

Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany

Accreditation Council

**Activity Report
2008**

Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany

Accreditation Council

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Activity Report 2008

Report period: January to December 2008

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For reasons of simplifying readability, gender-neutral differentiation has been avoided. For unbiased handling, corresponding terms are always and normally applicable for both genders

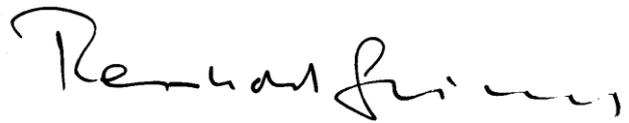
Preface

The summer of this year marks the 10th anniversary of the Bologna declaration signing by the European education ministers and therefore the beginning of an unprecedented reform process for over 40 participating countries. The Accreditation Council set up by Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder and German Rector's Conference will also celebrate its 10th anniversary around the same time. This is obviously not coincidental. The recognition, that quality assurance in teaching and learning is of primary importance for achieving the European higher education institution reform, precipitated not only in the communiqués of the follow-up conferences in Prague, Berlin and Bergen but also in the introduction of new or the development of established quality assurance systems in the signatory states.

The close relation between the objectives of the Bologna process and the role of quality assurance for its implementation - the topics, mobility of students, recognition of qualifications or transparency of the courses of study come to mind - transfers a considerable joint responsibility to the Accreditation Council if it comes to German contribution in realising the European Higher Education Area. The road travelled by the Accreditation Council in the past ten years was long, sometimes rocky but always went in the right direction. Thus, the Accreditation Council proved to be an active as well as unavoidable component of the study reform process and turned the accreditation system into an important pillar of the quality structure in the German higher education institution landscape by consistent transition aided by consolidation and advancement.

The Accreditation Council never doubted that a successful quality culture must be evident in the capability and readiness of the higher education institutions to accept the responsibility for quality in teaching and learning and to consider quality assurance as one of their most essential tasks. With the admittance of the agencies for implementation of system accreditation, the Accreditation Council could meet the prerequisites for it and has made quite a headway in the previous years in this regard as well. The requirements given to the higher education institutions with respect to system accreditation are rather more than what many expect. However, if the higher education institutions accept the challenge, the signs bode well for another level of development in the German accreditation system and consequently for successful continuance of the Bologna process in Germany.

The Accreditation Council thanks its partners and looks forward to continued fruitful cooperation.



Bonn, June 2009 Prof. Dr. Reinhold R. Grimm

1. Introduction of System

Accreditation

1.1 A New Instrument for Quality Development

While setting up accreditation system specific to Länder and higher education institution in Germany, the Accreditation Council has always allowed itself to be guided by the conviction that no one except the higher education institution itself is in the position to ensure the sustained quality of teaching and learning. This approach is expressed among other things in the scopes for development which the Accreditation Council not only grants the higher education institutions while setting up the study programmes to be accredited, but also constantly promotes their creative application in a sustainable way. In this regard, the Accreditation Council strived to provide the notion for a quality framework while developing stipulations for programme accreditation, instead of a close-meshed test-straitjacket. The proof to be provided by the higher education institution that the development and implementation of study programmes takes place on the basis of a clearly formulated quality understanding of the higher education institution and by applying a comprehensive concept of quality assurance is also a part of this framework. Though quality of processes and structures internal to the higher education institution is important here itself, the programme accreditation with its strong reference to individual or combined study programmes can hardly, or in a very limited way, include the area of strategic higher education institution control, which is constantly increasing in significance for development of quality.

Considering this background, the Accreditation Council has taken an important step towards further strengthening the individual responsibility of the higher education institutions with the development and introduction of a system accreditation procedure. Since the system accreditation has the evaluation of the internal quality assurance system of a higher education institution as its focus, the structures and processes relevant to teaching and learning are now primarily the focus of the evaluation. So, the core question of system accreditation is whether certain structures and processes can ensure the qualification objectives and a high quality of the offered study programmes in such a way that the consideration of criteria of the Accreditation Council, the European Standards and Guidelines and the prerequisites of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder are ensured for every single study programme. In case of a successfully completed system accreditation, all study programmes of a higher education institution receive the seal of the Accreditation Council which have already implemented the quality assurance system of higher education institution.

The system accreditation is not an end in itself, but rather based on the aim to secure and improve the quality of study programmes in a sustainable way. The criteria developed by the Accreditation Council are not oriented towards the theoretical concepts of quality management which are mainly encountered in industrial or organisational science. In fact, they are selected in such a way that with their help, the internal quality assurance system of a higher education institution can be verified whether it is suitable for quality oriented development of study programmes. Furthermore, the criteria and procedural rules for system accreditation correspond with the current European stan-

dards for quality assurance in teaching and learning and therefore ensure the international acceptance of the new procedure.

The Accreditation Council began in mid-2006 with the first preparations for the introduction of a new instrument of quality assurance and development as supplement to the currently exclusively operated programme accreditation and set up a work group for advancement of the accreditation system. The early and comprehensive participation of interested people and experts nationally and internationally and the inclusion of knowledge from various pilot projects and study visits to foreign accreditation facilities was characteristic of the subsequent discussion and consultation process, which finally led to the decision in favour of system accreditation and the enacting of relevant criteria and procedural rules.

The introduction of system accreditation opens not only the possibility for higher education institutions in future to opt between accreditation of individual study programmes and the accreditation of their internal quality assurance system, but also considerably minimise, at least for a medium term, the effort on external procedures for quality assurance. Nonetheless for higher education institutions which do not have comprehensive internal quality assurance systems in teaching and learning yet, the design and further development pose challenges which cannot be undermined.

In its 55th meeting on February 29, 2008 in Bonn, the Accreditation Council resolved "Criteria for System Accreditation" and the "General Rules for Implementation of Procedures of System Accreditation" and completed the last step for introducing system accreditation in Germany with it.

1.2 Criteria and Procedures of System Accreditation

For implementation of the system accreditation procedures, the Accreditation Council, in accordance with the stipulations for accreditation of agencies and accreditation of study programmes, has decided the criteria and general procedural rules. In this way, the "Criteria for System Accreditation" and the "General Rules for Implementation of Procedures of System Accreditation" form the guidelines to be considered by the agencies for implementation of system accreditation procedures.

The "Criteria for System Accreditation" define the subject and basic evaluation parameters of the system accreditation as well as the prerequisites for the admittance of a higher education institution to a new procedure. Subject of the system accreditation is the internal quality assurance system of a higher education institution in the area of teaching and learning. The higher education institution is awarded a positive system accreditation when its quality assurance system in the field of teaching and learning is suitable to ensure that the qualification objectives are met and the quality of their study programmes is high.

As the criteria for the accreditation of *study programmes*, the criteria for *system accreditation* also specify mainly basic conditions and targets which the higher education institution must consider while implementing and developing internal quality assurance systems. Accordingly, the criteria of the Accreditation Council do not include any concrete stipulations for layout of the systems in detail, but rather a binding catalogue of requirements which the higher education institution and the quality assurance system developed by it must fulfil for a successful system accreditation. This includes, for instance, continuous used proce-

cedure for assessment of qualification requirements of the study programmes, the proof of corresponding personnel and material resources which provide sustainability or a report system which documents the structures and processes for the development and implementation of study programmes as well as the measures for quality assurance, its results and effects. Furthermore, the internal quality assurance system must ensure and safeguard the participation of teachers and students, alumni, representatives of practitioners from the profession and the administrative personnel so that the quality evaluations during internal and external evaluations are made by independent instances and people.

The system accreditation is a supplement to and advancement of the existing accreditation system. Therefore higher education institutions can decide the way in which they will fulfil the obligation of accreditation of their study programmes; through individual and collective accreditations or through a system accreditation. It does not rule out that the higher education institutions which have run the system accreditation successfully continue to implement programme accreditations in specific areas.

The efficacy of the quality assurance system of the higher education institution is verified through random samples in the system accreditation: horizontal cross-sectional inspections of study programme based features ('criteria random sample') and in-depth expert reports on individual study programmes ('programme random sample') are intended for this purpose. Subject of *criteria random sample* could be the definition of qualification objectives, student work load or adherence to basic requirements for introduction of credit point systems and modularisation of study programmes. For the set up of the criteria random sample, the Accreditation Council has resolved

some regulations which determine the subject and scope of the random sample.

The criteria and procedure of the *programme random sample* mainly correspond with a conventional programme accreditation, but do not lead to an accreditation decision of their own. Instead of investigating the criteria of curriculum design of study programmes selected in the criteria random sample through all study programmes, the programme random sample basically checks all criteria of 15% of all study programmes. In these random samples the question, whether steering processes provided in teaching and learning and the internal quality assurance of the higher education institution guarantee that the study programmes are of high quality in all their aspects and all formal requirements are correctly realised, is at the focus.

The Accreditation Council also implemented a random sample for the assessment of the efficacy of the internal quality assurance in the middle of the accreditation period as a new procedural component at the behest of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder. This random sample is primarily for the information of the higher education institution. Even if there are no direct effects of the half-time random sample on the accreditation decision, its significance must not be underestimated since the higher education institution reports on the consequences in the re-accreditation phase which resulted from the results of the half-time random sample.

For the expert report procedure, which has two on-site-visits besides the evaluation of the written documents, the agency appoints an expert group which comprises of three members with experience in the field of higher education institution governance and internal quality assur-

ance of higher education institutions, a student member with experiences in higher education institution self-administration and accreditation as well as a practitioner from the profession. One member is from a foreign country.

In contrast to programme accreditation, which also provides the option of a conditional accreditation, system accreditation only gives (a) a positive accreditation decision, (b) a waiver of the procedure for 12 to 24 months or (c) a refusal for accreditation. This limitation of decision options has been decided by the Accreditation Council due to the far-reaching consequences of system accreditation. Since all study programmes, which have implemented quality assurance system of the higher education institution, carry the seal of the Accreditation Council after a successful system accreditation, conditions could result in the fact that all study programmes offered by a higher education institution are affected in a negative way by a deficiency in quality management despite being programme accredited. This would bring considerable disadvantages for the registered students.

The results of the random samples play an important role in system accreditation procedures, since they are used for the assessment of efficacy at the systemic level and therefore the effectiveness on the internal quality assurance system of the higher education institution.

Annexure 1.2.1 *Criteria for System Accreditation*
(08.10.2007 as amended on 31.10.2008)

Annexure 1.2.2 *General Regulations for Implementation of System Accreditation Procedures*
(08.10.2007 as amended on 31.10.2008)

Annexure 1.2.3 *Regulations for compiling the criteria random sample* (29.02.2008)

1.3 Admittance of Agencies for System Accreditation

If an agency applies for accreditation by the Accreditation Council, in future it can decide whether it wants to get certified by the implementation of procedures of programme accreditation, procedures of system accreditation or both. In accordance with the 'Criteria for accreditation of accreditation agencies' edited on 08.10.2007, an agency must provide evidence of internal procedures, regulations and expertise for the admittance to system accreditation, which ensure the application of the 'Criteria for System Accreditation' and the 'General Regulations for the Implementation of System Accreditation Procedures'.

Since the agencies already accredited by the Accreditation Council did not have the opportunity at the time to also get the certification for the implementation of system accreditation procedures, the Accreditation Council offered those agencies a simplified and non-bureaucratic admittance procedure. In this procedure, the agencies had to prove that they met the criteria for accreditation of agencies related to system accreditation and ensure the application of criteria and general procedural rules for system accreditation. According to the resolution 'Admittance of the agencies currently certified for programme accreditation for system accreditation procedures', the admittance for the implementation of procedures of system accreditation for the remaining term of existing accreditation can be determined by meeting the prerequisites. The agencies ACQUIN, AHPGS, AQAS, ASIIN, FIBAA and ZEvA submitted a request for admittance to system accreditation. The Accreditation Council set up a work group for a preliminary examination of the submitted applications.

On the basis of the recommendations of the work group and after hearing the applicants, the Accreditation Council resolved in autumn 2008 to provide admittance to the above mentioned agencies for system accreditation.

1.4 Relation of Consultation and Accreditation

The introduction of system accreditation undoubtedly brings considerable need for consultation regarding the development of internal quality assurance systems to the higher education institution. Accreditation agencies are competent consultants for higher education institutions based on their sometimes year-long experience in the field of quality assurance and development. However, the risk remains that the boundaries between consultation and certification dissolve and give the public impression that the agencies certified their own subjects of consultation. In order to avoid such conflicts of interest, ensure impartial decisions in system accreditation and have the maximum transparency possible, the Accreditation Council resolved in its 56th meeting to develop standards for structuring the relation between accreditation and consultation. The Accreditation Council instructed the chairman to acquire the opinion of the agencies regarding this. There was a round table meeting on October 6, 2008 with the agencies in which the topic 'Accreditation and Consultation' was discussed intensively. After the conclusion of discussions, the representatives of the agencies went with the majority decision that a determination of standards for the relationship of system accreditation and consultation or other services are necessary in order to countervail the effect of compromised impartiality in system accreditation and a consequent damage to the accreditation system and its legitimacy in advance. Highest possible

measure of objectivity and transparency in the system accreditation procedures is in the interest of all concerned because of the far-reaching consequence which involves issuance or refusal of system accreditation.

Therefore, the Accreditation Council resolved in its 57th meeting on 31.10.2008 the 'Standards for structuring the relationship between system accreditation and consultation services'. For ensuring the impartiality of system accreditation and with it the sustainable security of the trust in the quality of the Accreditation Council seal, the resolution specifies that the accreditation of the internal quality assurance of a higher education institution must not be done by the same agency which has contributed or is still contributing as consulting or assisting agency in the structuring or introduction of this quality assurance system besides system accreditation. This incongruity includes organisations which are connected with the accreditation agency legally, institutionally, organisationally, financially or personally. Furthermore, the work as an expert in a system accreditation procedure is incongruent with a preceding or current activity outside of system accreditation, which deals in consultation or other assistance to the structuring or introduction of the quality assurance system to be accredited in the same higher education institution.

With this resolution, the pertinent international agreements such as *European Standards and Guidelines* or the *Code of Good Practice for the Members of the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education* will also be taken into account. These standards uphold impartiality and avoidance of conflict of inter-

ests with internationally recognised principle for quality assurance.

Annexure 1.4.1 *Standards for the structuring of the relationship between system accreditation and consultation services (31.10.2008)*

2. Activities of the Foundation in 2008: Tasks and Achievements

2.1 Accreditation and Re-accreditation of Accreditation Agencies

The accreditation and re-accreditation of accreditation agencies including the assessment of the meeting of conditions to be proved by the agencies is the core operation of the Accreditation Council. Subsequent to the introduction of the system accreditation, the Accreditation Council implemented a total of six procedures in addition to admittance of already accredited agencies for system accreditation in 2008 (see Section 1.3).

With the accreditation of the 'Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Canonical Programmes of Studies in Germany (AKAST)' in the autumn of 2008, the number of agencies accredited by the Accreditation Council has reached seven. AKAST was accredited in the 57th meeting of the Accreditation Council on October 31, 2008 in Berlin with seven conditions and two recommendations for a period of five years. The activity of AKAST will mainly relate to accreditation of study programmes which qualify for priesthood or pastoral assistant, in adherence to the 'Benchmarks for Study Structure in Study Programmes with Catholic or Evangelic Theology/Religion' decided by the KMK on December 13, 2007 (re-

fer to points 3 and 8 of the 'Benchmarks'). The agency office with its head office in Eichstätt assumed its office at the change of 2008/2009.

The procedure for the accreditation of AKAST was implemented in a period of less than half a year; between submission of the rationale for the application at the beginning of September and the decision by the Accreditation Council in October 2008, there were hardly two months. If nothing else it is evidence for the efficiency of the procedures implemented by the Accreditation Council. The Accreditation Council's decision for the accreditation of AKAST, the accreditation application of the agency, the analysis report and the response of AKAST have been published in the Foundation's website.

In June 2008, the Accreditation agency for study courses in Health and Social Science (AHPGS) submitted an application to the Accreditation Council for re-accreditation as accreditation agency. The Accreditation Council set up an expert group in its 56th meeting on 23.06.2008. This group got together in December 2008 for a meeting and an on-site visit in Freiburg in December 2008. A decision of the Accreditation Council is expected in March 2009.

The Accreditation Council also resolved in its 57th meeting in October 2008 the start of more accreditation procedures. One German and two foreign establishments have requested the commencement of a procedure for accreditation by the Accreditation Council. The resolutions have been scheduled for 2009.

The assessment of the meeting of conditions took place in the report period for two re-accreditation procedures from the years 2006 (ZEvA) and 2007 (AQAS).

AQAS: In case of AQAS, the Accreditation Council recognised with the resolution of 29.02.2008 the implementation of all twelve conditions of the resolution on the re-accreditation of AQAS dated 15.02.2007. Regarding condition 11, it expressly referred to the resolution 'Standards for procedures of batch accreditation' and requested AQAS to submit a report on the implementation and the results of the internal quality assurance pursuant to condition 4 until 31.12.2008. The report of the agency has arrived within the term specified.

ZEvA: The Accreditation Council recognised with the resolution dated 29.02.2008 the implementation of condition 9 of the accreditation decision dated 22.06.2006, but expressly referred to the resolution 'Standards for procedures of batch accreditation'. The term for the conditions 2 and 10 connected with the re-accreditation of ZEvA was extended to 01.01.2009 by the Accreditation Council.

2.2 Supervision and Monitoring

The German accreditation system is decentralised and currently supported by seven competing agencies certified by the Accreditation Council. They implement programme and system accreditation procedures and are bound under the procedures and criteria stipulated by the Accreditation Council. In order to ensure the inclusion of these requirements in a sustainable way and to guarantee the comparability of the procedures, the Accreditation Council is liable to verify the accreditation procedures implemented by the agencies in line with § 2 Para 1 no. 4 of the Accreditation Foundation's statutes. The Accreditation Council meets this mission on the basis of a transparent and for the agencies comprehensive procedure, which provides assessments based on random-

sampling as well as specific-purpose besides observations during an on-site visit and the decisive meeting of the accreditation commission of the respective agency. The random sample assessment takes place annually for all agencies in four cases; the specific-purpose examination is done if there is a sign of defective implementation and decision of an accreditation procedure.

The random sample assessment is done on the basis of files. The head office receives a comprehensive procedure document which contains the self documentation of the higher education institution, information for selection and appointment of experts, information on implementation of the on-site visit, the evaluation report of the agency, the response of the higher education institution as well as the resolution of the agency's responsible accreditation commission. If the head office identifies deficiencies in the accreditation procedure during the preliminary examination of the documents, the responsible agency is invited to give a statement. If the indications of defects are later confirmed as unjustified, the assessment procedure is completed, otherwise the Foundation's management decides upon further procedures. Here, the possible decisions of the Accreditation Council or the Foundation's management range from instruction to amend the procedural practice of an agency through to the liability for amending a specific accreditation decision up to imposition of an administrative fine or, in case of long-term and grave breaches of criteria and procedural rules of Accreditation Council or agreements concluded between Accreditation Council and agencies, for withdrawing the accreditation.

In the report period, the Accreditation Council has verified a total of 24 selected random sample accreditation procedures through the files. The result of this assessment was as fol-

lows: From the 24 assessments, a total of 7 (i.e. 30% of the procedures) were concluded without any objections. The Accreditation Council found a total of 41 deficiencies in the remaining 17 procedures, from which 11 resulted in an instruction for amendment of an accreditation decision in line with § 7 of the contract concluded between the Accreditation Council and agencies. The instruction for amendment to an accreditation decision required the subsequent issuance of a condition in eight cases - in two cases, a slight modification of the accreditation decision and in one case the withdrawal of a condition. Subsequent to a breach of one of the obligations of the agencies, the Accreditation Council imposed an administrative fine in three cases in accordance with § 14 of the agreement with the Council and agencies.

Apart from the random sample assessments, the Accreditation Council initiated six specific-purpose assessment procedures in the report period. In one of these procedures, the indications of defects proved to be unjustified, in two other procedures, the responsible agencies were instructed for an amendment to the accreditation decision in line with § 7 of the agreement between Accreditation Council and agencies. The other three procedures have not been concluded yet.

The monitoring procedure provides a participation of members of the agency office or the Accreditation Council in expert and commission meetings of the agencies and offers a direct view of the procedural practice and work of the agencies, has proved to be a meaningful addition, in 2008 as well, to the random sample assessment procedure through files conducted by the Accreditation Council.

In line with the system of internal quality assurance resolved by the Accreditation Council,

the head office undertook an evaluation of the assessment procedure in the autumn of 2008 and submitted the results of the monitoring of agencies to the Accreditation Council for consultation on its 57th meeting. Considering the objective to ensure the inclusion of criteria and procedural rules specified by the Accreditation Council and consequently ensuring the comparability of the procedures, the assessment procedures have made a contribution which cannot be undermined: Several agencies have initiated relevant measures for removing the deficiencies in consequence of the feedbacks and objections of the Accreditation Council, which reach out over the individual case and therefore contributed towards improving the quality of the procedure. The Accreditation Council, on the other hand, for the purpose of quality development as well, has used knowledge from monitoring procedures for the modification and further development of individual resolutions in order to counteract defects or examples of defects occurring frequently and to ensure a uniform procedural practice of the agencies and a fair competition between the involved stakeholders.

In summer of 2008, the agency office undertook an analysis of the conditions given by the accreditation agencies in the study programme accreditations. The objective of the analysis was to get information about the most frequent defects, the assignment of conditions to the relevant criteria and to acquire relevance between individual agencies and issued criteria.

2.3 Resolutions of the Accreditation Council on Criteria and Procedures

The introduction of the system accreditation (see section 1.2) has made an adjustment in the existing resolutions of the Accreditation Council necessary. Besides the amendment to

individual resolutions made in this context, for instance those on decision types and effects of the Accreditation Council and the agencies or the Criteria for accreditation of accreditation agencies, the Accreditation Council issued a series of further resolutions in 2008 which deal with implementation of procedures, application of requirements common to Länder and structural features of the accreditation system. This includes the following resolutions:

► **Standards for procedures of cluster accreditation** (29.02.2008)

The opportunity to accredit cluster of professionally affine study programmes besides accreditation of individual study programmes in the procedure has led to a considerable increase in procedural efficiency and therefore also to a decrease in costs for the applying higher education institutions. However, during the random sample and specific-purpose procedure verifications in regard to the compilation of the clusters and the expert groups, the Accreditation Council discovered not only considerable differences in the procedural practice of individual agencies but also considerable deficiencies regarding criteria and procedures to be included for accreditation of study programmes. Therefore, the Accreditation Council agreed on issuing special regulations for procedures of cluster accreditation, which have been added as a separate section in the 'General Regulations for Implementation of Procedures for Accreditation and Re-accreditation of Study Programmes'. The core is formed by the regulations that the cluster of study programmes requires a high professional affinity of individual (partial) study programmes which is given only if it simply overlaps the affiliation to a faculty culture and has a disciplinary closeness to study programmes. On the con-

trary, collective structural features of study programmes alone do not provide a justification of necessary professional affinity. While building the expert group, an adequate amount of evaluation of all study programmes must be ensured. Limiting only to one faculty expert for every faculty represented in the cluster needs to be justified first.

***Annexure 2.3.1** General Regulations for Implementation of Procedures for Accreditation and Re-accreditation of Study Programmes (08.10.2007 amended on 29.02.2008)*

► **Standards for procedures of accreditation of combination study programmes** (29.02.2008)

While implementing the current Magister study programmes with one major and two minor fields of study on the tiered study system, the agencies are increasingly confronted with procedures for accreditation of so-called combination study programmes. The survey of such study programmes which normally stand out by the large number of combinations of major and minor faculties offered, requires a specially close examination of the underlying qualification objectives, study organisation and academic feasibility especially regarding the independent overlapping of teaching seminars and examinations. Based on this, the Accreditation Council decided upon special regulations for accreditation of combination study programmes in February 2008, which again determine under the indication of structural requirements common to Länder and the pertinent resolutions of the Accreditation Council, that basically the combination study programme and not its partial study programmes are the subject of the accreditation. Hence this, the criteria for accreditation of study programmes are always to be applied as such, in-

cluding the offered possible combinations, to the applied study programme and not only on the individual supplementary or partial study programmes. Qualification objectives forming the basis of the study programme concept can however comprise of the total number of qualification objectives of partial study programmes. The applicant higher education institution must prove for the often selected combinations that teaching seminars and module examinations are concordant with each other in such a way that academic feasibility is ensured. The higher education institution must provide evidence for combinations opted seldom that overlapping independence is strived for and information obligation to the students is met.

Annexure 2.3.1 *General Regulations for Implementation of Procedures for Accreditation and Re-accreditation of Study Programmes (08.10.2007 amended on 29.02.2008)*

► **Preparation of experts in accreditation procedures**(31.10.2008)

The focus of the German accreditation system is the survey of study programmes or internal quality assurance systems of higher education institutions by experts. While the agencies have professional structures for implementation of procedures, the experts are not professionals in the sense that they work especially and exclusively in contrast to those trained especially for quality assurance tasks in narrower context. However, their opinion is the essential basis for the accreditation decisions. Due to this singled out role of the experts, it is one of the most essential tasks of an agency to ensure that the expert group appointed by it appropriately meets its task and responsibility. The expertise of the experts is based on three aspects: (1) experienced, some research-based expertise on the accreditation subject,

(2) comprehensive knowledge of the assessment criteria and procedural rules and (3) understanding of own role as an expert. In the course of assessment and monitoring of accreditation procedures, the Accreditation Council has come to know that the measures of the agencies for preparing the experts are gravely different in the scope and quality and the significance of the peers in the accreditation procedure is not always considered. Consequently, the Accreditation Council agreed in October 2008 upon binding standards for the preparation of experts in accreditation procedures. The agencies have to guarantee the expertise of the experts based on experience and research activities by appropriate selection procedures. Through an appropriate selection procedure of the experts, the agencies ensure that only such experts are employed for the expert opinion who have comprehensive knowledge of evaluation criteria and procedural rules and a clear understanding of their role in the expert opinion procedure. Furthermore, the agency conducts a preliminary meeting with the expert group right before the on-site visit and consequently ensures that the experts are well aware of the special conditions of the case for decision at hand and know the course of the procedure as well as any specific task assignments. The chairperson of the expert group plays an important role here.

Annexure 2.3.2 *Initiation of experts in accreditation procedures (31.10.2008)*

► **Accreditation of Masters study programmes with artistic profile** (31.10.2008)

With the resolution of 15.06.2007, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder supplemented the Structural requirements common to Länder in accordance with § 9 Para 2 HRG for the Ac-

creditation of Bachelor's and Master's study programmes in Section B 1 with Regulations for artistic study programmes at Art and Music higher education institutions. The regulations according to point A 3.2 determine that Masters study programmes at Art and Music higher education institutions must have a primarily artistic profile which is to be determined in the accreditation according to the prerequisites of the Accreditation Council and indicated in the Diploma Supplement. The Accreditation Council has followed the instruction of issuing prerequisites for determination of this kind and issued the resolution 'Accreditation of Master's Study Programmes with Artistic Profile' on 31.10.2008. The resolution states that Master's study programmes at Art and Music higher education institutions must have a primarily artistic profile which is to be determined in the accreditation according to the prerequisites of the Accreditation Council and indicated in the Diploma Supplement. Nevertheless, the decision whether a Master's study programme has an artistic profile lies in the hand of the higher education institution so that only an evidently incorrect, i.e. a profile assignment not covered by the study programme is to be objected in the accreditation procedure.

Annexure 2.3.3 *Accreditation of Master's study programmes with artistic profile (31.10.2008)*

2.4 Internal Quality Assurance

Existence and application of an internal quality management is one of the central prerequisites for the national and international recognition of quality assurance facilities. Corresponding requirements are also a part of the membership criteria of the *European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)* and the *Code of Good Practice des European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA)*.

The Accreditation Council had agreed upon a resolution for the introduction of a system of internal quality assurance of the Foundation for Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany in June 2007 itself. An important objective of the internal quality assurance system is the continuous assessment and improvement of internal processes for ensuring a qualitatively high-class and as effective a fulfilment of the statutory tasks of the Foundation as possible. The individual quality assurance measures are based on the services processes (accreditation of agencies, definition of criteria and procedural rules for accreditation procedures and monitoring of the work of the agencies) and also on the support processes (strategic planning, financial planning, personnel recruitment and qualification as well as panel support). The fulfilment of statutory tasks and expectations of the stakeholders at the Foundation must be verified with a formalised feedback system and, in case of inconsistencies, must be ensured in the long term by carrying out appropriate measures. The measures of internal quality assurance correspond with the 'Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area' (ESG) and therefore ensure the international recognition of the work of the Foundation.

The Accreditation Council commissioned a work group at the end of 2007 with the tasks of developing recommendations for the implementation of the internal quality assurance system at the operative level. The work group 'Quality assurance' met twice in 2008 and presented the Accreditation Council with a draft on implementation of the internal quality assurance system which the Accreditation Council resolved in its 57th meeting on 31.10.2008. For implementation of quality measures, for instance involvement of groups and agencies represented in the Accreditation Council while

developing criteria and procedural rules or the preparation of the experts in the accreditation procedures, formalised feedback facilities for agencies will be provided in future for agencies and experts who are involved in the Accreditation Council's commission. The feedbacks must be in the form of interviews based on the guidelines or in the written questionnaire developed by the AG 'Quality assurance'. Besides these measures, which aim at a constant and quality-led advancement of procedures and criteria of the Accreditation Council, the introduction of a formalised feedback facility for members of Accreditation Council should strive to improve the quality of work at the Foundation and support of panels by the agency of-fice.

2.5 Complaints Procedure

With the resolution of 31.10.2008, the Accreditation Council has set up a complaints committee which has two members of the Accreditation Council and an external member. Pursuant to § 3 Para 7 of the rules of procedure of the Accreditation Council, the complaints committee advises on the complaints lodged by the agencies against decisions of the Accreditation Council about accreditation and re-accreditation of agencies, the withdrawal of accreditation or against decisions while monitoring the accreditations and subsequently provides a proposed resolution for decision to be taken to the Accreditation Council in line with § 7 of the foundation's statutes, the Accreditation Council takes a decision on a complaint after consulting with the Foundation's Council.

With this decision, the Accreditation Council has reformed the complaints procedure. Until now the agencies were assigned to the still existing procedure of assessment of the correct-

ness of a decision of the Accreditation Council by the Foundation's Council in line with § 9 Para 1 Akkreditierungs-Stiftungs-Gesetz, which is practicable only in a limited sense due to its tediousness.

While the complaints commission was not operational during the report period, the Foundation's Council has received the application of an agency for assessment of the correctness of the resolution 'Standards for structuring the relationship between system accreditation and consultation services' (see Section 1.4). The Foundation's Council returned the agency's complaint and confirmed the correctness of the resolution.

2.6 Results of the Foundation's Evaluation

The Accreditation Council had requested the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder way back in August 2006 for initiating an external evaluation of the Foundation for Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany. The Accreditation Council not only aimed at meeting the statutory duty of regular implementation of such evaluations, but also use the knowledge connected with self-evaluation and external evaluation for improving its work and processes. At the same time, it intended to request for the confirmation of full membership at the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) on the basis of this evaluation.

After the Accreditation Council had submitted its self report for external evaluation of the Foundation in the second half of 2007, there were evaluation meetings with the members of the Accreditation Council and the head office and representatives of the accreditation agencies in January 2008. In April the expert group

presented the result of evaluation of the Foundation for Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany, and subsequently the Accreditation Council issued a statement on the report in June 2008. It determined:

'The external evaluation has resulted in a comprehensible and balanced result which is a good basis for critical self-reflection of the Accreditation Council and will advance the professionalism and quality of its activity. With it, the Accreditation Council can assume its responsibility for high quality in teaching and learning in the German system of higher education institution further. Basing on the discussion it will analyse the information and recommendations of the experts and deduce measure from it while compiling its own report'.

The evaluation of the experts regarding the fulfilment of European Standards (ESG and ECA) by the Accreditation Council shows a primarily positive picture as well. Only ESG Standard 3.4 (Resources) and ESG Standard 3.6 (Independence) have been indicated as only partially met. In reaction to the evaluation of the experts, the ENQA management informed the Accreditation Council in October 2008 that on the basis of the external evaluation, full membership of the Accreditation Council was confirmed for five more years. At the same time, it asked for a report until September 2010, which is supposed to provide information on the measures taken to (1) the improvement of the personnel setup, (2) the assessment of compilation of the Accreditation Council with a view on safeguarding the independence and (3) the monitoring of introduction of system accreditation (see Section 2.8 as well).

Annexure 2.6.1 *Response to 'Result report on Evaluation of the Foundation for Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany' (11.07.2008)*

2.7 Meetings of the Accreditation Council

The Accreditation Council hosted a conference for introducing the criteria and procedures of system accreditation of the Accreditation Council on 13.03.2008 at the Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. The Chairperson explained the resolutions of the Accreditation Council on system accreditation in front of well over 150 representatives from presidency of higher education institutions and faculties and answered queries. For international presentation of system accreditation, Mr. Dr. Karl Dittrich of the *Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie* (NVAO) gave a current overview of the developments in the accreditation systems in Europe. Mr. Dr. Volker Meyer-Guckel, representative General Secretary of the Association announced the winner of the programme 'Quality Management in Higher Education Institutions' and handed over certificates to the representatives of the four winning higher education institutions TU Braunschweig, FH Münster, HS Fulda und Universität Main. The conference of the Accreditation Council concluded with a report on the ongoing work by Ms. Prof. Barbara Jürgens of the TU Braunschweig, which gave the participant an insight of the implementation of quality management systems in higher education institutions.

On 09.12.2008, the Accreditation Council conducted a meeting of experts at the Wissenschaftszentrum Bonn about 'Learning outcome orientation taken seriously: Consequences for accreditation'. A total of about 30 people from various areas participated, such as experts from the higher education didactics, international experts and representatives of the Accreditation Council and the agencies. The meeting of experts which is a start for future regular events of the Accreditation Council, offered the stakeholders in the German accredi-

tation system the opportunity to discuss the current questions and future developments of accreditation in small groups. Mr. Prof. Dr. Wilfried Müller, Vice President of the German Rector's Conference introduced the topic with his presentation 'Reform in teaching - Reform in accreditation: Orientation towards learning outcomes taken seriously'. In the following presentation, Ms. Prof. Karin Kleppin of the Ruhr-Universität Bonn and Dr. Hans-Joachim Althaus of TestDaF-Institut talked of the consequences of learning outcome orientation for the examinations. An overview of the current developments in the international field was given by Dr. Peter Findlay of the *Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)* with his presentation 'Learning outcomes and Quality Assurance – some current considerations'.

Annexure 2.7.1 *Programme of the meeting 'System accreditation: Procedural rules and criteria'*

Annexure 2.7.2 *Programme of the meeting of experts 'Learning outcome orientation taken seriously: Consequences for accreditation'*

2.8 Future Tasks: An outlook

Test phase of system accreditation: After the Accreditation Council has assumed the prerequisites for the introduction of system accreditation and has already admitted six agencies for the implementation of system accreditation procedure, the test phase for this new instrument of quality assurance will begin in 2009 with the release of the first procedure. Since the higher education institutions and the agencies are dealing with a new procedure with its positive and negative implications, connected with far-reaching consequence for the higher education institutions and their members, the Accreditation Council considers an intensive monitoring of the first procedure

implemented by the agencies to be essential. As in programme accreditation, the participation of the Accreditation Council in procedures of system accreditation will promote a mutual learning process and will contribute towards quickly resolving problems generally connected with the introduction of a new system.

In its resolution 'Basic decision on introduction of system accreditation' dated 15.06.2007, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder requested the Accreditation Council to monitor the introduction of system accreditation and to submit an evaluative report in five years. Efficacy and efficiency of the procedures and criteria developed by the Accreditation Council will be of a special interest in this connection. The extent of fulfilment of the expectations by the system accreditation and its suitability as an appropriate instrument must be shown in order for higher education institutions to assume the responsibility of quality of teaching and learning. Another important topic is the relationship between consultation and accreditation since the Accreditation Council must reliably ensure the long-term objectivity of expert report and impartiality of decisions as guarantee of system quality.

Follow up of external evaluation: The Accreditation Council has announced a series of measures in its response to the report of external evaluation of the Foundation, which aim at accepting the recommendations of the expert group and improving the work of the Accreditation Council further (see Section 2.6). With the implementation of recommendations, the Accreditation Council will also conform to the request of the *European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)* of submitting a report in two years, which will provide information about the desired improvement of personnel setup, assessment of

organisational setup with the purpose of ensuring the independence as well as monitoring of the introduction of system accreditation. In this way, the Accreditation Council will verify, for instance, on the basis of an analysis of the first six procedures of system accreditation the practicability of the criteria and procedural rules as well as its effects and carry out amendments, if necessary. As a reaction to the recommendations of the evaluators, the Accreditation Council will also check whether a simplified accreditation procedure for study programmes already accredited by recognised foreign agencies without endangering fair competition in the German accreditation system and make efforts towards acquiring additional resources for more extensive public relations.

Comparability of the procedures: One of the most important tasks of the Accreditation Council is to ensure the comparability of the procedures conducted by the agencies. Especially due to the importance attached to the accreditation with regard to the national and international reputation of German study programmes and the mutual recognition of study diplomas and qualifications in the international context, the consistent application of the criteria and procedural standards for the accreditation of study programmes and internal quality assurance systems is in the special interest of the Accreditation Council. With the random sample and specific-purpose assessment procedures (see Section 2.2), the Accreditation Council has already contributed towards improving the consistence of accreditation decision in the past years. Keeping in mind the growing numbers of accreditation agencies competing with each other, the Accreditation Council will intensify its efforts and must develop suitable measures for avoiding inconsistent decisions in the accreditation system.

Nevertheless, the Accreditation Council will decisively avoid an over-regulation in the future as well and will continue the taken path of de-bureaucratisation.

Accreditation procedures across borders:

The setup of so-called *joint programmes* which are developed and offered by several cooperating higher education institutions from various countries provides a major contribution for internationalisation of courses of study at German higher education institutions and for realising the idea of the European Higher Education Institution Area.

Since the accreditation of *joint programmes* always leads to difficulties in practice, which are mostly caused by the different and not always compatible national laws and directives, the Accreditation Council has aimed at identifying the main hurdles in this field and developing relevant solutions in cooperation with the agencies, higher education institutions and ministries. In this context, the monitoring and evaluation of cross-border accreditation procedures is planned in cooperation with the foreign accreditation facilities responsible and in some cases have already been initiated.

3. International Cooperation

The advancement of international cooperation in the field of accreditation is one of the most important tasks of the Accreditation Council pursuant to § 3 Para 2 no. 2 of the Akkreditierungs-Stiftungs-Gesetz. The efforts to further the mutual understanding of the systems of quality assurance, to develop comparable criteria, methods and standards of quality assurance and to improve the transparency of the courses of study and the qualifications related to them are not ends in themselves, but aim at the advancement of student mobility in the sense of transnational movement of people. The international layout of the German accreditation system stands out in a structural respect, for instance in the representation of international experts in the Accreditation Council or the directives developed by the Accreditation Council for the formation of expert groups. Equally important in this context is the cooperation in the pertinent European and international quality assurance networks, which is indispensable for concordance of common standards in quality assurance. As an active member of the *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 Accreditation Council is closely connected with the most important quality assurance networks. The efforts of the Accreditation Council in the field of international cooperation can be explained with the following overview of the activities of the Accreditation Council and its members:

ENQA: At the members' assembly of the *European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education* on 25./26.09.2008 in Vienna, the Director of the Accreditation Council, Dr. Hopbach was elected with a large majority as the Vice President of ENQA. In this function, the Director of the Accreditation Council will make a major contribution to further intensification of relationships between national and European level.

In cooperation with ENQA, the Accreditation Council on 12/13 June 2008 conducted an ENQA Workshop on the topic 'Programme oriented and institutional oriented approaches to quality assurance: New developments and mixed approaches' in Berlin. The focus of the workshop in which just short of 50 representatives from European quality assurance establishments participated, was the relationship between institutionally oriented and programme oriented components of quality assurance, the question of possible synergies through a suitable combination of methods and the relevant experiences of quality assurance establishments in the European context.

The Accreditation Council was represented by the members of the agency office at the following ENQA meets:

Bologna Seminar „Quality Assurance in Transnational Education (TNE) – From words to action“, 01./02.12.2008 in London.

Third European Quality Assurance Forum „Trends in Quality Assurance“, 22.-24.11.2008 in Budapest,

Bologna Seminar "First external evaluations of quality assurance agencies - lessons learned", am 10./11.07.2008 in Paris, und

Bologna Seminar "Internal QA-systems and the ESG", 14./15.04.2008 in Barcelona.

The Accreditation Council is also represented in the ENQA work group 'Internal Quality Assurance'. The second meeting of this work group took place on 14/15.04.2008. The focus of this meeting was the agreement on whether specific measures and procedures are understood and practiced as 'accountability procedures' under the Section 3.8 of the *European Standards and Guidelines*. Important objective of the work group is the regular exchange of the employees responsible for the internal quality assurance at the agency offices of the ENQA member agencies.

ECA: The intensive exchange between the ECA member organisations has contributed in the past years to mutual understanding of work methods and far-reaching common standards for important aspects of activities of an accreditation facility. After the completion of term of the ECA project by the end of 2007, the follow-up consortium of the *European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA)* was founded in Krakow on 05.05.2008, which continues to carry the name ECA. The project has designated as central objectives the mutual recognition of qualifications and accreditation decisions as well as the simplification of accreditation of joint programmes as well as the build-up of the European database 'Qrossroads', which already contains comprehensive information on the accreditation systems, quality assurance facilities and accredited study programmes in many countries represented in ECA. The Accreditation Council resolved in its 56th meeting on 23/24.06.2008, to continue its ECA membership and to carry it forward to the follow-up consortium of ECA.

The Accreditation Council is represented at the four work groups of ECA under the topics 'Mutual Recognition', 'Institutional Accreditation and Audits', 'Qrossroads and Information

Strategies' and 'Mutual Learning and best Practices' at consultation level.

Quality Audits Work Group: The Accreditation Council is a member of an international work group of agencies which implement quality audits.

National Bologna AG: One of the most important measures of the studies reform in the Bologna process is the development and application of qualification structure. At the Conference of Ministers in Berlin in 2003, the ministers of Bologna signatory states agreed upon the formulation of a European qualification structure and undertook to develop national qualification structures at the same time which correspond with that of the European structure. The national Bologna workgroup officially instituted in March 2008 the procedure for assessment of conformity of the qualification structure for German higher education degrees with the 'Qualification structure for the European Higher Education Institution Area'. Following the corresponding recommendation of the Bologna follow-up group (BFUG), a steering group was appointed in which the managing Director of the Accreditation Council also contributed. In September 2008, the Accreditation Council consented with the 'Report on the assessment of compatibility of the 'Qualification structure of the German higher education degrees' with the "Qualification structure of the European Higher Education Institution Area" submitted by the steering group.

Information exchange: Mutual understanding of quality assurance systems in the international context is not only promoted through the networks mentioned, but also through the cooperation of members of the Accreditation Council in commissions, expert groups or quality assurance establishments abroad but through informal contacts during meetings and

presentations as well. The international contacts and cooperation enable the Accreditation Council to bring in its expertise in the international forum and also consider the experience of international partners in its operations. The Chairman of the Accreditation Council is the Representative Chairman of the University Council of the Vienna University and has contributed as expert in the audit procedures at the Fribourg and Zurich universities. The managing Director of the Accreditation Council is the Vice President of the ENQA and also a member of the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ).

Besides the international lectures of the managing Director and the participation in international meetings or expert discussions such as the AQA Seminar 'Quality Audits' on 15.04.2008 in Vienna, the QUACE meeting for questions related to quality assurance in joint programmes on 29/30.05.2008 in Saarbrücken, the E4-Meeting on 06.10.2008 in Brussels or a meeting of representatives of the Slovenian ministry in December 2008 in Ljubljana, the agency office welcomed several different foreign delegations from Argentina, Guinea, Malaysia and Japan in the past year as well.

The members of the Accreditation Council are regularly informed at the meetings of the Council on the new development in accreditation and quality assurance fields in the international context.

4. Information and Communication

4.1 Presentation, Information and Consultation

The Accreditation Council considers it an integral part of its work to inform the public regularly and extensively about the activities of the Foundation, decisions of the Accreditation Council and the advancement of the accreditation system in Germany. For the presentation of its work, the Accreditation Council mainly uses electronic media. Besides the publication of press releases on the Informationsdienst Wissenschaft (idw) (information service science) and the QM newsletter of the Quality Management project of the HRK, the interested public is informed about the accreditation system, criteria and procedures for the accreditation of study programmes, accreditation agencies, and system accreditation; resolutions of the Accreditation Council and the agencies accredited by the Accreditation Council on the regularly updated website of the Foundation for Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany. All central documents are available as PDF files on the easily accessible website of the Foundation. In the procedure for accreditation of accreditation agencies, the Accreditation Council basically ensures transparency. Therefore, on completion of a procedure, not only the resolution of the Accreditation Council, but also the agency's application, the expert group's report and the response of the agency, if available, are published on the website of the Foundation. The progress report of the Foundation which gives the year-round information on all activities of the Foundation within the report period, is published in print as well as PDF document. The electronic version is available

for the public in German and English on the website of the Foundation as PDF files.

The agencies accredited by the Accreditation Council have a password protected internal area, which contains an overview of all negative decisions of the agencies and other confidential information of the Accreditation Council.

Besides providing information, the Accreditation Council tries to improve the level of knowledge of the relevant interested groups and the national as well as international public about the accreditation system. For one, it answers a large number of telephonic and written queries by students, higher education institutions, ministries, special associations and agencies on general information of accreditation and the resolutions of the Accreditation Council. The head office of the Accreditation Council is normally in office from Monday to Friday from 0800 to 1800 hours and is available for free information and consultation services. Secondly, the Accreditation Council is represented by its members and employees of the head office in a number of specialist meetings, seminars and expert discussions in which it contributes through speeches on issues concerning accreditation, quality assurance or the studies reform in a broader sense.

The Accreditation Council is also consulted as an advisor in questions of the studies reform and especially the Bologna process which is far beyond its direct work field of accreditation. In this context, formal as well as informal communication structures play an important role. The Accreditation Council is, for instance, represented in the National Bologna AG, in the programme area 'Quality Management' of the association for German Academics, the work group for formulation of the 'German qualification structure for life-long learning' and in the ERASMUS Mundus Beirat of BMBF. The man-

aging Director also represented the Accreditation Council at a state parliament hearing in Düsseldorf and contributed in the AG 'Certification of qualification structure for German higher education institution diplomas/degrees'. A corresponding information exchange takes place in addition through the participation of the employees of the head office at meetings, expert discussions or round table meetings of the German higher education institutions and academic organisations. Furthermore, the numerous discussions which the management of the Foundation conducted along with DAAD, higher education institution representatives, faculty offices, associations, professional associations, churches and chambers have proved to be helpful as well. During such discussions, for instance with representatives of ministries, federal associations of employers' unions, state secretaries and representatives of the German Bishop's Conference, ways to initiate cooperation and types of possible cooperation could be discussed.

4.2 Publication of Accreditation Data

All study programmes which carry the seal of the Accreditation Council after successful accreditation, are entered in the database of the Accreditation Council. The database linked with the Higher Education Compass of the German Rector's Conference can be downloaded from the Foundation's website. It gives information on accreditation terms, conditions connected with accreditation, if any, profile of the study programme, the participating experts as well as the evaluation of the study programme done by the experts. Besides the study programme-related accreditation data, the website of the Foundation also provides statistics of the accredited study programmes, information on the number of cur-

rently accredited study programmes, itemised according to study duration, type of qualification, subject groups, higher education institution type, German states and standard periods of study times. The accreditation data are maintained and updated in the database by the agencies accredited by the Accreditation Council. The release of data records takes place after formal examination by the agency office of the Foundation.

Programming of a European database accredited study programme 'Qrossroads' was started under the ECA team project in 2006. In January 2008, the functionality of the database was explained in one of the Netherlands-Flemish accreditation organisation's (NVAO) information seminar in Den Haag representatives of ECA member organisations. The head office of the Foundation for Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany was also represented in the seminar.

The Accreditation Council is involved in the Qrossroads project along with the German Rector's Conference. In the second quarter, the database was released under participation of the accreditation establishments of Belgium (Flemish part), Germany, France, Ireland, Norway, Poland, Spain, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Austria and has been providing the users since then with extensive information on the accredited study programmes, higher education institution and accreditation systems of the participating countries under www.qrossroads.de

The data export from the database of the Accreditation Council took place with the involvement and support of the German Rector's Conference. In the course of the advancement of Qrossroads planned for 2009, the structural features of the German accreditation system

will be included in the organisational structure of the database even more than before.

4.3 Communication with the Agencies

A communication structure which ensures mutual information exchange between Accreditation Council and accreditation agencies is of special importance for the operability of the Accreditation system. The involvement of agency representatives in various work groups of the Accreditation Council, round table discussion of the Accreditation Council with the agencies and membership of an agency representative in the Accreditation Council have proven to be reliable instruments in the previous years. The member with advisory vote appointed by the agencies has the task of representing the agencies and informing the outcomes of the consultations at the end of the Accreditation Council's meetings.

Before finalising the resolutions with fundamental significance for the accreditation system and the accreditation procedure, the Accreditation Council decides upon the protocol with the agencies. This ensures that the experiences of the agencies from practicing accreditation finds use in the appropriate measure unless it would put the Accreditation Council's regulatory function in question. In 2008, the management of the Foundation and the agencies met for two round table discussions on February 8 and October 6 in order to deliberate on resolutions of the Accreditation Council and to discuss suggestions and thoughts of the agencies. The agencies are informed in time by the Accreditation Council through circulars or emails about new or amended resolutions of the Accreditation Council as well as amendments of requirements common or specific to Länder.

The monitoring of the accreditation procedure (see Section 2.2) carried out by the Accreditation Council has led to acquiring of new information for the Accreditation Council as well as for the agencies and therefore also to an improved understanding of the various perspectives of the said stakeholders. Discussions with the agencies about the observation reports of the Accreditation Council, which were assessed by the agencies as constructive criticism for advancement and improvement of their own procedures, have proved to be meaningful in this context.

4.4 Statistical Data

A total of 4,160 Bachelor's and Master's study programmes which were offered by state or state-recognised higher education institutions in Germany bore the seal of the Accreditation Council by the end of December 2008.¹ With this, the number of accredited study programmes increased by about 1,000 study programmes within a year. Consequently, there are currently over 40% of the offered bachelor and master study programmes, which constitute over 70% of the total study programmes listed in the Higher Education Compass of the German Rector's Conference, have been accredited. Since the share of Bachelor's and Master's study programmes in the entire offer of study programmes has increased from 60% to 70% in a year and the share of accredited study programmes in the same period has remained constant throughout, this shows that there is further increase in annually accredited study programmes. Since the statistics of the Accreditation Council returns the study pro-

grammes at the time of query from the database, the number of 4,160 accredited study programmes does not say anything about all the accreditation procedures implemented. Due to the increasing number of procedures for re-accreditation of study programmes, the number of *procedures* implemented by the agencies could be considerably higher than 4,160.

Out of the 4,160 Bachelor's and Master's study programmes accredited in December 2008, over 70% have been accredited with conditions, whereas the accreditation has been denied by the resolution of the responsible accreditation commission only in 40 cases. Any negative decisions taken by the accreditation commissions of the agencies, but not within the responsibility of the Accreditation Council, are not included in this number. In comparison with the numbers in the previous years, the share of study programmes which were accredited conditionally increased by about 10 percent points.

Information on current numbers is provided on the Foundation's website:

www.akkreditierungsrat.de

¹ These said numbers are based on the data record of the Accreditation Council's database. All accredited study programmes and course possibilities are listed in this database, if they have been entered in the database by the accreditation agencies.

5. Resources

5.1 Finances

The financing of the Foundation is done in line with § 4 Para 1 Akkreditierungs-Stiftungs-Gesetz communally through the 16 Länder. Furthermore, pursuant to § 4 ASG, the foundation can impose fees for fulfilment of its tasks to cover its administrative expenses. The Länder grant the finance only if the administrative expenses of the Foundation are not covered through the fees.

The Conference of Finance Ministers has determined the annual contribution of the Länder on the Foundation at 330,000 Euros. Above this amount fees up to 40,000 Euros remain with the Foundation over. Excess is forwarded to the Länder. This regulation was resolved for the budget years 2008 to 2011.

The annual statement of the Foundation *for Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany* shows income for year 2008 amounting to 358,602.30 Euros and expenses of a total of 358,432.41 Euros therefore a remaining amount of 169.89 Euros.

5.2 Personnel, Spatial and Material Setup

The personnel setup of the agency office of the Foundation has a Director, three consultants (2.5 full time equivalent) and a clerk (50%). This means a total of four full time equivalents. The Director and employees are all higher education graduates and are employed for an unlimited period. The compensation takes place according to rate-related directives of the Tarifvertrag (Rate Agreement) for the Öffentlichen Dienst der Länder (TV-L).

With the head office on Adenauerallee 73 in Bonn, the *Foundation* has four leased office spaces with a total dimension of around 120 sqm.

The EDP infrastructure of the currently six work places comprises of a Pentium IV each, a flatscreen, a telephone and internet connection.