

Drs. AR 33/2009

Resolution on the Application of the Center of Accreditation and Quality Assurance of the Swiss Universities (OAQ) dated October 23, 2008

Resolution of the Accreditation Council dated 09.06.2009

I.

The Foundation for Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany (foundation) accredits the Center of Accreditation and Quality Assurance of the Swiss Universities (OAQ) as per § 2 para 1 no. 1 of the German Statute on the Establishment of a foundation 'Foundation for Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany' subject to the following regulations and thus grants it the right in this respect to accredit study programmes and internal quality assurance systems of Higher Education Institutions by awarding the Foundation's seal.

II.

The decision as per item I. comes into effect on 09.06.2009, however without retrospective effect because the agreement with the Foundation had not been concluded as per § 3 of the German Statute on the Establishment of a foundation 'Foundation for Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany' up to July 31, 2009.

III.

The accreditation and the right as per item I. above are granted for a duration of five years; the right to revocation as per item V. is reserved. As per § 2 Para 1 sentence 2 of the resolution "Decisions of the Accreditation Council: Types and effects" of 15.12.2005 amended on 29.02.2008, the accreditation will expire on 30.09.2014. If ENQA should decide by 31.12.2009 that according to general European standards, an accreditation with a period longer than five years is permitted, then the accreditation term gets extended up to the maximum period permitted according to general European standards, but at the most by another three years.

IV.

The Accreditation Council has determined that OAQ does not fulfil some quality standards; these quality standards are not significant as per § 1 para 3 of the resolution "Decisions of the Accreditation Council: Types and effects" dated 15.12.2005 amended on 29.02.2008. The accreditation is therefore granted under the following conditions:

Condition 1

The OAQ will prove before beginning the accreditation activity, latest by 31.12.2009, a revision and final publication of the documents "Procedures for accreditation of study programmes: Instructions for higher education institutions" and "Procedures for system accreditation: Process control", which will remove the defects listed in the expert report under the evaluation of criterion 3. (Criteria 1, 3, 7).

Condition 2

The OAQ will prove by 31.12.2009 a binding briefing of experts in line with the resolution of the Accreditation Council "Briefing of experts in accreditation procedures" dated 01.10.2008.

Condition 3

The OAQ will prove before beginning the accreditation activity, latest by 31.12.2009, a formalised internal complaints procedure and its announcement. (Criterion 6)

The Accreditation Council refers to the recommendations given in the expert report.

V.

If OAQ does not prove the fulfilment of the conditions within the given respite or if the conditions show not to be fulfilled after the the respite term, the foundation can revoke the accreditation as per § 7 para 2 of the resolution "Decisions of the Accreditation Council: Types and effects" dated 15.12.2005 amended on 28.02.08.

VI. Reasoning

General:

On the basis of the expert report and hearing, the Accreditation Council arrived at the opinion that the Center of Accreditation and Quality Assurance of the Swiss Universities (OAQ) essentially meets the "Criteria for accreditation of accreditation agencies" dated 15.12.2005 amended on 08.10.2007.

The Accreditation Council has gained a very positive impression of the work done by OAQ. Nevertheless, some defects have to be pointed out with regard to meeting the "Criteria for Accreditation of Accreditation Agencies", their rectifying is however possible in a period of at he most 18 months.

For condition 1:

In accordance with Criterion 2.2 of the "Criteria for Accreditation of Accreditation Agencies" dated 15.12.2005 amended on 08.10.2007, the agency implements programme and system accreditation with an efficient and binding regulation following procedure and ensures the enforcement of the Accreditation Council's guidelines as well as the consistence of its decisions. The procedures of the agency in the fields of programme and system accreditation are principally adequate and regular. Currently, the draft for instructions for programme accreditation procedures to be implemented in Germany and the draft for guidelines for system accreditation still require revisions. However, written guidelines are vital since not only do they externally represent the procedures, but also ensure reliability, predictability and consistence for the parties involved; therefore itself is a characteristic of a good procedure.

For condition 2:

In accordance with Criterion 2.3 of the "Criteria for Accreditation of Accreditation Agencies" dated 15.12.2005 amended on 08.10.2007, the agencies must ensure the competence of everyone involved in the procedure with the help of suitable selection processes or briefings

Remarkable about the OAQ situation is the still existing different treatment of student and non-student experts. While a three to four hour briefing for the entire expert group on the day before the on-site visit takes place, the student experts must obligatory complete another preliminary activity before they can be appointed in an expert group. This inequality in treatment is not comprehensible and the missing briefing of the non-student experts is contrary to the resolution "Briefing of experts in accreditation procedures" dated 01.10.2008.

For condition 3:

In accordance with Criterion 2.4 of the "Criteria for Accreditation of Accreditation Agencies" dated 15.12.2005 amended on 08.10.2007, the agency must prove a formalised internal procedure for verifying the accreditation decisions on request of a higher education institution which defines the subject of verification. For the accreditation procedure of the OAQ in Germany, there is the possibility for higher education institutions to have an accreditation decision re-verified by the accreditation commission as a re-deliberation. The described procedure meets the requirements, however, not quite, since terms, addressees etc. have not been defined sufficiently accurately.

VII. Conformity with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and the membership criteria of the European Association for Quality Assurance (ENQA)

The Accreditation Council has noted that the OAQ meets the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and the membership criteria of the European Association for Quality Assurance (ENQA) in most respects.

ESG 2.5 is however met only substantially due to the incomplete publication of the expert report. ESG 2.8 is met only partially since no synthesis reports are made in the field of accreditation. Consequently, ESG 3.1 is met substantially.

ESG 3.6 is not met. Though the operative independence of the OAQ and the independence in the quality evaluation is not in question, however, the independence regarding some basic aspects are restricted or at risk: Though, the procedural rules are developed by OAQ, but the SUK decides upon their commitment. A risk of the independence is given for the quality audit procedures as the members of the academic Advisory Board for universities is responsible for the recommendations and are recommended by the Swiss Conference of University Rectors and consequently exclusively by the representation of interests of the higher education institutions to be audited. The Accreditation Council recognises that the said risks are currently theoretical (or potential) and no problems have arisen yet while implementing the procedures. It also acknowledges that the OAQ is completely aware of the defects mentioned and is striving towards removing them as far as possible in light of the intended amendment to the statutes.

The Accreditation Council considers the fact alarming that the OAQ needs the approval of state bodies for the intent of candidature for membership in the European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies (EQAR).

The cooperation with interested parties, regardless of the developing cooperation with the students in the meantime, is to be considered inadequate. While the OAQ will involve practitioners from the profession in the Accreditation Commission and the expert groups in the future accreditation procedures in Germany in accordance with the relevant regulations, they have no role to play in the procedure in Switzerland. The Accreditation Council not only considers this a deficit, but also incomprehensible since the representatives of the agency in the conversations regarding the intended procedures in Germany highlighted the cooperation with practitioners from the profession as absolutely necessary in context of implementing the Learning Outcome concept. In contrast, the intensive cooperation with the Swiss higher education institutions for further development of procedural guidelines is very positive.

ESG 3.7 is met only substantially due to the incomplete publication of the expert report.

ESG 3.8 is met substantially since there is no liability for external evaluation.