



Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany

Decision of the Accreditation Council, of 22.06.2006, on the application of the Accreditation Agency for Study Programmes of Engineering, Information Science, Natural Sciences and Mathematics (reg ass) (ASIIN) for re-accreditation, of 21.02.2006

I.

The¹ Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany (“Foundation“) accredits, in accordance with section 2 para. 1 No. 1 of the “Act on the Creation of a Foundation,, ‘Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany’ “, the Accreditation Agency for Study Programmes of Engineering, Information Science, Natural Sciences and Mathematics (reg ass) (ASIIN) pursuant to the following provisions, thus granting it the authority to accredit study programmes by awarding the seal of the foundation.

II.

The decision in accordance with the above Item I. takes effect on 1 July 2006, but subject to the resolving, yet non-reactive condition that an agreement with the foundation pursuant to section 3 of the act for creation of a foundation „Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany“ be signed by 30 September 2006. In addition, the decision is subject to a resolving condition in the event of the invalidity of the above-mentioned agreement as a whole or of specific provisions thereof, with the resolving effect taking place for the period commencing on the day of any such judgement becoming incontestable.

III.

The accreditation and the authority pursuant to the above Item I. are granted for a term of five years, with the right of revocation according to Item V. reserved. According to section 1 para. 1 clause 2 of the resolution „Decisions of the Accreditation Council: Types and Impacts

¹ In the present text, gender-specific terms apply equally to women and men.

“ of 15.12.2005, the accreditation expires on 30 September 2011. Should ENQA decide by 31.12.2009 that, according to general European standards, accreditation with a longer term than five years is admissible, the accreditation term will then automatically extend to the maximum term admissible according to general European standards, but no longer than by another three years.

IV.

The Accreditation Council notes that the ASIIN does not meet some quality requirements. Some of these are quality requirements which had no validity during the expired accreditation term but were only introduced as quality criteria by the Accreditation Council in its resolution „Criteria for the Accreditation of Accreditation Agencies “ of 15.12.2005 ,. The quality deficiencies are, according to section 1 para 3 of the resolution „Decisions of the Accreditation Council: Types and Impacts“ of 15.12.2005, not fundamental. Accreditation is thus granted, yet under the following conditions:

1. The ASIIN proves by 01.01.2007 a revision of the „subject-specific supplementary notes“ such that „input factors“ are replaced by „learning outcomes“ as criteria for accreditation and that, on account of the Ländergemeinsame Strukturvorgaben (“Common Structural Guidelines”) of the federal states according to section 9 para. 2 HRG for the Accreditation of Bachelor and Master Study Courses and the binding guidelines of the accreditation council, the existing design leeway of the universities/colleges for the development of study programmes are not restricted and this is clearly communicated to the applicant universities/colleges and the experts, in accordance with criterion 1.3.a of the „Criteria for the Accreditation of Accreditation Agencies“ of 15.12.2005.*

Specifically, the ASIIN dispenses, in all accreditation procedures initiated from 01.07.2006 by conclusion of an agreement, with prescribing a fixed quantity of 18 points in the calculation of the credit point allocation for practice contents.*

2. The ASIIN proves by 01.01.2007 a binding modification of its structure and decision processes such that all accreditation decisions are taken by a single body.*
3. The ASIIN proves by 01.01.2007 the introduction of a formalised internal quality management in accordance with criterion 6 of the „Criteria for the Accreditation of Accreditation Agencies“ of 15.12.2005.*
4. The ASIIN proves by 01.01.2007 the setting up of a formalised complaints procedure for universities/colleges in accordance with criteria 19.1 to 19.3 of the „Criteria for the Accreditation of Accreditation Agencies“ of 15.12.2005.*

5. The ASIIN modifies, in all accreditation procedures initiated from 01.07.2006 by conclusion of an agreement, the procedural practice such that the applicant universities/colleges do not receive the decision recommendations for the procedure of comment to be executed in accordance with criterion 16.3 of the „Criteria for the Accreditation of Accreditation Agencies“ of 15.12.2005“ - this in accordance with a resolution by the accreditation council of 20.06.2005.*
6. The ASIIN proves by 01.01.2007 that the cooperation with ASAP will be changed such that ASIIN is independent in the definition of the accreditation criteria and the selection and appointment of experts.*
7. The ASIIN proves by 01.01.2007 a binding resolution on criteria for the selection of experts which ensures, in accordance with criterion 16.4 of the „Criteria for the Accreditation of Accreditation Agencies “ of 15.12.2005, that representatives of all relevant stakeholders participate in the expert groups.*

V.

Should the ASIIN not prove compliance with these conditions within the respective term or should such conditions not prove satisfied on expiry of the respective term, the Foundation may revoke the accreditation according to section 7 para. 2 of the resolution „Decisions of the Accreditation Council: Types and Impacts“, of 15.12.2005.

VI.

Statement of Reasons

In General:

Based on the expert report, the report on the submitted procedural documentations and the hearing, the Accreditation Council arrived at the opinion that the Accreditation Agency for Study Programmes of Engineering, Information Science, Natural Sciences and Mathematics (reg ass) (ASIIN) essentially meets the „Criteria for the Accreditation of Accreditation Agencies“, passed on 15 December 2005.

The ASIIN was able to show in the expert procedure that it performs the accreditation procedures on a high professional level. It has a programme-related quality understanding and sees its task in setting and reviewing general and subject-specific supplementary input

and outcome oriented quality standards, while applying and meeting the relevant legal rules. In doing so, the ASIIN attaches particular importance to the dialogue with national and international scientific specialist societies, professional associations, faculty and department days and other organisations participating in the economic life.

For the implementation of this task, the ASIIN has the necessary institutional and personnel resources, quantitatively and qualitatively. To be emphasised is the intensive process of the further development of the procedural foundations from an input to an outcome oriented expert procedure, which, however, is not yet concluded.

The high degree of professionalism in the implementation becomes evident principally in the thorough preparation for the decision-making in the accreditation commissions.

To be emphasised, in particular, is the weight of the employability in the expert rating of the study programmes and the international networking of the ASIIN, giving its work important impulses.

Finally, the experts and the accreditation council were able to satisfy themselves that the criteria forming the basis of the accreditation activity are essentially applied.

This positive overall judgement does not rule out that defects may be noted in subareas. Attention is invited to the fact that conditions 3, 4 and 5 relate largely to defects which are not to be ascribed to the procedures employed so far, but result from the „Criteria for the Accreditation of Accreditation Agencies“, decided on December 15, 2005, which, in part, make an adjustment of the institutional, content and procedural foundations and rules of the accreditation agencies mandatory.

Concerning Condition 1:

According to criterion 1.3.a of the „Criteria for the Accreditation of Accreditation Agencies“ of 15.12.2005, the accreditation agencies must base their activity on outcome-oriented expert valuation criteria, which, incidentally, are connected to the national qualification framework. The accreditation council recognises expressly that the ASIIN, in the „Requirements and procedural principles for the accreditation of bachelor’s and master’s degree programmes in engineering, architecture, informatics, the natural sciences and mathematics“, is adopting competence orientation and formulating „learning outcomes“. Despite the adjustments made in the past two years to the „subject-specific supplementary notes“, it sees, however, still need for adjustment as they are, in part, still governed too much by the traditional and very input-oriented „check-lists“ of individual subject cultures. This connection includes, e.g., restricting criteria such as 5 ECTS for BA work or restriction of the practice phases in six-semester study programmes to 18 ECTS, which inadmissibly restrict the design leeway of the universities/colleges in the development of study programmes and, incidentally,

contradict the “Common Structure Guidelines” of the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and the binding conditions/guidelines of the accreditation council.

Concerning Condition 2:

According to criteria 1.3.a, 1.4, 2.8, 2.11, 3.1 and 3.2 of the „Criteria for the Accreditation of Accreditation Agencies“ of 15.12.2005, outcome-oriented procedural rules, ensuring cross-subject and decision consistency, are fundamental to the accreditation of study programmes. A disciplinary restriction runs the risk of missing the satisfaction of these principles and staying with a discipline-related input control via specific curricular models. Such a restriction exists in the case of the ASIIN inasmuch as the disciplinary orientation of the agency on four disciplines or discipline families is already a specialisation which is again reinforced not only by the division of the decision-making into two disciplinarily oriented accreditation commissions, but also and particularly by the specialist commissions far more narrowly disciplinarily-oriented and preparing these decisions. The accreditation council sees in this the risk of a disciplinary isolation of the expert valuation of study programmes. The joint occasion-related decision-making of both accreditation commissions, introduced by the ASIIN to avoid this risk can, on the one hand, not counter this risk. On the other, it is even proof for the additional benefit of a fusion of the two accreditation commissions. Moreover, a unitarily organised decision hierarchy, in contrast to parallel structures of similar areas of responsibility, is best suited to ensure consistency of the decision practice of the agency. The argument of a work overload threatening because of a merger, put forward by ASIIN, is unconvincing as the amount of procedures has to be adapted to the requirements of a high-quality expert valuation, and not conversely. The accreditation council has therefore, in its accreditation decision of 05.03.2003, already imposed the condition on the ASIIN to merge the two accreditation commissions.

Concerning Condition 3:

According to criterion 6 of the „Criteria for the Accreditation of Accreditation Agencies “ of 15.12.2005, accreditation agencies must have a formalised internal quality management which permits the review of the daily activities at any time and enables the agency to analyse its own activity and correct it itself if necessary. Neither the non-formalised direct occasion-related discussions, mentioned by ASIIN for identification of improvement possibilities nor the system of checks and balances represent a coherent and routinely functioning quality management system.

Concerning Condition 4:

According to criteria 19.1 to 19.3 of the „Criteria for the Accreditation of Accreditation Agencies“ of 15.12.2005, the accreditation agencies must have a formalised internal complaints procedure. While the universities/colleges are free to use the administrative court

channels, there should however be, in line with general administrative practice, the possibility of a precedent internal objection procedure.

Concerning Condition 5:

In accordance with the decision of the accreditation council of 20.06.2005, notification of the decision recommendation to the applicant university/college is not admissible. This serves primarily to avoid procedures in which the application is withdrawn before a possible or expected certain negative decision.

Concerning Condition 6:

As per criterion 2.12, 2.13 and 3.2 of the „Criteria for the Accreditation of Accreditation Agencies“ of 15.12.2005, the agency must guarantee the implementation of its quality understanding and of the normative standards in the procedures as well as with the experts. These, incidentally, must be allowed to act independently of third parties. This clear determination is the prerequisite for the respective body to assume its task fully, thus enabling the agency as such to assume responsibility for its actions. The criticised cooperation agreements, however, grant third parties a central role in the definition of criteria and selection of experts which is prone to compromise the independence of the agency and thus the assumption of full responsibility in this respect.

Concerning Condition 7:

According to criteria 2.10 and 2.11 of the „Criteria for the Accreditation of Accreditation Agencies“ of 15.12.2005, the accreditation agencies must, by defined procedures of expert selection, ensure the application of the accreditation criteria. While on-site visit and hearing do not show defects in this regard, the ASIIN was not in a position to show a formal resolution on criteria for expert selection. In such determination, however, lies an important point of reference for the internal work of the agency.

Bonn, 23.06.2006

Professor Dr. Jürgen Kohler
Chairman of the Accreditation Council

* condition fulfilled