the Accreditation Council passed a *Mission Statement* on 18/06/2007. The *Mission Statement* documents the tasks, goals and principles of the Foundation's work and stresses in this context the specific responsibility of the Higher Education Institutions with regard to quality and quality assurance in study and education. Furthermore the document, that is accessible on the Foundation's website, stresses the importance of a trustful co-operations between the Accreditation Council and the agencies, international partners, Higher Education Institutions and profession not at last in view of the continuance of the further development of the accreditation system.

► **System of internal Quality Assurance** (18/06/2007)

In its resolution "Quality Policy of the Foundation" from 18/06/2007 the Accreditation Council has passed a system of internal quality assurance for the *Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany* on its 53. session.

The Quality Policy declares the continuing controlling and, if applicable, improvement of internal processes in order to warrant a high-quality and efficient compliance with the legal tasks of the Foundation as the central goal of the internal quality assurance. Furthermore the quality measurements aim at ensuring the consistency of the *Foundation* organ's decisions. The measurements of the internal quality assurance are complying with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG) and therefore ensure the international recognition of the Foundation's work.

Subject of the internal quality assurance are the processes and decisions of the *Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany.* It is thereby differentiated between the service provision processes for the compliance with legal tasks (accreditation of accreditation agencies, definition of criteria and procedure regulations for the accreditation procedure, controlling of the agencies work) and the support processes (strategic planning, financial planning, staff recruiting and qualification, committee support). The quality policy names for the service provision processes as well as for the support processes respectively the quality demand of the Foundation and the quality measurements necessary for the compliance with the demand.

To ensure the lasting internal quality assurance the *Foundation* has created a working group "Quality Assurance" consisting of three members of the Accreditation Council. It reports to the Accreditation Council annually and submits improvement suggestions if applicable. The working group works closely with the agencies in order to achieve a general accepted standard of internal quality assurance in the German accreditation system.

► **Accreditation of Master Study Programmes which provide the Qualification for a Teaching Post** (08/10/2007)

For the accreditation of master study programmes which provide the qualification for a teaching post the existence of a teaching post related profile has to be certified according to the above mentioned resolution. For this the state-shared professional requirements for the teaching post education (standards for the educational sciences and state-shared content-wise requirements for the subjects and their didactic) as well as possible state-specific conditions related to content and structural condition have to be created as evaluation benchmarks. Incidentally the state-shared structural conditions for the accreditation of Bachelor and Master study programmes in their valid version have to be applied in accordance with §9 (2) HRG.

► **Usage of Bachelor Modules in Master Study Programmes** (08/10/2007)

Since the implementation of the stepped study structure the differentiation of Bachelor and Master standard has been motive for several discussions. The concern about a possible loss of standard for Masters as a result of the usage of Bachelor modules in Master study programmes appeared in this context time

and again. For this reason the Accreditation Council passed a resolution for the Usage of Bachelor Modules in Master Study Programmes on 08/10/2007. According to the resolution the usage of the Bachelor modules in Master study programmes is permissible for once, if the sub qualification goal, that is achieved by the successful taking of the respective module, serves the achievement of the Master Programme's overall qualification goal in an adequate way. This applies for consecutive as well as for non-consecutive and advanced Master study programmes. The double-usage of modules in the content-wise consecutive sub-areas of the study programme however has to be excluded. Incidentally the following applies: The qualification standards defined in the *National Qualification Scope* of the respective graduation class must be met. The Higher Education Institutions must also ensure that the individual student can not attend the same or the content-wise essentially same module in Bachelor and then again in a Master study programme.

► Accreditation of a Study Programme in Cases of a Supplement of a Bachelor Study Programme by a Placement Year (05/01/2007)

Already in the beginning of the year the Accreditation Council has decided that accreditation agencies can abstain from a local inspection under certain conditions: If a Higher Education Institution applies for an accreditation of an already accredited Bachelor study programme because it made significant modification in form of a supplement by a placement year, but the study programme incidentally was not modified significantly, an execution of the procedure can be made on file base.

► Representation of a German Accreditation Agency in the *Washington Accord* (08/05/2007)

In relation to the application of an agency for membership in the *Washington Accord* the Accreditation Council has resolved on 08/05/2007 that accreditation agencies certified by the Accreditation Council are not permitted to make binding declarations for the recognition of final degrees acquired on German Higher Education Institutions. In the German accreditation system solely the Accreditation Council is responsible in compliance with it legal tasks to define criteria and procedure principles for the accreditation of study programmes and to ensure their consistent and objective application. The Accreditation Council recognizes the efforts made by the *Washington Accord* for the quality assurance in engineering science, especially the efforts made to encourage the mobility of engineer science graduates over international agreements. After appreciation of the legal basic conditions of the German accreditation system the Accreditation Council however assumes that only itself can meet the criteria for a membership in the *Washington Accord.* It will therefore apply for a membership.

► Recommendations for the Accreditation of Distance Study and E-Learning Study Programs (18/06/2007)

On the basis of the final report of the working group "Distance Study and E-Learning" the Accreditation Council passed recommendations for the accreditation of Distance Study and E-Learning on 18/06/2007. After the working group came to the decision that despite the specific characteristics of the named study programmes no revision or supplementation of the existing criteria for the accreditation of study programmes is necessary it submitted a final report to the Accreditation Council with recommendations for

the accreditation of Distance Study and E-Learning. The recommendations relate on the one hand to the procedure level with view on the required expertise for the evaluation of the study programme concept and the design of the local inspection, and on the other hand to the curricular level, for example on the specifications with regard to design of attendance, support of students, technical equipment or calculation of workload. The recommendations passed by the Accreditation Council mainly aim at pointing out the specific conditions that are involved in distance study and E-Learning and which deserve special attention at the accreditation.

► **Recommendations for ECTS und Modularisation** (12/10/2007)

The implementation of ECTS as well as its relation to study results, modularisation and examination character have time and again lead to uncertainties that have not only appeared at the conception of study programmes but also in the scope of accreditation procedures. That's why the Accreditation Council passed an aid for the accreditation agencies on basis of the preliminary work of the working group "ECTS" which offers possible solutions for the essential problems that occur at the implementation of ECTS and Modularisation as well as its controlling in accreditation procedures.

► **Recommendations for the Accreditation of advanced Master Study Programmes** (14/10/2007)

Because of the specific orientation of advanced Master study programmes the Accreditation Council created a working group for the subject "Advanced Education" which submitted a final report to the Accreditation Council on its 54. session. On this base the Accreditation Council passed recommendations for the accreditation of advanced Master study programmes on 14/10/2007 which were submitted to the accreditation agencies in form of manuals. The recommendation covers especially the subjects "Access and Credit of professional Competences" and "Curriculum and Study Organisation".

With regard to the credit of professional competences it has particularly to be considered that in case of a flat crediting of ex-curricular gained competences made possible by the Conference of German Cultural Ministers the adjustment into the study concept must be ensured even in the individual case according to the recommendations of the Accreditation Council. Additionally a crediting can only be carried-out in accordance to previously defined credit criteria. The equality of ex-curricular gained accomplishments and the respective study contents should be verified in a procedure for the determination of competence equivalencies.

For the curricular requirements the document recommends an orientation on the requirements of the profession, among others related to knowledge transfer between profession and study. Furthermore the professional experiences of the students should also be considered in the contents and the didactic conception of study programmes. It has to be assessed how the Higher Education Institute ensures the adequate actual work load in addition to the occupation of the students and therefore the ability to master the study programme for in-service advanced Master study programmes.

2.4 Working Groups of the Accreditation Council

The subject specific working groups deployed by the Accreditation Council mainly have the task to prepare resolutions for the Accreditation Council and involve external international experts from profession and agencies in the consulting process. The preliminary consultation of accreditation-related subjects in working groups has not only increased the efficiency of the way the Accreditation Council works but has also lead to a content-wise enrichment of the discussion by involvement of national and international experts. Specifically considering the challenges related to the further development of the accreditation system the consideration of different national perspectives and interests as well as of international expertise has turned out to be very helpful and goal oriented.

In addition to the working group "Further Development of the Accreditation System" the working groups "ECTS", "Advanced Education" and "Distance Study and E-Learning" have held meetings in 2007. The working groups have been deployed by the Accreditation Council in 2006 and have accomplished their working mission in 2007. On its 54. session on 08/10/2007 the Accreditation Council has deployed the working group "Quality Assurance" which will begin its work in 2008.

Working Group *Further Development of the Accreditation System* This working group has been deployed on the Accreditation Council's 49. session in 2006 and has met for a total of seven sessions. The working group included members of the Accreditation Council, representatives of the German Rectors' Conference, the Conference of German Cultural Ministers and international experts and it submitted a report relating to the further development of the accreditation system in Germany to the Accreditation Council in April 2007, on whose basis the Accreditation Council passed its recommendations for the implementation of the system accreditation on its session in May. In the second half of the year the working group developed resolution recommendations for the criteria and procedures of the system accreditation as well as the resulting modifications of current resolutions of the Accreditation Council. On the basis of these recommendations the Accreditation Council passed its resolution for the implementation of the system accreditation on 29/10/2007 (see more details in chapter 1.3)

Working Group ECTS: The working group included members of the Accreditation Council, representatives of the Conference of German Cultural Ministers, German Rectors' Conference , the DAAD, the agencies and the profession and has met two times. The objective of the working group was to reveal the essential problems involved in the application of ECTS and modularisation in the conception of study programmes and the controlling of these concepts in the accreditation procedure and to develop solution proposals. Mid 2007 the working group submitted a final report on whose basis the Accreditation Council passed the manuals for the agencies on 12/10/2007.

Working Group *Advanced Education*: The working group included members of the Accreditation Council, representatives of the agencies and representatives of HIS, DGWF and the Centre for Quality Assurance of the University Rostock and has been deployed in 2006. It met for a total of three sessions. The objective of the working group was to analyse the current practice of the agencies for the accredita-

tion of advanced study programmes and the problems for the quality assurance resulting from the specific orientation of these study programmes and to develop criteria for their accreditation or substantiate the current criteria. Since the working group came to the conclusion that the current criteria of the Accreditation Council were sufficient for the evaluation of advanced study programmes it submitted recommendations for the quality assurance and accreditation of advanced study programmes to the Accreditation Council. On the basis of these recommendation the Accreditation Council passed an according manual for the agencies on 14/10/2007.

Working Group *Distance Study and E-Learning* The working group included members of the Accreditation Council, representatives of the agencies and further external experts. In the scope of a total of two sessions the working group developed a report that was passed by the Accreditation Council on 18/06/2007 in form of a manual for the agencies. The objective of the working group was to assess if the current criteria of the Accreditation Council suffice to also evaluate these study programmes appropriately particularly because at least in the beginning criticism was expressed about the not always appropriate handling by the agencies. The working group came to the conclusion that no revision or supplementation of the resolution position was necessary but that indeed a set of specific features existed that deserved special attention at the accreditation. The final report of the working group however declares, that the agencies should be responsible for issuing appropriate regulations in order to particularly give evaluators adequate help and to make a conform, the respective specific features considering evaluation possible. The recommendations verbalised by the working group point to these specific features involved with distance study and E-Learning and which deserve special attention at the accreditation.

Working Group *Quality Assurance* The resolution "The System of internal Quality Assurance of the Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany" dated 18/06/2007 envisions the deployment of a working group "Quality Assurance" to ensure a lasting internal quality assurance. The working group, which should include three members of the Accreditation Council, will submit annual reports and, if applicable, improvement suggestions to the Accreditation Council. The working group "Quality Assurance" has been deployed on the Accreditation Council's 54. session in October 2007 and will presumably meet for their constitutive session in January 2008.

2.5 Evaluation of the Foundation

The Accreditation Council resolved on its 49. session on 30-31/08/2006 to ask the Conference of German Cultural Ministers for an evaluation of the *Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany* in cooperation with the German Rectors' Conference and to deploy an international evaluation group for this task. The evaluation should not only serve as an assessment of the compliance with legal objectives but also as an assessment of compliance with the member criteria of the *European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education* (ENQA) an the *Code of Good Practice des European Consortiums for Accreditation* (ECA) in order to ensure an international recognition of the Accreditation Council.

The basis for the implementation of the procedure should be the regulations of the ENQA resolution *Peer Review System for Quality Assurance Agencies*

On its 53. session on 18/06/2007 the Accreditation Council passed a special report for the external evaluation of the *Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in German.* Because the compilation of the international oriented expert group by the Conference of German Cultural Ministers and the German Rectors' Conference took more time than originally anticipated the Accreditation Council has resolved an update of the special report on its 54. session on 08/10/2007. The involved supplementations have become necessary due to the modifications of the resolution positions resulting from the further development of the accreditation system and were contributed significantly to the up-to-date-ness of the report.

The experts for the evaluation procedure meanwhile nominated by the Conference of German Cultural Ministers and the German Rectors' Conference have received the special report of the Foundations in October 2007. The dialogues between the evaluators and the members of the Accreditation Council, the employees of the Head Office of the Foundation and the accreditation agencies are planned for the first quarter of 2008.

2.6 Future Tasks: A Preview

Implementation of the System Accreditation After the final discussion and resolution of criteria and procedures for the system accreditation scheduled for February 2008 the Accreditation Council will take on the admission of agencies for the implementation of procedures for the system accreditation during the first half of the year. In March 2008 the Accreditation Council will inform the interested public about the criteria and procedures for the system accreditation on a convention in Berlin. Because the system accreditation is not only about a new procedure for all involved, but at the same time is also a comparatively complex procedure of quality assurance that particularly during the upcoming trial phase will cause questions and problems of the most different kind, a close coordination and cooperation between the agencies and the Accreditation Council is an important condition for the success of this new instrument of quality assurance. This coordination should be instituted in the scope of round-table-meetings between the Accreditation Council and the accreditation agencies. Additionally the observation of the new procedures for the system accreditation implemented by the agencies by members of the Accreditation Council and the Head Office of the Foundation is envisioned in order to encourage the process of mutual learning.

Streamlining: During the revision of the criteria for the accreditation of agencies and the criteria for the accreditation of study programmes the Accreditation Council has already started to design its regulation body more transparent and readable and to get rid of redundancies. The Accreditation Council will continue this way in 2008 and will put effort into the revision and further streamlining of its resolutions, where applicable. The balance between the warranty of comparability on the basis of defined criteria and procedures on the one hand and the prevention of statically excessive regimentation on the other hand have to be kept in mind.

Implementation of Quality Policy: After the Accreditation Council has passed a comprehensive quality policy that defines the quality requirements and measurements for the various service provisions and support processes the substantiation of these processes and measurements are on the Accreditation Council's agenda for 2008. In this context the objective of the working group "Quality Assurance" will be to develop questionnaires for the process quality feedback for the accreditation and re-accreditation of agencies or to implement instruments for the determination of further development demand with view on the criteria and procedures of the Accreditation Council.

3. International Cooperation

An important instrument for the promotion of the international cooperation is the active membership in the relevant European and international Quality Assurance Networks. These networks are e.g. *European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education* (ENQA), the *International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education* (INQAAHE) and the *European Consortium for Accreditation* (ECA). The efforts by the *Foundation* on the area of the international cooperation can be made clear with the following overview about the *Foundation's* and their members activities.

ENQA: On the members meeting of the *European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education* on 20-21/09/2007 the Managing Director of the *Foundation,* Dr. Hopbach, was voted into the Board of the association by a big majority. In this function he will in the future inform the German accreditation agencies about news from the EQNA Board and this way intensify the information exchange between the national and the European level.

The first meeting of the *Internal Quality Assurance Forum of the EQNA members* took place on 17/04/2007 in Copenhagen. The Accreditation Council was represented by MS. Leinweber from the Head Office of the *Foundation*. The Discussion Forum should facilitate the exchange of questions and methods related to the internal quality assurance of the respective responsible persons on working level of the European agencies. In addition to a communication platform about the internal website of the ENQA annual meetings for specific subjects of the internal quality assurance are planned.

On 07-08/06/2007 the ENQA seminar "Quality Assurance and Qualifications Frameworks" took place in Dublin, where the Managing Director of the *Foundation,* Dr. Hopbach, was leading the panel "Roles of the quality agency in framework development – Exploring Chapter 2 of the Bergen framework report".

Encouraged by the Accreditation Council the planning for a EQNA seminar "Relationship of institutional-oriented and program-oriented Approaches of Quality Assurance" envisioned for 2008 in Berlin have started.

ECA: The *European Consortium for Accreditation* (ECA) is currently in the fourth and last project phase, that is on the one hand characterized by the external evaluation of its members and on the other hand in particular by the preparations for the declaration of mutual recognition of accreditation decisions. Core task in the forth phase is also the cooperation with the ENIC/NARIC networks in order to clarify the as of

yet not sufficiently regulated relationship Both allies are currently aiming to develop procedures together. In this respect the ninth semi-annual meeting of the European Consortium for Accreditation took place from 13th until 15th June 2007 in Berlin. The meeting was organized by the Accreditation Council with financial support of the BMBF and the German member agencies. Subject of the meeting was to negotiate a declaration for the mutual recognition of accreditation decisions within the forth project phase of ECA. The results of the meeting will be fed into the decision processes of ENQA and the ENIC/NARIC networks to encourage the development of ENQA recommendations for the mutual recognition of qualifications and final degrees on the basis of accreditation decisions in 2008.

Dr. Hopbach, Managing Director of the *Foundation* and member of the ECA Management Group, participated on the transatlantic dialogue "Toward mutual recognition" taking place for the first time on 02/04/2007 in Toronto on initiative of the European Consortiums for Accreditation. The convention served the mutual information about procedures for the accreditation and the exchange about new development in the field accreditation on both continents. The subject of mutual recognition of accreditation decisions is currently no matter of high importance in North-America.

On the ECA conference "The benefits of mutual recognition of accreditation and quality assurance decisions", the *Foundation for the accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany* was also represented by its Managing Director.

INQAAHE: From 03-05/04.2007 the semi-annual convention of the *International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education* (INQAAHE) took place in Toronto. The *Foundation for the accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany* was represented by its Managing Director, Dr. Hopbach, who lead one section of the convention. Traditionally this convention serves mainly the exchange about new developments. Particularly the enormous dynamic in the creation of national quality assurance systems and regional co-operations in African and Asia have to be mentioned.

Study Visits: In the scope of the "Further Development of the Accreditation System" activities two visits at international quality assurance agencies took place.

At the end of February the Managing Director of the *Foundation for the accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany* participated in an expert training of the English quality assurance agency QAA and talked with representatives of agencies and Higher Education as well as experts about detail questions regarding the consideration of programme quality at the implementation of institutional quality assurance procedures.

At the end of March Ms. Lantermann and Mr. Börsch of the *Foundation*'s Head Office visited the Norwegian agency for quality assurance in the Higher Education field (NOKUT). Conversations were held with representatives of NOKUT, experts from accreditation and evaluation procedures as well as representatives of the Conservatory (Norges Musikkhøgskole) and the Theological Higher Education Institution (MF Det Teologiske Menighetsfakultet) whose internal quality assurance systems were evaluated already by NOKUT. The assessment of both visits were, mainly with view on the requirements related to the German accreditation system, summarized in a report and submitted to the working group "Further Development".

International Networking: The number of inquiries for a contribution by members and employees of the Accreditation Council in international evaluator groups and other international expert groups shows the high appreciation that is showed to the Accreditation Council. Through this and through the co-operation with foreign members of the Accreditation Council, in the evaluator groups and the working groups a tight network of international contacts and co-operations evolved that makes it possible for the Accreditation Council to bring in its expertise into an international environment and at the same time to consider international experiences in its national activities.

For example is the Managing Director of the *Foundation* member in the *Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications* (HKCAAVQ); as an expert he was a member of the expert group of the *Agencia National de Evaluatión de la Calidad y Accreditatión* (ANECA) as well as of the evaluation group for the evaluation of the Austrian Accreditation Council (ÖAR). Furthermore the *Foundation* cultivates a close co-operation with the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) that was mainly reflected in the active participation in meetings and seminars of the DAAD as well as in the presentation of the German accreditation system to international delegates who informed themselves on invitation by the DAAD about the German Higher Education and Accreditation System. During the report period the employees of the *Foundation*'s Head Office greeted for example delegations from Africa, South-America and Kazakhstan and informed the participants of the DAAD seminar "Erasmus Mundus. Past Experiences – Future Perspectives" in September 2007 about the position of the Accreditation Council to the accreditation of international study programmes.

4. Information and Communication

4.1 Presentation, Information and Consulting

The Accreditation Council uses primarily the electronic media for the presentation of its work. In addition to the publishing of press releases via the Informationsdienst Wissenschaft (idw) and the -meanwhile discontinued- EvaNet- Newsletters the interested public is informed comprehensively on the frequently updated *Foundation for the accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany*'s website about the accreditation system, the criteria and procedures for the accreditation of study programmes and accreditation agencies, about resolutions of the Accreditation Council and the by the Accreditation Council accredited agencies. The *Foundation*'s activity report, that provides annual information about all activities of the *Foundation* within the report period, is published in printing and in form of a PDF document; the electronic version is available for download on the *Foundation*'s website in German and in English.

In order to improve the *Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany*'s internet presence with regard to functionality as well as to design and hereby increase the user-friendliness, the Cologne design agency *Die Hoffnungsträger* has been commissioned to redevelop the Corporate Design and redesign the website last year. Since the work was finished in May 2007 the *Foundation* has been presenting itself in a whole new appearance. The barrier-free internet presence is designed well arranged and transparently and provides the users with a multitude of information and download possibilities.

Apart from the new design and the changed site structure the *Foundation*'s website also provides a new functionality. The by the Accreditation Council accredited agencies can access an internal password-protected area that provides them with an overview of all negative decisions of the agencies, the *Foundation*'s logo for download and further confidential information by the Accreditation Council.

In addition to providing information the *Foundation* is trying to further improve the knowledge base of the relevant interest groups and the national and international public about the accreditation system . On the one hand this happens by responding to a large number of phone calls and written inquiries by students, Higher Education Institutions, Ministries, professional associations and agencies regarding general questions about the accreditation, resolutions of the Accreditation Council or to ongoing accreditation procedures. The *Foundation*'s Head Office is in general open from Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm and provides information and consulting services free of charge. On the other hand is the *Foundation* represented on a multitude of conventions, seminars and expert discussions by the members of the Accreditation Council and the employees of the Head Office, where they give lectures on questions about the accreditation, quality assurance or study reform in the further sense. Additionally the Accreditation Council is consulted as an adviser in study reform questions and particularly related to the Bologna process, which goes beyond its direct area of responsibility of accreditation. Formal as well as informal communication structures play an important role in this context. The *Foundation* is for example represented by its Managing Director in the National Bologna AG, the "Innovative Circle for Academic Advanced Study" of the BMBF and the advisory council "Quality Management" of the Founder Association for the German Science. A respective information exchange also takes place by the participation of Head Office employees in public events - e.g. the expert discussion of the DAAD and the German Rector's Conference (HRK) to the subject "Qualification Scope" in November 2007 or the session of the HRK Commission for New Media and Academic Transfer, also in November 2007. The various conversations between the Foundation's Board and the organizations, professional associations, churches and chambers also turned out to be helpful. In the scope of such informal conversations- like e.g. with representatives of the German Medical Association, the Chamber of Psychotherapist, the German Student Union or the Confederation of German Employers- ways of cooperation and possible cooperation with view on the implementation of accreditation procedures could be discussed.

4.2 Publication of Accreditation Data

All study programmes that bear the official seal of the Accreditation Council after their accreditation are listed in the database of the Accreditation Council. The database is linked to the German Rectors Conference's Higher Education Compass and is accessible over the *Foundation*'s website for the retrieval of information about accreditation time limits, the conditions possibly tied to the accreditation, the profile of the study programme, the participating evaluators and the evaluation of the study programme by the evaluators. Apart from the study-related accreditation data the *Foundation*'s website also provides statistics about accredited study programmes informing database users of the number of currently accredited study

programmes – grouped by study period, degree description, subject groups, type of Higher Education Institution, Federal States and standard periods of study. The accreditation data are fed into the database by the agencies accredited by the Accreditation Council and kept up-to-date. The release of the data sets occurs after a formal examination by the *Foundation*'s Head Office.

At the end of April 2007 the for the database responsible employees of the agencies, the German Rectors Conference and the Accreditation Council met to discuss the various questions about the data entry and listing and to examine improvement possibilities. In consequence of the meetings the Accreditation Council commissioned some modifications that will presumably be implemented in the first quarter of 2008. The implemented modifications will enable the display of combination study programmes, simplify the data sets for the condition compliance and increase the up-to-date-ness of the data by automatic archiving the datasets of study programmes with expired accreditation time limit. In order to inform the Higher Education Institutions in the scope of the accreditation procedures and the users of the database about these functions and their possibilities for the data entry and correction, a document "Information to Accredited Study Programmes Database "prepared by all above mentioned participants was made available on the Accreditation Council's website.

4.3 Communication with Agencies

Communication structures that ensure the mutual information exchange of Accreditation Council and agencies are very important for the efficiency of the accreditation system. The participation of agency representatives in the various working groups of the accreditation Council have turned out to be a reliable communication instrument in particular against the background of the further development of the accreditation system activities. Apart from this subject-related cooperation the Accreditation Council and the agencies have agreed to continue discussing recent questions and challenges of the accreditation in the scope of round-table-meetings in the future. Particularly with view on the implementation of the system accreditation a frequent exchange between the Accreditation Council and the agencies as well as between the agencies among each other is an important prerequisite for a preferably smooth launch of the new procedure (see chapter 2.6)

In October 2007 the Foundation Board and representative of the agencies already came together for a discussion in Berlin in order to debate about the preparation of the system accreditation application, about the accreditation of international study programmes and the accreditation of combination study programmes. The next round-table-meeting will presumably be taking place in February 2008.

A continuing communication between the agencies and the Accreditation Council is ensured on the basis of §7 (2) no 6 of the accreditation-foundation-law, which envisions the membership of one agency representative with advisory vote in the Accreditation Council. The by the agencies appointed representative has the task to represent and inform the agencies after the session of the Accreditation Council about the results. Additionally the agencies are informed by the Accreditation Council about new or modified resolu-

tions of the Accreditation Council as well as about modifications of the state-shared or state-specific conditions via memo or e-mail.

4.4 Statistical Data

At the end of December 2007 a total of 3,082 Bachelor and Master study programmes, offered by public or publicly recognized Higher Education Institutions in Germany bore the seal of the Accreditation Council.[1] Therefore the number of accredited study programmes has increased by approximately 1,000 study programmes since the end of December 2006. This means that currently about over 40% of the offered Bachelor and Master study programmes, which make a total of over 60% of all study programmes listed in the Higher Education Compass of the German Rectors Conference, are accredited. Because the share of Bachelor and Master study programmes on all offered study programmes increased within one year from 50% to 60% and the share of accredited study programmes in the same period increased from 35% to 40%, a further dynamic increase of the yearly accredited study programmes can be declared.

Of the until December 2008 overall 3,082 accredited Bachelor and Master study programmes 65% were conditionally accredited, whereas in only 37 cases the accreditation was refused through resolution of the responsible accreditation commission. Those negative decisions, that were made by the accreditation commission of the agencies but are not in the Accreditation Council's area of responsibility, are not included in this number. In comparison to the previous years numbers the share of study programmes that were conditionally accredited has increased by 15%.

The possibility to revoke the application for accreditation before completion of the procedure has so far been used in 61 cases according to the agencies. The number of accredited Diploma and Graduate study programmes constitutes with 28 study programmes a negligent number.

The *Foundation*'s website informs about the current number at: www.akkreditierungsrat.de

5. Ressources

5.1 Finances

The *Foundation* is financed in accordance to § 4 (1) ASG by the 16 Federal States. In addition the *Foundation* can charge fees for providing its services to cover its administrative expenses in accordance with §4 ASG. The Federal States only grant funding if the administrative expenses of the *Foundation* can not be covered by the charged fees.

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[1] The mentioned numbers are based on the dataset of the Accreditation Council's database. All accredited study programmes or study possibilities are listed in this database, provided that the accreditation agencies entered them into the database.

Because so-called combination study programmes, that is study programmes that consist of several free selectable subjects, can only be displayed in the database adequately in 2008, these study programmes could not be considered for the statistic for 2007 (see also chapter 4)2).

Already in 2006 the Head Office of the *Foundations for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany* has in cooperation with the responsible department of the North-Rhine Westphalia Ministry of Interior prepared a draft for a fee statute, which was after a detailed debate in the Accreditation and Foundation Council passed by the Foundation Council on 29/11/2007 by a majority of two thirds of its members. In accordance to § 5 (1) ASG the statute needs the approval of the Ministry of Innovation, Science, Research and Technology of the federal state of North-Rhine Westphalia and needs to be published in the North-Rhine Westphalia Ministerial Gazette. The approval and publishing of the fee statute passed by the Foundation Council will presumably happen in 2008.

To provide the *Foundation*'s services an annual funding of EUR 400,000 is necessary according to the Conference of Cultural Minister. The Conference of German Finance Ministers in contrast determined on 01. December 2005 an annual funding requirement of EUR 350,000 for each fiscal year 2006 and 2007. To cover the relocation and initial setup-costs an additional EUR 10,000 was allocated to the *Foundation* for each fiscal year 2006 and 2007.

On 21/06/2007 the Conference of German Finance Ministers determined the annual allocation by the Federal States to the Foundation at EUR 330,000. Fees exceeding this amount will remain with the *Foundation* up to a maximum of EUR 40,000; surpluses have to be paid to the Federal States. This regulation was passed for the fiscal years 2008 until 2011. The efforts for an increase of the Federal States allocations by the Conference of German Culture Ministers was not successful.

To finance the activities for the further development of the accreditation system in Germany the Accreditation Council raised funds in the amount of EUR 40,000 from the *Founder Association for German Science,* which covered the costs for the working group meetings, conventions and study visits at international accreditation institutions. For the *European Consortium for Accreditation* (ECA) convention, which took place from 13-15/06/2007 in Berlin, the Accreditation Council successfully raised third-party funds in the amount off EUR 10,400 from the Ministry of Education and Research. The event was also co-sponsored by the ECA, The Berlin federal state and the German accreditation agencies.

5.2 Personal, spatial and factual Equipment

The personal equipment of *Foundation*'s Head Office has not changed from the previous year and consists of one Managing Director, one Programme Manager (100%), one Programme Manager (75%), one Programme Manager (75%) and one Assistant (50%); this corresponds to four full-time equivalents. The Managing Director and the employees are all Higher Education Graduates and have permanent contracts. The salary is in accordance with the tariff provisions of the TV-L (wage agreement of the Federal States).

Including the Head Office in the Adenauerallee 73 in Bonn the *Foundation* has four rented office spaces with a total of 120 square meters available.

The IT equipment with regard to hard- and software is state of the art; the six work stations are equipped with a computer (Pentium IV), a Flat-Screen LCD, and phone and internet connection.

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[1] Benchmarks for the further development of accreditation in Germany, KMK resolution dated 15/10/2004

[2] Quality assurance in education, KMK resolution dated 22/09/2005

[3] Criteria for the accreditation of study programmes, Accreditation Council resolution dated 17/07/2006

[4] Recommendations for the further development of the accreditation system, Accreditation Council resolution dated 08/05/2007

[5] Criteria for the accreditation of accreditation agencies, Accreditation Council resolution dated 15/12/2005

[6] General rules for the implementation of procedures for the accreditation and re-accreditation of accreditation agencies, Accreditation Council resolution dated 22/06/2006

[7] Accreditation Council procedure for the controlling of accreditations carried out by the agencies in compliance with § 2 (1) No 4 Accreditation Foundation Law (ASG) dated 21/09/2006, Accreditation Council resolution dated 18/06/2007

[8] In accordance with §7 of the agreement the agencies are obligated to verify the accreditation of the study programme immediately, issue a condition retro-actively or possibly withdraw the accreditation, if the Accreditation Council objected to a not appropriate application of the criteria or procedure regulations for the accreditation of study programmes.

[9] In accordance with §7 of the agreement the agencies are obligated to verify the accreditation of the study programme immediately, issue a condition retro-actively or possibly withdraw the accreditation, if the Accreditation Council objected to a not appropriate application of the criteria or procedure regulations for the accreditation of study programmes.

[10] In the course of the suspension of resolutions for the implementation of system accreditation (see chapter 1.3) the resolution "Decisions of the Accreditation Agencies: Types and Effects" was suspended by the Chairman of the Accreditation Council. A new resolution is intended for the session of the Accreditation Council in February 2008.

[11] In the course of the suspension of resolutions for the implementation of system accreditation (see chapter 1.3) the resolution "General Rules for the Implementation of Procedures for the Programme Accreditation" was suspended by the Chairman of the Accreditation Council. A new resolution is intended for the session of the Accreditation Council in February 2008.

[12] Not listed are the (suspended) resolutions for the implementation of the system accreditation (see chapter 1.3) as well as the resolutions for the re-accreditation of the agencies AQAS and FIBAA (see chapter 2.1)