



**Application<sup>1</sup> for**

**Reaccreditation of Agentur für Qualitätssicherung  
und Akkreditierung kanonischer Studiengänge in  
Deutschland e.V.**

**by the Accreditation Council**

**for Programme Accreditation**

**9 May 2018**

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<sup>1</sup> This report is confidential. It may not be released to any third party without the permission of the AKAST Head Office.

**Agentur für Qualitätssicherung und Akkreditierung kanonischer Studiengänge in  
Deutschland e.V. (AKAST)**

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**Register of associations**

Amtsgericht Bonn (Bonn Local Court)

VR-Nr. (registration number) 8946



## A) Introduction

### 1. Preliminary remarks and report structure

This report was prepared at a time when the German accreditation system was in the course of a fundamental reorganisation. Until 31 December 2017, accreditations were granted on the basis of requirements issued by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK)<sup>2</sup> and on criteria and rules of procedure derived from those requirements by the Accreditation Council<sup>3</sup>. From 1 January 2018, the accreditation procedure and accreditation decisions are based on the Interstate Treaty on the organisation of a joint accreditation system to ensure the quality of teaching and learning at German higher education institutions<sup>4</sup> and on the Specimen Decree<sup>5</sup> pursuant to Article 4(1)–(4) of that Treaty.

The new rules apply to all accreditation procedures with a contractual start date from 1 January 2018 onwards. Accreditations with a contractual start date in 2017 are carried out under the previous system. As a result of this, the present report is primarily based on experience gained under the system in force until 31 December 2017. Since all accreditations to be conducted by AKAST in the course of 2018 will be carried out under the previous rules, AKAST will not be able to report on its own experience in implementing the new rules before 2019 at the earliest.

Key AKAST documents such as its Statutes and Mission Statement consequently still reflect the previous rules. They will be revised successively in the course of 2018. Submission of the revised documents for resolution by the AKAST general meeting is planned for 25 January 2019.

The structure of this self-evaluation report follows the Accreditation Council's Rules for the Accreditation of Agencies<sup>6</sup> as amended 23 September 2016, which is the version that was in force on inception of the accreditation process. The introduction is followed by a presentation and explanation of the Agency's implementation of Parts 2 and 3 of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) as amended 14/15 May 2015. The standards for quality assurance agencies (Part 3 of the ESG) are addressed first, with information on AKAST's structures, responsibilities and resources. This is followed by information on implementation of the standards for external quality assurance (Part 2 of the ESG), relating to the organisation and conduct of programme accreditations at AKAST. The last section of this self-evaluation report presents and explains the Agency's implementation of the *criteria for national accreditation*.

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<sup>2</sup> Ständige Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Kultusministerkonferenz)

<sup>3</sup> Akkreditierungsrat

<sup>4</sup> Staatsvertrag über die Organisation eines gemeinsamen Akkreditierungssystems zur Qualitätssicherung in Studium und Lehre an deutschen Hochschulen (Studienakkreditierungsstaatsvertrag)

<sup>5</sup> Musterrechtsverordnung gemäß Artikel 4 Absätze 1 – 4 Studienakkreditierungsstaatsvertrag

<sup>6</sup> Regeln für die Akkreditierung von Agenturen

## 2. Presentation and development of AKAST; outlook

Agentur für Qualitätssicherung und Akkreditierung kanonischer Studiengänge in Deutschland e.V. (AKAST – Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Canonical Programmes of Studies in Germany) was established in 2008 by representatives of the Association of Faculties of Catholic Theology (KThF), the associations of theological disciplines (theologische Arbeitsgemeinschaften) and ten theological faculties and schools of philosophy and theology. AKAST is recognised by the German Accreditation Council and is an independent regional agency of the Vatican evaluation agency, Agenzia della Santa Sede per la Valutazione e la Promozione della Qualità delle Università e Facoltà Ecclesiastiche (AVEPRO).

AKAST was first accredited as an accreditation agency in 2008 and has the right to accredit canonical study programmes and to award them the Accreditation Council's quality seal. AKAST was successfully reaccredited in December 2013. Activities during the first accreditation period (2008-2013) centred on establishing the infrastructure, making the Agency operational and developing knowledge and capabilities on an ongoing basis. The AKAST Office was set up at Eichstätt under a cooperation agreement with the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt Foundation (KUE Foundation) and the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt (KUE). The AKAST Office was relocated to Ingolstadt in June 2015. A cooperation agreement was entered into with the Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute (ACQUIN), primarily at first to relieve temporary pressures at AKAST and for support in technical aspects of conducting individual accreditations. In the meantime, the cooperation agreement covers, among other things, procedures for canonical and theology-related study programme accreditations conducted in mutual collaboration.

Further professionalising the Agency's work was an ongoing focus in the next accreditation period (2013-2018). To comply with conditions attached to accreditation, and prompted by the review panel's recommendations, the procedural documents and procedures underwent a fundamental revision that was partly instigated by a change in the administration of AKAST. The work of reviewing and accrediting canonical study programmes continued. In 2014 and 2015, AKAST was able to contribute its considerable experience in the reform of Catholic theology study programmes in the course of preparing for consultations between the Standing Conference and the Churches on evaluation of the Standing Conference's Key Points for the Structure of Studies in Study Courses Involving Catholic and Protestant Theology/Religion<sup>7</sup> of 13 December 2007 (the KMK 'Key Points' resolution) and the related and ensuing review of the Ecclesiastical Requirements for Modularisation of Catholic Theology Study Programmes (Single-Subject Theology Study Programmes) under the Bologna Process of 7 July 2008 (Ecclesiastical Requirements).<sup>8</sup> 2016 and 2017 were notably marked by a decision of the German Federal Constitutional Court on accreditation and its potential implications for the work of AKAST. The year 2018 will be dominated by the

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<sup>7</sup> Eckpunkte für die Studienstruktur in Studiengängen mit Katholischer oder Evangelischer Theologie/Religion

<sup>8</sup> Kirchliche Anforderungen an die Modularisierung des Studiums der Katholischen Theologie (Theologisches Vollstudium) im Rahmen des Bologna-Prozesses

entry into force of the Interstate Treaty on the accreditation of study programmes and of the Specimen Decree, and by the resulting implementation of new procedures and procedural criteria. AKAST's internal processes will be adapted and new process steps introduced.

AKAST has ten years of experience and, looking ahead, is well placed to maintain its status as a professional agency and service provider. AKAST sees the reorganisation of the accreditation system as an opportunity to agree a future strategic orientation together with the relevant stakeholder groups and to further bring out the advisory and supporting character of the considerable expertise that results from AKAST's unique structure.

### **3. Action on conditions and recommendations**

AKAST's last reaccreditation was subject to four conditions:

1. Revision of the standard accreditation agreement in order to clearly communicate that AKAST has overall responsibility for the key decisions in the accreditation process;
2. Alignment of the procedural documents with the resolutions of the Accreditation Council that applied at the time;
3. Composition of the Accreditation Committee such that, as a rule, it normally includes a further reviewer from professional practice in addition to the rector of a seminary<sup>9</sup>;
4. Submission of a published paper describing the internal quality assurance system.

The external review report on reaccreditation additionally contained eight recommendations:

1. Clearer communication of the processes for passing on findings from accreditation work to the German Bishops' Conference and the Association of Faculties of Catholic Theology and raising of the Agency's profile as a communication platform for the improvement of study programmes;
2. Involvement of the chair of the review panel when determining compliance with conditions or resuming suspended accreditation procedures;
3. A provision to ensure stand-ins for members of the Accreditation Committee, in particular for the representatives of professional practice and for the student representative;
4. Ensuring the possibility of upgrading and updating expertise within the Office in the area of internal quality assurance in higher education institutions;
5. More transparent presentation in the budget of receipts and payments, including the costs of the services provided by the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt;

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<sup>9</sup> The term 'rector' relates here to the head of a seminary – an institution where candidates for ordination are housed and receive additional elements of their training alongside their studies.

6. Billing of accreditations under the Agency's own responsibility;
7. Removal of the caveat in accreditation certificates that accreditation decisions can be revoked by AVEPRO;
8. Performance of the Advisory Board's internal quality assurance function beyond participation in meetings of the Accreditation Committee and documentation of the Advisory Board's work.

Compliance with the conditions attached to the accreditation was determined in resolutions of the Accreditation Council of 17 September 2014 and 18 June 2015.

For compliance with Condition 1 in conjunction with Recommendation 6, the standard accreditation agreement and the cooperation agreement with ACQUIN were revised in all necessary points. It was clearly stipulated that AKAST is the sole contractual partner to higher education institutions, that AKAST has overall responsibility for the key decisions in the accreditation process and that accreditations are billed under AKAST's own responsibility.

Furthermore, the Accreditation Committee revised the procedural documents (Condition 2) and in particular the AKAST Guidelines, taking into account the resolutions of the Accreditation Council that applied at the time. In the course of this revision, account was also taken of the fact that AKAST faces more reaccreditations. The reorganisation of the accreditation system makes it necessary to revise and publish the related procedures. This will be completed in due time at the beginning of the winter semester 2018/19. AKAST expects to carry out the first accreditations under the new rules in the summer semester 2019.

For compliance with Condition 3 in conjunction with Recommendation 3, successive changes were made regarding the composition of the Accreditation Committee. Its membership was supplemented such that, as a rule, it includes an additional reviewer from professional practice. Furthermore, a provision was added to ensure a stand-in for the student representative. Finally, a similar stand-in provision was added for the academic representatives. The necessary amendments to the Statutes were made in 2014 and 2016 respectively.

AKAST's internal quality assurance processes, quality targets, measures and feedback arrangements were compiled and published in a document, *Das System der internen Qualitätssicherung von AKAST e.V.* (The internal quality assurance system of AKAST e.V.) (Condition 4).

Recommendation 5 and Recommendation 7 were also acted upon. The caveat that accreditation decisions can be revoked by AVEPRO was taken out of AKAST accreditation certificates and a corresponding note was added to the presentation of receipts and expenses in the use of funds statement. The action taken on Recommendations 1, 2, 4 and 8 is described in the appropriate sections of this report.

## B) Standards for quality assurance agencies

### Standard 3.1: Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis. They should have clear and explicit goals and objectives that are part of their publicly available mission statement. These should translate into the daily work of the agency. Agencies should ensure the involvement of stakeholders in their governance and work.

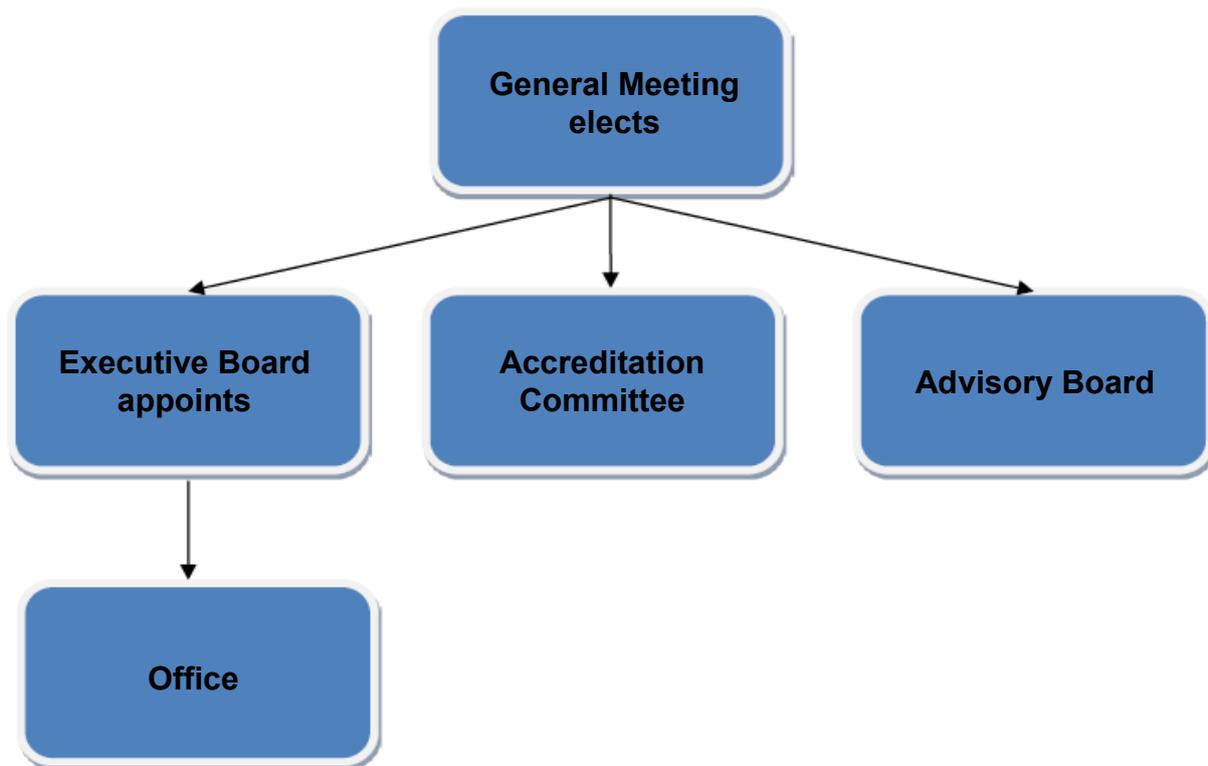
*Tasks and objectives:* Agentur für Qualitätssicherung und Akkreditierung kanonischer Studiengänge in Deutschland e.V. (AKAST) is a public association under canon law and has been part of the German accreditation system for ten years. In accordance with the Apostolic Constitutions Sapientia Christiana of 15 April 1979 and Veritatis gadium of 27 December 2017, AKAST is dedicated to the quality assurance of canonical study programmes and contributes to the development of the European Higher Education Area.

The tasks and objectives of AKAST are set forth in the Statutes (Annex 2) and translate into the daily work of the Agency. Their primary focus within external quality assurance in higher education is as follows:

- Promotion of faculties and other institutes of Catholic theology;
- Quality assurance of canonical study programmes in accordance with the Apostolic Constitution Sapientia Christiana of 15 April 1979 (Annex 18a) and its Ordinaciones (Annex 18a);
- Accreditation of canonical study programmes;
- (Up to the present) award of the Accreditation Council seal.

AKAST's quality philosophy is publicly documented on the Agency's website ([www.akast.info](http://www.akast.info)) and, in particular, is set out in its Mission Statement (Annex 5), according to which "accreditation is designed to facilitate the national, international and ecclesiastical certification of canonical study programmes and degrees. Simultaneously it aims at providing orientation for universities, students, employers, and responsible Church authorities towards the quality of programmes and their correspondence with the relevant ecclesiastical guidelines according to the 'Key Points for the Structure of Studies in Study Courses involving Catholic and Protestant Theology/Religion' (Annex 1) amended by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK) December 13th, 2007."

*Structure:* The governing bodies and organisational structure of AKAST are laid down in its Statutes (Annex 2). Its governing bodies are the Executive Board and the General Meeting. The clearly defined and separate organisational units of AKAST are linked by reciprocal and hierarchical relationships.



*Executive Board (Section 5 of the Statutes):* The Executive Board comprises the Chairperson, the First Vice-Chairperson and the Second Vice-Chairperson. The Chairperson must be a professor or retired professor of a faculty of Catholic theology. The Chairperson also chairs the Accreditation Committee and the Advisory Board. In accordance with c. 317, §1 of the Code of Canon Law (CIC), the Chairperson has to be confirmed by the German Bishops' Conference (Annex 6). The Executive Board is elected by the General Meeting for a period of five years and remains in office until the next election. The Executive Board conducts the registered association's day-to-day business within the bounds set by resolutions of the General Meeting. It reports to the General Meeting and presents the draft budget and annual accounts. A representative appointed by the Commission for Science and Arts (Commission VIII) of the German Bishops' Conference attends its meetings in an advisory capacity.

The current Executive Board is composed as follows:

- Professor Dr. Michael Gabel, Erfurt, Chairman
- Professor Dr. Stephan Haering OSB, Munich, First Vice Chairman
- Professor Dr. Gerhard Krieger, Trier, Second Vice Chairman

*General Meeting (Section 6 of the Statutes):* The membership of the General Meeting includes:

- Individuals who are members of the Catholic Church;
- Legal entities – primarily schools and faculties of theology that apply for admission;

- The Association of Faculties of Catholic Theology (six representatives: the Chairperson, the Deputy Chairperson and the four members of the Advisory Board of the Association of Faculties of Catholic Theology for the duration of their term of office);
- The spokesperson of the associations of theological disciplines<sup>10</sup> for the duration of his or her term of office;
- Two representatives of German (arch-)dioceses appointed by the German Bishops' Conference.

The General Meeting, which has grown in the meantime to nearly 30 members (Annex 9), includes representatives of all relevant stakeholder groups. The General Meeting adopts resolutions on, among other matters, amendments to the Statutes, dissolution of the association, and guidelines for implementation of its purpose. It passes resolutions on the budget and formally adopts the annual accounts. Further key tasks of the General Meeting comprise the election of the Executive Board, of those members of the Accreditation Committee who are not members ex officio, and of the Advisory Board. Its duties also include accepting the annual audit report, formally approving the actions of the Executive Board, and accepting the report of the Executive Board and of the Administrator. Resolutions on procedural guidelines require its consent.

*Accreditation Committee (Section 7 of the Statutes):* AKAST's central decision-making body is the Accreditation Committee. Composed of experts, the Accreditation Committee makes accreditation decisions, adopts resolutions on procedural guidelines, and nominates review panels. Its members are elected by the General Meeting for five years in consultation with the Association of Faculties of Catholic Theology (KThF), the associations of theological disciplines, the German Seminary Rectors' Conference and the Association of Theology Students (AGT). They require the consent of the German Bishops' Conference. In accordance with the Statutes, the Accreditation Committee comprises the following ten members and substitute members, who are either elected or ex-officio members:

- The Chairman;
- Four professors (one of whom should be from abroad if possible);
- For the event of unavailability, two professors as substitute members;
- One expert in quality assurance and accreditation matters;
- One member from the Commission for Science and Arts (Commission VIII) of the German Bishops' Conference;
- Two members from professional practice, of whom one is the rector of a seminary;
- One student member;
- For the event of unavailability, one substitute student member.

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<sup>10</sup> This grouping now bears the name Vereinigung der Arbeitsgemeinschaften für katholische Theologie and is headed by a chairperson and a deputy chairperson.

The participation of students, representatives of the academic community and representatives of professional practice is ensured. The student member and substitute student member are elected for two years and all other members for five years.

The Accreditation Committee is quorate when more than half of its members, including the Chairperson, or in the event of the Chairperson's absence the Vice Chairperson, are in attendance. Resolutions are passed by a majority of those present and a majority of professor members. In the event of a tie, the Chairperson of the Accreditation Committee, or if the Chairperson is unavailable the Vice Chairperson, has the casting vote. Accreditation decisions require the consent of the member from the Commission for Science and Arts (Commission VIII) of the German Bishops' Conference.

The current Accreditation Committee includes international expertise and is composed as follows:

- Professor Dr. Michael Gabel, Erfurt, Chairman
- Professor Dr. Barbara Hallensleben, Fribourg
- Professor Dr. Peter Schallenberg, Paderborn
- Professor Dr. Klaus Unterburger, Regensburg
- Professor Dr. Joseph Verheyden, Leuven
- Professor Dr. Stephan Haering OSB, Munich, substitute representative
- Professor Dr. Cornelius Roth, Fulda, substitute representative
- [TBA], expert for quality and accreditation matters
- Director Msgr. Martin Fahrner, Tübingen
- Dipl. Theol. Birgit Hosselmann, Twistingen
- Auxiliary Bishop Christoph Hegge, Münster
- Johanna Tannen, Münster
- Alexandra Thätner, Sankt Augustin, substitute student representative

*Advisory Board (Section 8 of the Statutes):* The Advisory Board monitors the quality of AKAST's work in an advisory capacity and provides suggestions. It comprises the Chairman and four experts in quality assurance and accreditation matters. In the preceding reaccreditation, a recommendation – Recommendation 8 – was made with regard to performance of the Advisory Board's internal quality assurance function beyond participation in meetings of the Accreditation Committee and documentation of the Advisory Board's work. Acting on this recommendation, Advisory Board matters were added as an agenda item in the standard agenda of meetings of the Accreditation Committee and Advisory Board (Annex 26). The work of the Advisory Board is now explicitly recorded in meeting minutes (Annex 26a). The members of the Advisory Board regularly report, in the course of meetings, on matters such as recent international developments in accreditation. They are involved in planning and holding workshops. From the Agency's point of view, the practice of joint meetings has proved useful and is valued by all involved, partly because of the limited amount of time able to be made available by members of the Advisory Board and Accreditation Committee, who operate on an unpaid basis.

The Advisory Board includes international expertise and is currently composed as follows:

- Professor Dr. Peter Jonkers, Tilburg
- Dr. Johann Komusiewicz, Jena
- Professor Dr. Drago Pintaric, Salzburg
- PD Dr. Ulrike Senger, Hamburg

Its members are elected for five years. Re-election is permitted. The Advisory Board is quorate when more than half of its members, including the Chairperson, or in the event of the Chairperson's absence the Vice Chairperson, are in attendance. Resolutions are passed by a majority of those present. In the event of a tie, the Chairperson has the casting vote.

*Office:* The AKAST office is staffed in accordance with the staffing plan. The Administrator runs the Office and conducts the day-to-day business in consultation with and as instructed by the Executive Board. She is responsible for the technical management of accreditations. The Administrator supports the work of all of the decision-making bodies and in particular prepares their meetings and resolutions. The Administrator keeps the decision-making bodies informed about all relevant national, international and ecclesiastical developments relevant to the work of the Agency.

Biographical information on the members of the Executive Board, the Accreditation Committee, the Advisory Board and the Office staff is provided in Annex 8.

*Conduct of external quality assurance:* The purpose of AKAST as set forth in its Statutes is the quality assurance of canonical study programmes. This is achieved by means of programme accreditation.

*Programme accreditation of canonical study programmes:* AKAST's discipline-specific focus is largely determined by the KMK 'Key Points' resolution. AKAST carries out programme accreditation of undergraduate theological study programmes that are completed with an academic or ecclesiastical examination after a normal duration of five years and have canonical value, and of other canonical study programmes.<sup>11</sup> The latter include Bachelor's and Master's study programmes in philosophy and sacred music insofar as they are of a canonical nature along with canonical study programmes leading to a licentiate examination. On accreditation, study programmes of this type, which are not covered by the KMK Structural Guidelines<sup>12</sup> (Annex 18b), are awarded with the AKAST quality seal.

The requirements, main elements and procedural outline of programme accreditation are set out in a set of guidelines, *Leitfaden für die Programmakkreditierung* ("Guidelines on Programme Accreditation", Annex 15).

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<sup>11</sup> See Articles 51, 56 and 60 of the Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia Christiana*, Annex II, Ordinationes

<sup>12</sup> Ländergemeinsame Strukturvorgaben für die Akkreditierung von Bachelor- und Masterstudiengänge, Beschluss der Kultuskonferenz (KMK-Strukturvorgaben) – KMK resolution on structural guidelines for the accreditation of Bachelor's and Master's study programmes that are common for all Länder, as amended from time to time

Since its establishment, AKAST has carried out 35 accreditations, in most cases as individual accreditations and in some as cluster accreditations. The Accreditation Committee has made 43 accreditation decisions (as of January 2018); this does not include findings with regard to the fulfilment of conditions and notifications of changes. The study programmes accredited by AKAST are listed on the AKAST website ([www.akast.info](http://www.akast.info)).

*Evaluation of faculties of Catholic theology and of higher education schools of philosophy and theology:* AKAST has developed a peer-reviewed institutional evaluation procedure that can be carried out at the request of faculties of Catholic theology or higher education schools of philosophy and theology within the ambit of the German Bishops' Conference. The Agency has compiled the requirements, main elements and procedural outline of peer-reviewed institutional (quality development) evaluations and published them in a set of guidelines (Annex 16). An institutional evaluation concludes with recommendations for structural and substantive quality development in research, education, study, and knowledge transfer, but without a formal decision. As no such evaluations have yet been carried out, no experience or information can be reported on their further development.

**See section on Criterion 3.1**

Reference documents:

- [www.akast.info](http://www.akast.info)
- Key Points for the Structure of Studies in Study Courses Involving Catholic and Protestant Theology/Religion (Annex 1)
- Statutes (Annex 2)
- Mission Statement (Annex 5)
- German Bishops' Conference letter approving Chairman (Annex 6)
- Biographical information (Annex 8)
- List of members (Annex 9)
- Guidelines on programme accreditation (Annex 15)
- Guidelines on evaluation (Annex 16)
- Sapiientia Christiana and the annexed Ordinationes (Annex 18a)
- KMK structural guidelines (Annex 18b)
- Standard Agenda for meetings of the Accreditation Committee and Advisory Board (Annex 26)
- Example: Extract from the minutes on Item 8 Advisory Board matters (Annex 26a)

### **Standard 3.2: Official status**

Agencies should have an established legal basis and should be formally recognised as quality assurance agencies by competent public authorities.

AKAST has an established legal basis in civil and ecclesiastical law. In order to operate as the regional agency of AVEPRO within the ambit of the German Bishops' Conference in accordance with the AVEPRO Statute and the Apostolic Constitution Sapiientia Christiana,

AKAST was established with the agreement of the Holy See as Agentur für Qualitätssicherung und Akkreditierung kanonischer Studiengänge in Deutschland e. V. (Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Canonical Programmes of Studies in Germany), an incorporated public association under canon law in accordance with the Code of Canon Law (CIC), cc. 116, 301 § 3 and 312, by resolution of the Autumn Plenary Assembly of the German Bishops' Conference on 22 to 25 September 2008 (Annex 2). The association has its registered office in Bonn (Annex 3).

By resolution of the Accreditation Council of 31 October 2008 pursuant to Section 2 (1) 1 of the Act Establishing a Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany of 26 February 2005 as amended 1 April 2008, AKAST was accredited until 31 December 2013 and authorised to accredit and to award the Accreditation Council seal to canonical study programmes covered by the KMK structural guidelines and the KMK 'Key Points' resolution. By resolution of 13 December 2013, AKAST was reaccredited as an accreditation agency until 31 December 2018.

By letter of 9 August 2013 (Annex 7), AKAST was formally recognised by the Congregation for Catholic Education as an "articolazione territoriale" of AVEPRO and the formal basis was laid for AKAST to make accreditation decisions in practice that fall, in the wording of Paragraph 8 of the 'Key Points' resolution, to the agency of the Holy See.

**See section on Criterion 3.2**

Reference documents:

- Statutes (Annex 2)
- Entry in register of associations (Annex 3)
- Recognition by the Congregation for Catholic Education (Annex 7)

### **Standard 3.3: Independence**

Agencies should be independent and act autonomously. They should have full responsibility for their operations and the outcomes of those operations without third party influence.
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*Organisational independence:* As an entity of higher education institutions established by theological faculties, schools of philosophy and theology, representatives of the Association of Faculties of Catholic Theology (KThF) and the associations of theological disciplines (theologische Arbeitsgemeinschaften), AKAST is free from state influence.

In accordance with the KMK 'Key Points' resolution, AKAST exercises sovereign rights of the Church and, under canon law, is subject to the vigilance of the German Bishops' Conference (CIC, cc. 305 and 312-320). Notwithstanding the autonomy of higher education institutions and academic freedom, AKAST's remit is by nature subject to Church authority.

The Agency's autonomy and independence in deciding individual cases, and the independence and impartiality of the members of its governing and decision-making bodies,

are not affected by the structural consequences in terms of legal form and the composition of the decision-making bodies; this also applies, in particular, to the independence and impartiality of the members of the Accreditation Committee and review panels.

The Committee's autonomy in deciding individual cases also applies to the member from the Commission for Science and Arts (Commission VIII) of the German Bishops' Conference. The stipulation in the Statutes that decisions are subject to the Commission VIII member's consent, by making this member party to the decision-making process, helps ensure that there is no conflict between accreditation decisions and the subsequent ecclesiastical approval required under canon law. That approval is granted by the respective diocesan bishop, or in the case of colleges affiliated with religious orders, directly by the Holy See, and not by the Commission for Science and Arts (Commission VIII) of the German Bishops' Conference. There is no relationship of authority in this connection.

When defining the structure of AKAST, it was ensured that members would have a say in the Agency's strategic orientation but would not have any influence on the conduct of individual accreditations. The Executive Board, the Advisory Board and the Accreditation Committee are autonomous and independent. The members of the decision-making bodies declare their impartiality to AKAST (Annexes 28-30).

*Operational independence:* AKAST's central, independent and autonomous decision-making body is the Accreditation Committee. The composition of the decision-making bodies and the selection criteria for members of the Accreditation Committee are laid down in the Statutes (Annex 2) and ensure the participation of recognised specialist academics and experts. The procedure for nominating and appointing reviewers is laid down in Annex 21 and published on the website ([www.akast.info](http://www.akast.info)). The review panel comprises representatives of the relevant stakeholder groups, notably students, the academic community and professional practice. The outside experts appointed by the Agency declare their impartiality to AKAST (Annex 31). Higher education institutions have the right to lodge objections – for example on grounds of bias – against experts nominated by AKAST.

The participation of students, representatives of the academic community and representatives of professional practice is ensured, both in the Accreditation Committee and in the review panels it appoints.

Rules of procedure and review criteria for the accreditation of canonical study programmes in Germany are laid down by the Accreditation Council in the Rules for the Accreditation of Study Programmes and for System Accreditation dated 8 December 2009 (Annex 18b) and as amended from time to time. Both the Accreditation Committee and the review panels it appoints are bound in their assessments by the rules of the Accreditation Council. In their decisions and assessments, the Accreditation Committee and the respective review panels are independent and are not bound by instructions of any kind.

*Independence of findings:* Decision-making independence is ensured by the multi-stage accreditation procedure at AKAST (Annex 22), which maintains strict separation between

reviews and decisions. The discipline-specific focus of the AKAST Accreditation Committee ensures consistency in accreditation decisions. The Accreditation Committee appoints the respective review panels. These carry out the review of study programmes and write a review report with an accreditation recommendation to the Accreditation Committee. The observer appointed by the Accreditation Committee monitors the proper conduct of the accreditation procedure and also comments on the conduct of the procedure taking into account the higher education institution's comments. The sole decision-making body is the AKAST Accreditation Committee, which makes the accreditation decision on the basis of the available documents (the review report with accreditation recommendation, the higher education institution's comments and the observer's comments). The members of the Accreditation Committee do not take part in consultations and resolutions that affect its own organisation. This is recorded in minutes.

All members of the Accreditation Committee and review panels are aware that they perform the task of external quality assurance on the basis of their personal expertise and not as representatives of their organisation, even if it was their organisation which proposed them for the task.

**See sections on Standard 2.5 and Criterion 3.6**

Reference documents:

- [www.akast.info](http://www.akast.info)
- Statutes (Annex 2)
- Rules for the Accreditation of Study Programmes (Annex 18b)
- Reviewer nomination procedure (Annex 21)
- Prior programme accreditation procedure (Annex 22)
- Executive Board declaration of impartiality (Annex 28)
- Accreditation Committee declaration of impartiality (Annex 29)
- Advisory Board declaration of impartiality (Annex 30)
- Reviewers' declaration of impartiality (Annex 31)

### **Standard 3.4: Thematic analysis**

Agencies should regularly publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities.
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The considerable expertise and special status that result from AKAST's unique structure serve as a basis for structured analysis with a view to enhancing the quality of canonical study programmes in the national context. AKAST addresses this task in various ways. Activities relating to this standard were stepped up during the reporting period, thus acting upon Recommendation 1 from the preceding accreditation relating to clearer communication of the processes used for passing back findings to the various partner organisations (DBK, KThF, AGT, associations of theological disciplines, the Congregation for Catholic Education, KMK, etc.) and the raising of the Agency's profile as a communication platform.

The regularly publication of reports as a means of passing back experience gathered by AKAST in its work was not yet a focus during the reporting period. So far, any feedback – including within the focused remit of AKAST – has been provided almost exclusively on a discursive basis. AKAST’s experience to date has shown the discursive approach to be suitable and effective when it comes to providing feedback on experience and findings. In future, AKAST will increasingly make related documents available on its website but will continue to prefer the discursive approach. AKAST presents its findings in various forms, such as by participating in working groups, organising workshops, holding briefings, giving presentations and publishing regular reports. The feedback places special focus on quality assurance and quality development of study programmes in Catholic theology.

*Participation in working groups:* The Association of Faculties of Catholic Theology (KThF) set up a mixed working group that included AKAST for an evaluation of guidelines on the recognition of study and examination credits in modular single-subject Catholic theology degree programmes (Annex 18b). The evaluation was occasioned by problems with recognition of the *externitas* year brought up with KThF by the German Seminary Rectors’ Conference (Regentenkonferenz) and the Seminary Speakers’ Conference (Seminarsprecherkonferenz). AKAST evaluated the conditions and recommendations that had been issued in accreditations carried out to date and that had a bearing on the *externitas*, and assigned them to the criteria to be reviewed during accreditations as specified by the Accreditation Council. The evaluation showed that they could be assigned to criterion 2.3 (study programme concept) and in particular the sub-criteria modularisation, recognition, crediting and mobility, criterion 2.4 (academic feasibility) and criterion 2.8 (transparency). The outcome of the evaluation was a circular dated 22 July 2015 on the *externitas* in modular single-subject theology study programmes (Annex 18b), in which the recognition problems were presented as being primarily a matter of implementation.

In preparation for discussions between the Standing Conference and the churches on the evaluation of the KMK ‘Key Points’ resolution in 2015, the German Bishops’ Conference appointed a mixed working group, in which AKAST was also included, to compile a report on experience with the reform of the Catholic theology study programmes. The report was presented and discussed at a conference. Among other things, it specifically included analyses compiled by AKAST on the implementation of modularisation and final examinations in accordance with the requirements of the churches. As the outcome of the second evaluation of the KMK ‘Key Points’ resolution, the Standing Conference welcomed (Annex 39) the progress made in implementation of the Bologna Process in theological study programmes, notably with regard to modularisation, ECTS points and the churches’ efforts to improve permeability and mobility, as well as in implementation of the Lisbon Convention, and concluded that no revision of the KMK ‘Key Points’ resolution was necessary.

The German Bishops’ Conference once again appointed a mixed working group, likewise including AKAST, for the evaluation of the Ecclesiastical Requirements in 2015 (Annex 18b). AKAST identified areas where there is a conflict in accreditation between the Ecclesiastical Requirements and the Rules for the Accreditation of Study Programmes (Annex 18b) and presented them for discussion by the working group. Requirements identified by AKAST as

problematic included the award of ECTS points, modularisation, final examination design, the generation of overall grades and the timing of modules within the various programme segments. The points identified by AKAST were taken into account in the revision of the Ecclesiastical Requirements.

*Workshops:* Since its foundation, AKAST has held regular one-day information events and workshops on the subject of academic reform in Catholic theology. Mostly organised for specific target groups and staged in various formats, these events are directed at potential reviewers, students, or heads of faculties and higher education institutions, and those in charge of study programme and quality development at Catholic theology faculties and ecclesiastical higher education institutions. The events serve to further enhance AKAST's enabling role in the quality assurance of canonical study programmes in Germany while providing an additional forum for exchange on questions relating to theological study programmes and implementation of academic reform. Their primary aim is not therefore to develop prescriptions for action, for example in the implementation of academic reform. During the reporting period, AKAST organised 15 workshops for various target groups, including twelve workshops for students. These half-day events generally consisted of two workshop units on topics selected each time with the student representation committee. A list of topics is provided in Annex 37. The workshops are either designed as general information events for potential new student reviewers or focus on specific topics. In one workshop, for example, students drew up an Accreditation glossary for student reviewers.

Two workshops were held for member higher education institutions and member faculties: one on competency-based examination, including module examinations and final examinations, and one on reorganisation of the accreditation system. About 25 people generally take part in these one-day events. In the first workshop, for examples, members presented various models for final examinations. These were then commented on by an external expert and subsequently discussed in the general forum.

For members of the Accreditation Committee and the Advisory Board, a workshop was organised on the accreditation of a distance learning study programme in Catholic theology.

*Reporting:* The Chairman reports on the work and experience of AKAST annually to the General Meeting of AKAST and to the annual meeting of the Association of Faculties of Catholic Theology.

The Accreditation Council is regularly informed and, by means of position statements and feedback, is supported in compiling and analysing outcomes of the German accreditation system.

The German Bishops' Conference, and notably the Commission for Science and Arts (Commission VIII), is regularly informed about AKAST's work and experience.

AKAST reports semi-annually to the Congregation for Catholic Education and AVEPRO on AKAST's work and experience gathered in accreditation.

Programme accreditation was evaluated for the first time in the form of guided interviews over the period summer semester 2014 to summer semester 2016. A summary of this evaluation (Annex 35) is published on the AKAST website. Further quality reports are planned.

Reference documents:

- Ecclesiastical Requirements (Annex 18b)
- Rules for the Accreditation of Study Programmes (Annex 18b)
- Circular on the *externitas* (Annex 18b)
- Summary evaluation of programme accreditation (Annex 35)
- List of workshops (Annex 37)
- KMK 'Key Points' resolution: Findings of second evaluation (Annex 39)

### **Standard 3.5: Resources**

Agencies should have adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, to carry out their work.

*Financial resources:* AKAST has adequate financial resources. It generates income from accreditation procedure costs and grants from the Association of German Dioceses (VDD). The annual budget is drawn up by the Executive Board and the Office. An audit is conducted as of the end of the financial year by auditors Freudenhammer, Maas und Partner mbB. The audit report is presented annually at the General Meeting for approval of the actions of the Executive Board. On the same occasion, the General Meeting resolves the draft budget for the coming financial year (Annex 10), which is forwarded to VDD in a grant application.

Since the foundation of AKAST, the accreditation procedure costs have been set on the basis of experience by partner agency ACQUIN (Annex 17) and have not had to be changed in terms of their total amount since. The procedure costs will be reviewed again once experience has been gained with programme accreditation under the new legal framework.

*Human resources:* AKAST has adequate staff resources on a lasting basis. The Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt (KUE) Foundation serves as employer for the staff of the Agency's Office. The Office is staffed by an administrator (currently pay grade TV-L E14) and a secretary (50% part-time, pay grade TV-L E5).

The cooperation agreement with ACQUIN (Annex 13) ensures that temporary pressures at AKAST can be relieved and administrative support can be provided in the conduct of accreditations. Each accreditation agreement (Annex 20) entered into by AKAST with a higher education institution must include a clause that AKAST may commission ACQUIN to carry out individual steps of the accreditation with the exception of the accreditation decision and reviewer nomination. At staff level, regular working discussions take place between the two agencies before meetings of their respective accreditation committees, in which the AKAST Administrator and the ACQUIN representative responsible for AKAST reciprocally

take part. An annual exchange of information and experience generally takes place annually at executive level, where required together with the representative of the German Bishops' Conference Secretariat (Annex 13a).

*Material resources:* The Office has adequate material resources to ensure the proper functioning of the Agency.

The Agency maintains an office at KUE with administrative support from KUE under the AKAST/KUE cooperation agreement (Annex 11). The KUE Foundation provides the necessary material resources and premises for the Office. KUE bills AKAST for the operating costs (rent, cleaning, postal mail, telephone, etc.). The cooperation agreement is concluded for periods of five years and evaluated before being renewed for a further five years (Annex 12). An office room that is available in Ingolstadt for shared use enables staff to meet freely and easily in order to coordinate working arrangements. Close proximity to Ingolstadt School of Management also aids the smooth conduct of business. Additional meeting rooms can be used on KUE premises as a result of the cooperation with KUE. Data is backed up regularly. All relevant documents are archived and stored in paper form and on data media.

The AKAST website server is hosted by comcenter.netcologne. Consulting and support is provided by Jacobs Consulting, Düsseldorf.

**See section on Criterion 3.3**

Reference documents:

- 2019 budget and financial plan (Annex 10)
- AKAST/KUE cooperation agreement (Annex 11)
- Evaluation of AKAST/KUE cooperation agreement (Annex 12)
- AKAST/ACQUIN cooperation agreement (Annex 13)
- Example of AKAST/ACQUIN working meeting (Annex 13a)
- Accreditation procedure cost calculation (Annex 17)
- Standard contractual agreement for programme accreditation (Annex 20)

### **Standard 3.6: Internal quality assurance and professional conduct**

Agencies should have in place processes for internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities.
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*Definition, assurance and enhancement of the quality of the Agency's activities:* AKAST's internal quality standards and quality measures centre around the Agency's basic purpose of providing external quality assurance in higher education. Its quality concept as formulated in the Mission Statement (Annex 5) is based on the principles of academic freedom and autonomy of higher education institutions and hence on the responsibility of institutions and faculties for study programme quality and for measurement and validation of the institutions'

objectives. That quality concept is bound by requirements of higher education law, by Accreditation Council resolutions, and by requirements under the body of law governing relations between the state and the churches, including relevant ecclesiastical stipulations made in concordats, and has the following objectives:

- To ensure AKAST's establishment as a discipline-specific quality assurance agency in the national context;
- To safeguard and further enhance the high quality of quality assurance carried out by AKAST;
- To support Catholic theology faculties and education institutions with the considerable expertise that results from AKAST's unique structure and special status;
- To ensure adequate staff and material resources on a lasting basis in all areas.

In order to attain these objectives, AKAST continuously subjects its activities to a formalised internal quality assurance system. The features of this system were compiled in a document, *Das System der internen Qualitätssicherung von AKAST e.V.* (The internal quality assurance system of AKAST e.V.) (Annex 32), which was drawn up in compliance with a condition attached to the last accreditation. Following consultation by the Accreditation Committee, this document was adopted by the Executive Board on 26 May 2014 and was accepted and approved by the Accreditation Council as fulfilling the condition attached to accreditation.

AKAST's internal quality assurance system is suitable for assessing the effectiveness of internal control processes and covers the definition, assurance and continuous enhancement of the quality and integrity of the Agency's work. The system is consistent with the specific nature of AKAST as a small agency with two full-time staff (the Office), a comparatively small volume of accreditations and short decision and communication lines. It defines superordinate quality objectives and quality requirements for AKAST's activities. It is publicly available and includes systematic internal and external feedback processes.

*Professionalism and integrity:* An accreditation by AKAST involves the Accreditation Committee, the review panel and the AKAST Office. The members of the Advisory Board are involved in an advisory capacity.

According to the Statutes, members of the Accreditation Committee are appointed on the basis of the following criteria: Academic qualification, representation of the four fields of theology, representation of faculties maintained by the State and by the Church, experience with the Bologna process, and expertise in the training of educators (Annex 2).

The criteria and procedure for reviewer appointment are clearly defined and laid down and are publicly documented (Annex 21). The composition of the review panel ensures the assessment of all aspects relevant to the examination procedure (including academic aspects, aspects relating to programme structure and formal aspects, and social aspects). The members have both relevant subject-matter expertise and expertise as reviewers in accreditation and/or evaluation.

The elected committee members and review panel members declare their impartiality to AKAST and sign a declaration on impartiality and confidentiality (Annexes 28 to 31).

The professional development of the full-time staff is ensured through further training, literature and conference attendance. As may be seen in Annex 36 – in line with Recommendation 4 from the previous reaccreditation – a focus is also placed here on upgrading and updating expertise within the Office in the area of internal quality assurance in higher education institutions. As KUE employees, the staff are also able to make use of the entire range of professional development opportunities provided by the University. Examples include courses provided by the computer centre and the languages centre.

*Internal and external feedback:* Internal and external feedback provides valuable information for the agency's further development. As a rule, such feedback is evaluated at the end of accreditations. Both the reviewers involved in accreditation and the higher education institutions or faculties concerned give their assessment (Annexes 33 and 34). The output from the guided interviews carried out in the period summer semester 2014 to summer semester 2016 was made available to the Executive Board, the Accreditation Committee and the Advisory Board and reviewed to identify whether any negative feedback was related to a systematic cause that needed to be acted upon. A summary of the evaluation is provided in Annex 35. The interviewees gave AKAST a good overall assessment. AKAST is seen as a professional agency and service provider. The following findings may be cited by way of example: All interviewees said the size of the review panel was a great benefit of AKAST and even a unique selling point. The composition of the review panel was considered to be balanced and suitable and received an unreservedly positive assessment. Interviewees valued the panel's discipline-specific focus and professorial breadth, which they said is not always ensured in cluster accreditations by other agencies. The Accreditation Committee is accepted and respected as a follow-up and decision-making body in implementation of the 'four eyes' principle. It is also considered to have a broad overview. Taking up a suggestion from the interviews, students were provided with support in a workshop in preparing a 'review from a student perspective'. Before preparatory documentation is sent out, review panel members are also asked if they want all documents to be sent both by email and in paper form or if they can do without selected documents in paper form.

Feedback from joint meetings of the Accreditation Committee and Advisory Board is discussed by the Executive Board and contributes to further enhancing the quality of AKAST's work. As a result of such feedback, a stand-in arrangement has been put in place for the professorial representatives on the Accreditation Committee and the principle that key decisions must be made with sufficient involvement of the academic community has been incorporated in the Statutes in more distinct form.

In response to Recommendation 2 from the previous reaccreditation, AKAST makes observers in accreditation procedures more expressly aware of the fact that they should remain as neutral as possible in the performance of their duties. AKAST's experience shows that observers are aware of their duties and role and that there is not a risk of their being

evaluative. This applies both to participation in site visits and to the observers' task of preliminary assessment for compliance with conditions or for the resumption of suspended accreditation procedures. AKAST's special practice of having an additional person take part in site visits alongside the Administrator in implementation of the 'four eyes' principle was another point that expressly received positive mention in the interviews with higher education institutions and review panels. In view of this, AKAST has retained its existing procedure and does not as a rule involve the chair of the review panel when determining compliance with conditions or resuming suspended accreditation procedures.

Feedback from the Accreditation Council also provides AKAST with pointers for adjusting its procedures and improving its work for the future. Two regular file-based random sample monitoring assessments were carried out by the Accreditation Council in the reporting period. In both instances, there were indications of a documentation deficiency with regard to completeness of the positive assessment for all Accreditation Council criteria. One programme accreditation was also monitored during the reporting period. Positive mention was made here of the fact that AKAST places a focus in reaccreditation on how the institution developed over the course of the first accreditation period.

*Intolerance and discrimination:* Under Article 10 (4) of the KUE Foundation Charter, all KUE employees are obliged to recognise and respect the ecclesiastical mission and the Catholic character of KUE and to guard against or eliminate intolerance and discrimination.

*Ensuring compliance with the ESG:* AKAST also ensures compliance with the ESG in instances where parts of the review are carried out by a third party on behalf of AKAST. This can only take place in cooperation with ACQUIN. Under the cooperation agreement with ACQUIN (Annex 13), certain parts of the review procedure can be performed by ACQUIN. Compliance with the ESG is ensured due to the fact that ACQUIN is accredited by the Accreditation Council and authorised by the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

**See sections on Criterion 3.5, Criterion 3.6 and Criterion 3.8**

Reference documents:

- Statutes (Annex 2)
- Mission Statement (Annex 5)
- AKAST/ACQUIN cooperation agreement (Annex 13)
- Reviewer nomination procedure (Annex 21)
- Committee and reviewer declarations of impartiality (Annexes 28 – 31)
- Internal quality management system (Annex 32)
- Reviewer interview guide (Annex 33)
- Higher education institution interview guide (Annex 34)
- Summary evaluation of programme accreditation (Annex 35)
- List of conferences attended (Annex 36)

### **Standard 3.7: Cyclical external review of agencies**

Agencies should undergo an external review at least once every five years in order to demonstrate their compliance with the ESG.

In accordance with the requirements for agencies authorised in Germany, AKAST must undergo an external assessment every five years. AKAST was first accredited as an accreditation agency in October 2008. The last reaccreditation by the Accreditation Council was in 2013.

Following the entry into force of the Interstate Treaty on the accreditation of study programmes, the constitutive meeting of the new Accreditation Council adopted rules for the accreditation of agencies and, for agencies already operating in Germany, transitional arrangements clarifying their responsibilities under the prior and the new legal framework.

Under Section 5 of the Accreditation Council resolution of 20 February 2018 on transitional arrangements for agencies accredited under the prior legal framework, the Accreditation Council authorised AKAST until the end of the accreditation period (31 December 2018). AKAST is thus authorised to carry out accreditations under the prior legal framework.

In future, under Section 7 of the Accreditation Council resolution of 20 February 2018 on the authorisation of agencies in the German system, non-EQAR-listed agencies may additionally be authorised in justified individual instances if compliance with the ESG is periodically verified by an external evaluation.

See section on Criterion 3.1

## **C) Standards for external quality assurance**

### **Standard 2.1: Consideration of internal quality assurance**

External quality assurance should address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the ESG.

The assessment criteria used by AKAST in the accreditation of canonical study programmes in Germany are described in a set of guidelines, Leitfaden für die Programmakkreditierung ("Guidelines on Programme Accreditation", Annex 15). These are based on the corresponding Accreditation Council criteria, as amended from time to time. Those criteria in turn are drafted in accordance with the ESG in force at the time of their adoption. The Accreditation Council's criteria incorporate the requirements formulated in ESG Standards 1.1 to 1.10. This ensures that the ESG are also complied with in accreditations by AKAST. A table matching up the Accreditation Council criteria used in programme accreditation with the corresponding ESG standards is provided in Annex 19.

The review criteria that AKAST is to apply in future for accreditation of canonical study programmes in Germany under the new legal framework are based on the Interstate Treaty

and the Specimen Decree in accordance with Article 4 (1) to (4) of the Interstate Treaty. A guiding principle in the Interstate Treaty is compatibility with the ESG. The provisions of the Specimen Decree are based on the ESG. This ensures that the ESG are also complied with in accreditations by AKAST with regard to programme accreditation under the new legal framework.

Reference documents:

- Guidelines on programme accreditation (Annex 15)
- Comparison of Accreditation Council criteria and ESG standards (Annex 19)

## **Standard 2.2: Designing methodologies fit for purpose**

External quality assurance should be defined and designed specifically to ensure its fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for it, while taking into account relevant regulations. Stakeholders should be involved in its design and continuous improvement.

*Procedure objectives:* Programme accreditation by AKAST relates to ten-semester undergraduate study programmes in Catholic theology (single-subject Catholic theology study programmes) and other study programmes that have canonical value. The objective of the programme accreditations carried out by AKAST is publicly documented on the website ([www.akast.info](http://www.akast.info)) and expressly specified in the Mission Statement (Annex 5). The programme accreditation procedures (Annex 15) attain their objectives and follow the relevant requirements under statute law and under the body of law governing relations between the state and the churches. In assessing the quality of a study programme, AKAST is guided by the following:

- The objectives set by the higher education institution in a top-level strategy;
- The national and international standards to be complied with at the same time;
- The validity of the study programme objective and design in conjunction with the objective's possibility of attainment.

This quality concept is operationalised by:

- A reviewer-centred procedure;
- Higher education teachers, representatives of professional practice and students, all taking part autonomously and independently.

The decision-making basis underlying the assessment for award of the Accreditation Council seal under the prior legal framework comprises the ESG and, in accordance with the KMK 'Key Points' resolution, requirements of the Accreditation Council and the KMK, Länder-specific structural guidelines, the Qualifications Framework for German Higher Education Qualifications and relevant ecclesiastical requirements.

The review criteria that AKAST is to apply in future for accreditation of canonical study programmes in Germany under the new legal framework are based on the Interstate Treaty and the Specimen Decree in accordance with Article 4 (1) to (4) of the Interstate Treaty.

*Stakeholder involvement:* The composition of the Accreditation Committee is laid down in the Statutes (Annex 2) and ensures the participation of all stakeholder groups (higher education institutions, students and professional practice). The participation of all stakeholder groups is ensured in the review panels nominated by the Accreditation Commission (Annex 21). Regular interviews with higher education institutions and review panels (Annexes 33 and 34) provide AKAST with feedback on the procedures' fitness for purpose and for their improvement.

*Support for higher education institutions:* During the preparatory phase and throughout the entire process, the Administrator is available as the point of contact for the higher education institutions and faculties applying for accreditation.

On request, AKAST provides the faculty or higher education institution with a briefing on the substance, rules, criteria and procedure involved in an accreditation for canonical study programmes. The assessment criteria used in accreditation and reaccreditation of canonical study programmes are based on the state and ecclesiastical requirements that are current at the time. The criteria are transparent and suitably available for inspection. They and all other documents relevant for an accreditation are made available to the faculties and higher education institutions free of charge (Annexes 15, 18a and 18b) or are published on the AKAST website ([www.akast.info](http://www.akast.info)).

The Office informs those responsible at faculties and higher education institutions about important developments in the accreditation system as the need arises (Annex 38).

Reference documents:

- [www.akast.info](http://www.akast.info)
- Statutes (Annex 2)
- Mission Statement (Annex 5)
- Guidelines on programme accreditation (Annex 15)
- Reviewer nomination procedure (Annex 21)
- Reviewer interview guide (Annex 33)
- Higher education institution interviewer guide (Annex 34)
- Programme accreditation documentation (Annex 18a)
- Reviewer information package (Annex 18b)
- Circulars to deans/rectorates (Annex 38)

### **Standard 2.3: Implementing processes**

External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published. They include

- a self-assessment or equivalent;
- an external assessment normally including a site visit;
- a report resulting from the external assessment;
- a consistent follow-up.

Programme accreditation of canonical study programmes by AKAST is based on the relevant requirements under statute law and the body of law governing relations between the state and the churches and is thus suitable and useful. The underlying evaluation criteria and rules of procedure are pre-defined and can be viewed on the AKAST website.

All programme accreditations – under the prior legal framework – comprise:

- A self-evaluation/self-documentation in which the higher education institution or faculty describes compliance with the predefined and published evaluation criteria;
- A peer-review site visit, notably including review of the submitted documentation and separately held interviews with programme heads, educators, students and the institution's management;
- An external review report – including proposed recommendations – which, together with the higher education institution's comments, forms the basis of the AKAST Accreditation Committee's decision and, following completion of the accreditation, is published in full on the AKAST website and in the Hochschulkompass (Higher Education Compass) information service.
- Systematic follow-up in the form of verification of compliance with conditions and the higher education institution's contractual obligation to notify the Agency of any material changes. As accreditations are granted for a limited time period, institutions generally undergo reaccreditation, which AKAST also combines with a review of action on recommendations for the improvement of study programme quality.

All programme accreditations – under the new statutory framework – comprise:

- A self-evaluation/self-documentation in which the higher education institution or faculty describes compliance with the predefined and published evaluation criteria;
- A peer-review site visit;
- An external review report – including recommendations for compliance with relevant criteria and any suggestions for conditions – which, if applicable together with the higher education institution's comments, forms the basis of the Accreditation Council's accreditation decision and is published following completion of the accreditation;
- Systematic follow-up in the form of verification of compliance with conditions and the higher education institution's contractual obligation to notify the Agency of any

material changes. As accreditations are granted for a limited time period, programmes undergo regular reaccreditation.

The detailed procedures for programme accreditations of canonical study programmes under the prior and the new legal framework (Annexes 22 and 23) are published ([www.akast.info](http://www.akast.info)) and described in leaflets and are discussed in universities and faculties in briefings and workshops.

Sample site visit schedules are provided in Annex 24. The external review reports including accreditation decisions and any follow-up measures are published ([www.akast.info](http://www.akast.info)).

**See section on Standard 2.2**

Reference documents:

- [www.akast.info](http://www.akast.info)
- Prior programme accreditation procedure (Annex 22)
- Future programme accreditation procedure (Annex 23)
- Sample site visit schedule (Annex 24)

#### **Standard 2.4: Peer-review experts**

External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include (a) student member(s).
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*Selection, appointment and composition:* In accordance with the selection procedure specified by AKAST (Annex 21) and in future the HRK guidelines for reviewer nomination, review panels are appointed by the AKAST Accreditation Committee. AKAST's criteria and procedure for reviewer appointment are clearly defined and laid down and are publicly documented (Annex 21). The review panel comprises representatives of the relevant stakeholder groups, notably students, the academic community and professional practice. A review panel generally consists of four professors corresponding to the four theology subject groups, one rector of a seminary, a further representative of professional practice and a student representative. Its members are independent and autonomous. The reviewers have relevant discipline-specific expertise. AKAST ensures that, in addition to their relevant discipline-specific expertise, the reviewers from higher education have expertise in accreditation and/or evaluation (in particular knowledge of the procedures, the ecclesiastical and statutory framework, the German higher education system and the Bologna Process) as well as expertise in study programme development and quality assurance. AKAST takes care to ensure that the representatives of the academic community belong to different higher education institutions. In reaccreditation, AKAST aims to include at least one member out of the review panel from the initial accreditation.

*Preparation:* The selection procedure specified by AKAST ensures that reviewers possess experience-based and research-based expertise. The Office prepares reviewers intensively

for their task and for each specific accreditation assignment. For this purpose, it provides special information events or allows sufficient time in the context of site visits themselves for a comprehensive and detailed briefing to prepare the review panel for the accreditation procedure (Annex 24). In this way, it is ensured that reviewers have full knowledge of the assessment criteria and rules and a clear understanding of their role in the review process. In addition, each review panel is provided in advance with the Guidelines on Programme Accreditation (Annex 15) and the relevant ecclesiastical and statutory documents (Annexes 18a and 18b).

*Independence:* Where reviewers are appointed for an accreditation, AKAST ensures that they are impartial and uphold confidentiality and obtains a declaration on impartiality and confidentiality from the members of the review panel before a specific accreditation procedure begins (Annex 31).

**See section on Criterion 3.6**

Reference documents:

- Guidelines on programme accreditation (Annex 15)
- Programme accreditation documentation (Annex 18a)
- Reviewer information package (Annex 18b)
- Reviewer nomination procedure (Annex 21)
- Sample site visit schedule (Annex 24)
- Reviewers' declaration of impartiality (Annex 31)

### **Standard 2.5: Criteria for outcomes**

Any outcomes or judgements made as the result of external quality assurance should be based on explicit and published criteria that are applied consistently, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision.

The accreditations and reaccreditations of canonical study programmes by AKAST follow a standard procedure prescribed by law that is transparently described in sufficient detail and is available for viewing ([www.akast.info](http://www.akast.info)). The assessment criteria are based on the state and ecclesiastical requirements that are current at the time; these are clear, transparent and suitably available for viewing ([www.akast.info](http://www.akast.info)). Accreditation decisions in the accreditation and reaccreditation of canonical study programmes likewise apply the state and ecclesiastical assessment criteria that are current at the time. Decisions are appropriate, correct and verifiable. Changes in the law are taken into account without delay.

AKAST uses various instruments to enhance the consistency of Accreditation Committee reviews and decisions. Consistent application of the criteria is ensured in particular by the multi-stage procedure, which separates the review by the review panel from the decision – or in future the proposal to determine compliance with the relevant criteria – by the AKAST Accreditation Committee, and which ensures the Accreditation Committee's discipline-

specific focus (Annex 22). For full and consistent evaluation against the accreditation rules, AKAST has so far made available a report template (Annex 25). In future, a template prescribed by the Accreditation Council will be made available. AKAST's now established practice of involving members of the Accreditation Committee or Advisory Board as rapporteurs in the interests of internal quality assurance and the 'four eyes' principle in the oversight of accreditation procedures has the purpose of ensuring consistent application of the criteria. A further special feature is the fact that the Administrator has had the organisational oversight of all programme accreditations conducted by AKAST since its establishment.

Programme accreditation decisions lead to a formal decision (accreditation or non-accreditation). Accreditation can be made subject to conditions, compliance with which must be demonstrated within a specified period of time. AKAST also makes use of the opportunity to make additional recommendations for improving study programme quality. Action on such recommendations is a focus of assessment in subsequent accreditations.

The same applies to the conduct of accreditations under the new legal framework. The conduct of accreditations follows the standard procedure prescribed by law in the Interstate Treaty and the Specimen Decree and is consequently described with sufficient detail and transparency.

Reference documents:

- [www.akast.info](http://www.akast.info)
- Prior programme accreditation procedure (Annex 22)
- External review report template (Annex 25).

### **Standard 2.6: Reporting**

Full reports by the experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals. If the agency takes any formal decision based on the reports, the decision should be published together with the report.

The full expert reports, which also contain the formal decision, are published in all programme accreditations under the prior legal framework. The reports are published on the Agency website ([www.akast.info](http://www.akast.info)) and, for study programmes that are awarded the Accreditation Council seal, additionally in the Hochschulkompass (Higher Education Compass) information service. Individual text passages (e.g. personal data) may be removed under data protection law. The external review report is prepared with the headings in the report outline (objectives, concept, implementation and quality assurance), each of which is followed by a descriptive section and an assessment section. To ensure comparability between external review reports, these are required to be structured according to the report template (Annex 25). The external review report separately assesses all criteria for the accreditation of study programmes. AKAST takes care to ensure that each external review report is sufficiently informative such that heads of study programmes, heads of

higher education institutions and the Accreditation Committee can follow the review panel's recommendations without additional background information. A clear distinction is upheld between recommendations, which aim to help improve study programmes, and conditions, whose timely fulfilment is a requirement for accreditation status.

The full expert reports, which also contain the formal decision, are published in all programme accreditations under the new legal framework. They are published by the Accreditation Council. An accreditation report consists of a formal report and a review report. It contains suggestions for compliance with the relevant criteria and is prepared in accordance with the structure specified by the Accreditation Council.

Reference documents:

- [www.akast.info](http://www.akast.info)
- External review report template (Annex 25).

### **Standard 2.7: Complaints and appeals**

Complaints and appeals processes should be clearly defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and communicated to the institutions.

AKAST has a documented complaints procedure (Annex 27). The complaints procedure is publicly documented, transparent and verifiable ([www.akast.info](http://www.akast.info)). The availability of a complaints procedure is provided for in the accreditation agreement (Annex 20) with each higher education institution.

Higher education institutions and faculties have the right to file a written appeal, stating reasons, within two weeks of being notified of measures, resolutions and decisions of the Accreditation Committee or the review panel. Appeals are examined and decided on a case-by-case basis by the Executive Board or the Accreditation Committee. If an appeal is justified, a remedy is provided. Documentation and archiving are performed by way of minutes of meetings and procedure files.

An appeal against a decision of the Accreditation Committee has been made on one occasion since AKAST was established. After examination and consultation by the Committee, the appeal was granted in part.

The complaints procedure and standard accreditation agreement are pending a revision and adaptation to the new processes which will be submitted for adoption by the General Meeting and Executive Board.

**See section on Criterion 3.8**

Reference documents:

- [www.akast.info](http://www.akast.info)

- Standard contractual agreement for programme accreditation (Annex 20)
- Complaints procedure (Annex 27).

## **D) Criteria for national accreditation**

### **Criterion 3.1: Internal structures and processes**

The agency has binding internal structures and processes that ensure the correct and consistent application of the Accreditation Council's Rules for the Accreditation of Study Programmes and for System Accreditation, as amended. The agency enters into an agreement with the Accreditation Council pursuant to Section 3 of the ASG.

AKAST has binding internal structures and processes that ensure the correct and consistent application of the Accreditation Council's Rules for the Accreditation of Study Programmes and for System Accreditation, as amended from time to time. The responsibilities of the governing bodies in relation to accreditations and their composition are prescribed in the Statutes (Annex 2). The Accreditation Committee is the deciding body for accreditation decisions. The programme accreditation procedure is laid down by the Accreditation Committee and is based on the relevant stipulations of statute law and the body of law governing relations between the state and the churches. Annex 22 contains the process sequence for accreditations under the prior framework. Annex 23 contains the process sequence for accreditations under the new framework.

**See sections on Standard 3.6, Standard 2.2, Standard 2.3 and Standard 2.5**

Since its foundation, AKAST has undergone reaccreditation by the Accreditation Council every five years in order to obtain authorisation to conduct programme accreditation of canonical study programmes and (up to the present) to be allowed to award the Accreditation Council seal in such accreditations.

Under the act establishing the Accreditation Council, the Agency's work is based on the agreement between the Accreditation Council and the Agency that sets forth the rights and obligations of the parties in the German accreditation system for the duration of the accreditation. AKAST signed the most recent version of this agreement in December 2013. Among other things, the agreement specifies the remit for accreditations by the Agency and the quality requirements it must comply with. Under para. 3 of the KMK 'Key Points' resolution, accreditation by AKAST is restricted to those theological study programmes which qualify students for the office of pastor or priest or for the profession of lay pastor ('single-subject theology degrees'), and to Bachelor's and Master's study programmes at German higher education institutions whose degrees have canonical value. The agreement also requires the agency to apply the resolutions of the Accreditation Council, the KMK structural guidelines applicable in all Länder and any Länder-specific structural guidelines as amended from time to time.

**See sections on Standard 3.2 and Standard 3.7**

As partner agency to AKAST, ACQUIN may be engaged under the cooperation agreement between the two to provide administrative support in accreditations by AKAST (Annex 13). In such cases, a member of the ACQUIN staff is involved who is familiar with the special features of canonical study programmes. This cooperation enables state theological faculties to have their entire range of theological study programmes, both canonical and non-canonical, to be assessed and accredited in a cluster accreditation conducted jointly by AKAST and ACQUIN. To ensure congruence between decisions in jointly conducted accreditations, the Administrator and the responsible representative at ACQUIN each take part in meetings of the other agency's accreditation committee, and a member of the AKAST Accreditation Committee is seconded to the corresponding standing expert committee at ACQUIN.

**See section on Standard 3.5**

Reference documents:

- [www.akast.info](http://www.akast.info)
- Statutes (Annex 2)
- AKAST/ACQUIN cooperation agreement (Annex 13)
- Prior programme accreditation procedure (Annex 22)
- Future programme accreditation procedure (Annex 23)

### **Criterion 3.2: Legal personality**

The agency has its own legal personality.
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AKAST was founded in 2008 as Agentur für Qualitätssicherung und Akkreditierung kanonischer Studiengänge in Deutschland e. V. (Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Canonical Programmes of Studies in Germany), has been registered in the register of associations at Bonn Local Court (Amtsgericht Bonn) under registration number VR 8946 since 29 October 2008 (Annex 3) and is established by the German Bishops' Conference as an incorporated public association under canon law in accordance with the Code of Canon Law (CIC), cc. 116, 301 § 3 and 312. AKAST is formally recognised as a non-profit association (Annex 4). The Statutes (Annex 2) are publicly documented ([www.akast.info](http://www.akast.info)).

**See section on Standard 3.2**

Reference documents:

- [www.akast.info](http://www.akast.info)
- Statutes (Annex 2)
- Entry in register of associations (Annex 3)
- Proof of non-profit status (Annex 4)

### **Criterion 3.3: Full-cost basis**

The agency does not work on a for-profit basis and carries out accreditation procedures on a full-cost basis.

In compliance with the requirements for agencies authorised in Germany and in accordance with its Statutes (Annex 2), AKASt, as a non-profit association, exclusively and directly pursues public-benefit purposes and not economic purposes of its own within the meaning of the “Tax-privileged purposes” chapter of the German Fiscal Code (Abgabenordnung) (Annex 4). AKASt’s funds are used solely for the purposes set out in its Statutes. All members of AKASt decision-making bodies serve on an unpaid basis. The association does not provide any benefit for any person by means of expenditure unrelated to the purposes of the association or by means of disproportionately high remuneration.

AKASt generates income from accreditation procedure costs and grants from the VDD. The draft budget (Annex 10) for the coming financial year is adopted each year by the General Meeting. AKASt will remain unable to be self-funding in the future because of the limitation of its area of activities as a matter of policy. As stipulated in Section 4 (2) of the Agreement between the Agency and the Accreditation Council as last amended, AKASt’s activities are currently restricted to the exclusive remit of the accreditation of canonical study programmes. The grant funding by the VDD therefore does not constitute a distortion of competition in favour of AKASt relative to other agencies.

**See section on Standard 3.5**

Reference documents:

- Statutes (Annex 2)
- Proof of non-profit status (Annex 4)
- Financial year 2019 budget and financial plan (Annex 10)

### **Criterion 3.4: Accreditation across all types of higher education institutions and across disciplines**

The agency accredits across all types of higher education institutions and, in certification for programme accreditation, additionally across disciplines.

AKASt carries out programme accreditations at various different types of higher education institutions. These include faculties of Catholic theology under the auspices of the state (universities), faculties of Catholic theology under the auspices of the Church, schools of philosophy and theology, and colleges of sacred music. AKASt thus accredits across all types of higher education institutions.

AKASt carries out programme accreditations across disciplines for study programmes that have canonical value. These include undergraduate theology programmes (single-subject theology study programmes), Bachelor’s and Master’s study programmes in philosophy and

sacred music and canonical study programmes leading to a licentiate examination. The study programmes accredited by AKAST are listed on the AKAST website ([www.akast.info](http://www.akast.info)).

**See section on Standard 3.2**

Reference documents:

- [www.akast.info](http://www.akast.info)

### **Criterion 3.5: Responsibilities and composition of governing bodies**

The responsibilities of the governing bodies and their composition are appropriate and are prescribed with binding effect. Academics, students and professional practice are appropriately involved.

The responsibilities of the Agency's governing bodies are appropriate and are prescribed with binding effect in the Statutes (Annex 2). Its governing bodies are the Executive Board and the General Meeting. Further organisational units comprise the Accreditation Committee, the Advisory Board and the Office, whose tasks are likewise set down in the Statutes. In accordance with the Statutes, the review panel comprises representatives of the relevant stakeholder groups, notably students, the academic community and professional practice, thus ensuring suitable involvement of the various different perspectives.

**See section on Standard 3.1**

Reference documents:

- Statutes (Annex 2)

### **Criterion 3.6: Selection and composition of review panel**

The review panels appointed by the Agency include representatives from the academic community, the student body and professional practice. Reviewers are carefully selected and are prepared for each specific accreditation. The Agency takes suitable measures to ensure reviewer impartiality.

The review panels appointed by AKAST comprise representatives of the relevant stakeholder groups, notably students, the academic community and professional practice. In accordance with the selection procedure specified by AKAST (Annex 21) and in future the HRK guidelines for reviewer nomination, review panels are appointed by the AKAST Accreditation Committee. The members of the review panels give AKAST a declaration of independence, impartiality and confidentiality (Annex 31). The Office intensively prepares reviewers for their task and for each specific accreditation assignment.

The office informs the higher education institution about the composition of the review panel. Within a specified period, the higher education institution may submit any objections – stating reasons – to members of the review panel. The higher education institution does not have a right to propose and/or veto specific reviewers.

AKAST's reviewer pool consists of 176 members, composed as follows: 112 professorial representatives, 13 seminary rectors' representatives, 22 representatives of professional practice and 29 student representatives. Since its foundation, AKAST has recorded 229 reviewer assignments carried out by a total of 141 reviewers, 35 of whom were women (including multiple assignments). 14 reviewers with international expertise have been deployed (as of February 2018). The pool is administered by the Office. Members are found and replaced based on candidates proposed by the associations of theological disciplines, the Association of Faculties of Catholic Theology, the German Seminary Rectors' Conference and the Association of Theology Students (AGT), which are regularly asked by the Office to put forward proposals. The collaboration with the AGT relates to the special requirements that have to be met in order to serve as a reviewer within AKAST's remit (among other things: religious denomination; student in a canonical study programme or Catholic theology teacher training study programme; expertise, experience and both structural and substantive knowledge with regard to canonical study programmes). There are also increasing numbers of unsolicited applications and proposals put forward by reviewers already serving AKAST.

**See section on Standard 2.4**

Reference documents:

- Reviewer nomination procedure (Annex 21)
- Reviewers' declaration of impartiality (Annex 31)

### **Criterion 3.7: Academic majority**

In the governing bodies and review panels, academic representatives have the majority of the votes.
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Academic representatives have the majority of the votes in AKAST's governing bodies (the Executive Board and the General Meeting) and in the review panels appointed by AKAST.

The Executive Board comprises the Chairperson, the First Vice-Chairperson and the Second Vice-Chairperson (Annex 2). All three are from the academic community.

The General Meeting includes institutions of Catholic theology, which have the status of legal entities and send delegates, and individuals.

Review panels at AKAST consist as a rule of seven individuals, four of whom are representatives of the academic community (Annex 21).

**See sections on Standard 3.1 and Standard 2.4**

Reference documents:

- Statutes (Annex 2)
- Reviewer nomination procedure (Annex 21)

### **Criterion 3.8: Internal quality assurance and internal procedures for handling complaints and appeals**

The agency publishes its procedures for internal quality assurance and for handling complaints and appeals.

AKAST has formalised internal procedures for quality assurance (Annex 32) and for handling complaints and appeals (Annex 27). The procedures are suitably available for viewing and are published ([www.akast.info](http://www.akast.info)).

**See sections on Standard 3.4, Standard 3.6, Standard 2.7 and Criterion 3.11**

Reference documents:

- [www.akast.info](http://www.akast.info)
- Complaints procedure (Annex 27).
- Internal quality management system (Annex 32)

### **Criterion 3.9: Engagement of other organisations**

If the agency engages other organisations for the implementation of parts of the procedures, correct implementation must be ensured by binding and documented agreements.

Under the cooperation agreement with ACQUIN (Annex 13), AKAST is able to engage ACQUIN as cooperation agency to carry out individual steps of the accreditation procedure with the exception of accreditation decisions and reviewer nomination. The fact that ACQUIN is accredited by the Accreditation Council ensures the proper conduct of accreditations.

The cooperation, which has been in place since AKAST was founded, was enshrined in a binding cooperation agreement in 2009. The cooperation agreement is regularly evaluated every five years and renewed for a further five years. The most recent, positive evaluation was in 2013. The next evaluation takes place in 2018 (Annex 14).

**See sections on Standard 3.5 and Criterion 3.1**

Reference documents:

- AKAST/ACQUIN cooperation agreement (Annex 13)
- Evaluation of AKAST/ACQUIN cooperation agreement (Annex 14)

### **Criterion 3.10: German Language**

Within the ambit of the Accreditation Council, the agency generally uses the German language.

Within the ambit of the Accreditation Council, the agency exclusively uses the German language. All information on the website about programme accreditations performed by

AKAST, communication with review panels, higher education institutions and other documents (guidelines, contractual agreements, external review reports, accreditation certificates, resolutions, etc.) are in German.

Reference documents:

- [www.akast.info](http://www.akast.info)

### **Criterion 3.11: Internal quality assurance**

The agency's quality assurance includes internal and external feedback.
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AKAST continuously subjects its activities to a formalised internal quality assurance system. The features of this system have been compiled in a document, *Das System der internen Qualitätssicherung von AKAST e.V.* (The internal quality assurance system of AKAST e.V.) (Annex 32). It includes internal and external feedback.

**See sections on Standard 3.4, Standard 3.6, Standard 2.7, Criterion 3.8 and Criterion 3.11**

Reference documents:

- [www.akast.info](http://www.akast.info)
- Internal quality management system (Annex 32)

## List of annexes

### Association matters

1. Eckpunkte für die Studienstruktur in Studiengängen mit Katholischer oder Evangelischer Theologie/Religion (“Key Points for the Structure of Studies in Study Courses Involving Catholic and Protestant Theology/Religion”), resolution of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder (KMK) of 13 December 2007
2. Satzung (Statutes) as amended 25 January 2018<sup>13</sup>
3. Entry in register of associations
4. Proof of non-profit status
5. Mission Statement – resolution of 26 January 2009
6. Letter from German Bishops’ Conference of 22 October 2013 approving Chairman<sup>14</sup>
7. Letter from the Congregation for Catholic Education of 9 August 2013 – recognition as articolazione territoriale
8. Biographical information: Executive Board, Accreditation Committee, Advisory Board, Office
9. List of members
10. Financial year 2019 budget and financial plan

### Administration and staff

11. AKAST-KUE cooperation agreement (2013)
12. Evaluation of AKAST-KUE cooperation agreement (2018)<sup>15</sup>
13. AKAST-ACQUIN cooperation agreement (2013)
- 13a. Example: AKAST/ACQUIN working meeting
14. Evaluation of AKAST-ACQUIN cooperation agreement (2018)<sup>16</sup>

### Programme accreditation

15. Guidelines on programme accreditation as amended 18 March 2014
16. Guidelines on the evaluation of faculties of Catholic theology and of higher education schools of philosophy and theology as amended 15 March 2013
17. Programme accreditation cost calculation
- 18a. Programme accreditation documentation (selection)
- 18b. Reviewer information package
19. Comparison of Accreditation Council criteria and ESG standards
20. Standard programme accreditation agreement

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<sup>13</sup> The letter from the German Bishops’ Conference approving the amendment to the Statutes, resolution of the General Meeting of 25 January 2018, was not yet available at the time of submission of this report. It will be submitted subsequently.

<sup>14</sup> The letter from the German Bishops’ Conference approving the election of the Chairman on 25 January 2018 was not yet available at the time of submission of this report. It will be submitted subsequently.

<sup>15</sup> The evaluation outcome was not yet available at the time of submission of this report. It will be submitted subsequently.

<sup>16</sup> See note 15

21. Reviewer nomination procedure and criteria
22. Prior programme accreditation procedure
23. Future programme accreditation procedure
24. Site visit schedule: programme accreditation
25. Report template: programme accreditation
26. Standard Agenda for meetings of the Accreditation Committee and Advisory Board
- 26a. Example: Extract from the minutes on Item 8 Advisory Board matters
27. Complaints procedure as amended 26 January 2014

### **Documents on impartiality of members of AKAST decision-making bodies and reviewers**

28. Executive Board impartiality and confidentiality declaration
29. Accreditation Committee impartiality and confidentiality declaration
30. Advisory Board impartiality and confidentiality declaration
31. Reviewer impartiality and confidentiality declaration

### **Quality management system**

32. Das System der internen Qualitätssicherung von AKAST e.V. ("The Internal Quality Assurance System of AKAST) (Version 1.0), Executive Board resolution of 26 May 2014
33. Reviewer interview guide
34. Higher education institution interview guide
35. Summary analysis, programme accreditation (summer semester 2014 to summer semester 2016)

### **PR and Information**

36. Attendance of national and international conferences (selection)
37. List of topics for student workshops
38. Sample letter to faculties of Catholic theology and schools of philosophy and theology
39. Findings of the second evaluation of the KMK 'Key Points' resolution: KMK resolution of 10 September 2015

## List of abbreviations

ACQUIN	Akkreditierungs-, Zertifizierungs- und Qualitätssicherungsinstitut (Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute)
AGT	Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Theologiestudierenden (Association of Theology Students)
AKAST	Agentur für Qualitätssicherung und Akkreditierung kanonischer Studiengänge in Deutschland (Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Canonical Programmes of Studies in Germany)
AVEPRO	Agenzia della Santa Sede per la Valutazione e la Promozione della Qualità delle Università e Facoltà Ecclesiastiche
DBK	Deutsche Bischofskonferenz (German Bishops' Conference)
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
HRK	Hochschulrektorenkonferenz (German Rectors' Conference)
KMK	Kultusministerkonferenz (Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder)
KThF	Katholisch-Theologischer Fakultätentag (Association of Faculties of Catholic Theology)
KUE	Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt (Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt)
TV-L	Tarifvertrag für den Öffentlichen Dienst der Länder (Länder public service pay agreement)
VDD	Verband der Diözesen Deutschlands (Association of German Dioceses)