

Printed matter AC 36/2017

Decision on the application of Agency for Quality Assurance through the Accreditation of Study Programmes (AQAS e.V.) dated 11 May 2016 for accreditation

5 Resolution by the Accreditation Council of 7 February 2017

I.

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

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II.

The decision comes into effect pursuant to Point I. above on 7 February 2017. However, it shall become void if the agency does not sign an agreement by 31 May 2017 pursuant to § 3 of the German Law on the Establishment of a Foundation “Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany” in the version adopted by the Accreditation Council on 22 June 2016.

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III.

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

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Pursuant to Section 3.2.1 of the resolution “Rules for the Accreditation of Agencies” from 8 December 2009, in the version adopted on 10 December 2010, the accreditation shall expire on 31 March 2022.

30 **IV.**

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

Condition 1:

AQAS expands the existing SharePoint server to the extent that the quality management processes display the requirements of the PDCA cycle. (Criterion 2.5. – Internal quality management)

Condition 2:

AQAS looks for solutions together with the Accreditation Council and the personnel responsible for the database in order to resolve the entry problems in the central database. The disputed function restrictions and data losses must be documented. (Criterion 2.7 - Reporting)

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

50 **V.**

Pursuant to Section 3.1.3 of the resolution “Rules for the Accreditation of Agencies” from 8 December 2009, in the version adopted on 10 December 2010, the conditions have to be fulfilled within six months. If AQAS does not demonstrate that the conditions have been fulfilled within this time, the Accreditation Council shall revoke accreditation pursuant to section 3.5.3 of the resolution.

VI. Rationale

General:

Based on the report and taking into consideration the agency’s statement, the Accreditation Council has concluded that the Agency for Quality Assurance through Accreditation of Study

Programmes (AQAS e.V.) substantially fulfils the criteria pursuant to Chapter 2 of the resolution “Rules for the Accreditation of Agencies” dated 8 December 2009 in the version adopted on 10 December 2010.

65 Condition no. 2 as identified by the review panel will be maintained (see the explanations in the section “Regarding Condition 1” for rationale).

Condition no. 3 as identified by the review panel will also remain unchanged (see the explanations in the section “Regarding Condition 2” for rationale).

In the following points the Accreditation Council deviates from the review panel’s recommendations in the review report and issues no condition:

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- As the Accreditation Council takes its decision according the set of rules dated 8 December 2009 in the version adopted on 10 December 2010, the conditions that emerged from the ESG part should be removed. This means that the condition no. 1 as proposed by the review panel is omitted.
 - Condition no. 4 as proposed by the review panel is related to the criterion of scientific
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- majority from the new rules for accreditation of agencies. As this criterion was introduced recently and was not applied in the earlier rules of the AC, the condition will be converted into a recommendation.

Regarding Condition 1:

80 According to the criteria of the Accreditation Council, the agencies use a formalised internal quality management system. The system assesses the effectiveness of the internal control processes and guarantees continuous quality improvement.

85 Along with a publicly accessible quality assurance concept, AQAS uses a so-called SharePoint server in order to document the agency’s own rules, approaches and processes with binding effect. The server is used as a tool for the employees and presents the responsibilities and necessary documentation in the respective process descriptions. The agency considers this to be more expedient than creating a QM manual.

90 However, the agency’s QM concept remains incomplete since the quality cycles are not closed systematically. In order to guarantee that each individual process is presented and improved to fulfil the PDCA principle (plan-do-check-act), the SharePoint server should be supplemented with the available quality measures, including the ZEM analyses, which are applied as an external feedback instrument, and clear feedback loops should be defined.

95 **Regarding Condition 2:**

In accordance with the criteria set forth by the Accreditation Council, the agency publishes the reports and decisions of conducted accreditation procedures. At the same time the agencies are obliged to put corresponding entries into the AC's central database.

100 According to the Accreditation Council's progress report, the finding within a random sample assessment has shown that the accreditations conducted by AQAS were not completely carried out in the database of accredited study programmes. For example, it appeared that just barely half of the study programmes accredited in June 2016 could be found in the database of accredited study programmes two months later. A random sample based on 2015 produced a similar result.

105 With this in mind, AQAS has developed an internal process which ensures that the resolution and the review report are to be published within four weeks on the homepage. The process starts after the final decision of a responsible commission and after sending the documents to the higher education institution. Subsequently the relevant information is uploaded in the central database. The agency has a so-called traffic light system for keeping the entry of accredited study programmes into the central database under control. As soon as the Accreditation Council's confirmation e-mail about the published data has been delivered, the process is considered completed for the agency and is marked with "Green".

115 The agency's instruments for the follow-up of the commission meetings, together with the process description for entering the decisions into the Accreditation Council's central database had been fundamentally assessed positively by the review panel. However, to resolve the existing deficiencies, AQAS was asked during the site visit to document alleged crashes in order to search for causes and solutions together with the AC's head office and the programmer.