



# Stages of the Accreditation Procedure

## Version for Accreditation Procedures of Study Programmes for Higher Education Institutions outside of Germany

### **AQAS**

Hohenstaufenring 30-32  
50674 Cologne  
Germany

Tel.: +49 (0)221/995006 21  
Fax: +49 (0)221/995006 99  
Email: [info@aqas.de](mailto:info@aqas.de)  
Homepage: [www.aqas.de](http://www.aqas.de)

### **Preparation of the Accreditation Procedure:**

1. AQAS offers an informal and free-of-charge initial consultation in our head office in Cologne before the accreditation procedure starts. This consultation covers information on the accreditation procedure, on the requirements for the application report and on the criteria.
2. The university executive mandates AQAS to perform the accreditation procedure. The university receives the contract from AQAS, duly signed by the chair of our executive board and the managing director. The contract is formally concluded with the university executive. The contract covers all stages of the accreditation procedure, the budget and the intended schedule.

### **Application for Accreditation:**

3. The university drafts an accreditation application in accordance with the AQAS guidelines.
  - a) If the study programme has not yet started, the full accreditation application will cover the following documents:
    - accreditation application
    - module manual
    - study and examination regulations
    - exemplary diploma supplement.
  - b) If the study programme is already running, the full accreditation application will include the following documents:
    - accreditation application (incl. student success data and performance indicators, plus examination and student statistics, including a list of the last 50 final papers/theses);
    - evaluation reports (internal/external) (if available),
    - if the study programme has already been accredited:
      - final report for the previous accreditation/accreditation letter,
      - proof that any conditions from the previous accreditation have been met (if any conditions were imposed during the accreditation),
    - module manual (latest version),
    - study and examination regulations (latest version),
    - exemplary diploma supplement.

The university executive will confirm in writing that the resources specified in the application are available as outlined. The application and all annexes are sent to AQAS paper based and in electronic format.

4. The university will name a primary contact person for AQAS for the accreditation procedure.
5. The university will provide AQAS with a suggested qualification profile (e.g. discipline) it considers to be appropriate for the members of the panel of experts.
6. AQAS will check the application for sufficiency and will advise the university on the further procedure. If necessary, AQAS will request a revision or completion of the application. If the study programme leads to a joint or double degree involving a German university, AQAS will check the papers for compliance with the formal guidelines of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK) and of the German Accreditation Council (GAC).
7. In study programmes that are jointly run by two or more universities, AQAS will, in consultation with the universities, specify where the site visit will be held.

### **Decision on the official opening of the Accreditation Procedure:**

8. AQAS will produce an internal report on the "initial situation" of the study programme(s) outlining the key aspects of the accreditation application. Combined with the application the report is presented to the accreditation commission. The accreditation commission will deliberate on the application and will decide upon the official opening of the accreditation procedure.
9. AQAS will inform the university about the decision of the commission and will pass on any questions / comments that the accreditation commission might have. In case the accreditation commission decided against an official opening of the procedure, the university will be informed about the reasons and receive advice on the further proceedings from AQAS. After an appropriate revision of the documents the university may resubmit the application.<sup>1</sup>
10. The accreditation commission will appoint the panel of experts. As a basic principle, the panel will consist of professors, one representative from the labour market and one student.

### **Site Visit at the University:**

11. AQAS will inform the university in good time about the members of the expert panel and will allow the university a period of time for any justified objections it may have. Justified objections must be submitted in writing and will be forwarded to the accreditation commission. The university has neither nomination rights nor veto rights.
12. AQAS will inform the university about the date for the site visit and suggest a schedule for the visit.
13. The university will submit the accreditation application to AQAS in sufficient number at least four weeks prior to scheduled site visit. If the documents do not reach AQAS on time, this may result in the postponement of the site visit.
14. The experts will review the application and are requested to submit a short preliminary statement including open questions and potential needs for additional information. AQAS will forward these preliminary statements to the university and the other panel members to increase transparency in the process and the discussions during the site visit.
15. During the site visit, talks will generally be held with the university executive, the head(s) of department, the study programme coordinator, the lecturers and the students.
16. If the study programme is already running and students have already graduated, the university is requested to randomly choose a number of final papers/theses and to provide these for inspection during the site visit (see 3b).

### **Completion of the Procedure:**

17. The expert panel will produce an assessment report with a recommendation to the accreditation commission how to decide on the accreditation application of the programme.
18. AQAS will forward the assessment report without the recommendation to the accreditation commission to the university. The university is given the opportunity to comment on the report within two weeks.
19. Based upon the report of the expert panel and the potential comments of the university the accreditation commission will take a decision on the accreditation of the programme.

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<sup>1</sup> This will not affect the costs of the procedure. However, delays to the various stages must be expected.

20. AQAS will forward the decision of the accreditation commission to the university. The university has the right to appeal the decision or any imposed conditions. Appeals must be submitted in writing within four weeks after notification of the decision. In case of an appeal, the case is once again presented to the accreditation commission for decision. In the event of formal complaints that do not relate to decision of the accreditation commission, the appeal commission of AQAS will decide.
21. If no appeal is received, AQAS will publish the result of the accreditation and the names of the panel of experts. In case of a negative decision, the publication of the results will be substituted by the notification of the German Accreditation Council.
22. In case of a positive accreditation decision, the awarding of the AQAS seal officially concludes the procedure. The seal confirms that the programme operates in accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines. In case of a conditional accreditation, failure to report the fulfilment of the conditions leads to a withdrawal of the AQAS seal.
23. In case the accreditation commission decides to suspend the accreditation procedure based on the findings documented in the expert report, the university is given the opportunity to revise the programme in a defined period and re-submit the application to AQAS for a second review.<sup>2</sup>

FOLIE MIT ÜBERSICHT!

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<sup>2</sup> Additional costs may occur.