

## **Rules of Procedure for Alternative Accreditation Procedures**

5 Resolution of the Accreditation Council of 4 June 2019

### **Preamble**

The guiding principle of alternative accreditation procedures is to open up the accreditation system for higher education institutions to pursue new avenues in quality assurance.

10 As set out in the first section of the explanatory memorandum to the Interstate Study Accreditation Treaty<sup>1</sup>, the present statutory accreditation system is geared to compatibility with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). Accreditation of alternative accreditation procedures implies that they comply with the ESG with regard to both internal and external quality assurance.

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### **Section 1 Scope**

These Rules of Procedure govern, on the basis of section 34 (4) of the Specimen Decree<sup>2</sup>, the accreditation of procedures under article 3 (1) no. 3 of the Interstate Study Accreditation Treaty (alternative accreditation procedures).

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<sup>1</sup> *Staatsvertrag über die Organisation eines gemeinsamen Akkreditierungssystems zur Qualitätssicherung in Studium und Lehre an deutschen Hochschulen (Studienakkreditierungsstaatsvertrag)*,

<https://www.akkreditierungsrat.de/sites/default/files/downloads/2019/Studienakkreditierungsstaatsvertrag.pdf>; English translation: Interstate Treaty on the Organisation of a Joint Accreditation System to Ensure the Quality of Teaching and Learning at German Higher Education Institutions (Interstate study accreditation treaty) [https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/veroeffentlichungen\\_beschluesse/2016/2016\\_12\\_08-Studienakkreditierungsstaatsvertrag-englisch.pdf](https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/veroeffentlichungen_beschluesse/2016/2016_12_08-Studienakkreditierungsstaatsvertrag-englisch.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> *Musterrechtsverordnung gemäß Artikel 4 Absätze 1-4 Studienakkreditierungsstaatsvertrag*

<https://www.akkreditierungsrat.de/sites/default/files/downloads/2019/Musterrechtsverordnung.pdf>; English translation: Specimen Decree Pursuant to Article 4, Paragraphs 1-4 of the Interstate Study Accreditation Treaty [https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/veroeffentlichungen\\_beschluesse/2017/2017\\_12\\_07-Musterrechtsverordnung-englisch.pdf](https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/veroeffentlichungen_beschluesse/2017/2017_12_07-Musterrechtsverordnung-englisch.pdf). The authoritative text is the text of the decree applicable in each Land.

## Section 2 Subject matter

- (1) The subject matter of these Rules of Procedure is the accreditation of alternative accreditation procedures under article 3 (1) no. 3 of the Interstate Treaty.
- 5 (2) Alternative accreditation procedures serve to ensure and enhance the quality of teaching and learning (section 34 (1) of the Specimen Decree). They are intended for the purpose of gaining fundamental knowledge of alternative approaches to external quality assurance beyond programme and system accreditation (section 34 (3) sentence 4 of the Specimen Decree).
- 10 (3) Assessment and evaluation outcomes from past accreditations may be used in the accreditation of alternative accreditation procedures in accordance with section 5 and section 9 of these Rules of Procedure.

## Section 3 Prior consent

- 15 (1) Prior to preparation of the consent application and its submission to the competent scientific authority and to the Accreditation Council, a consultation meeting is held between the applicant higher education institution and the Foundation Accreditation Council. The scientific authority is to be informed. The meeting takes place at the invitation of the Foundation Accreditation Council after the higher education institution has informed the Foundation Accreditation Council of its intention. An application may
- 20 not be submitted without a preliminary meeting.
- (2) The consent of the competent scientific authority and of the Accreditation Council must be obtained before an alternative accreditation procedure may be conducted (section 34 (3) sentence 1 of the Specimen Decree).
- (3) In order for the Accreditation Council to grant consent, an application must be submitted which
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1. provides a general description of the envisaged alternative accreditation procedure, including a timetable for its implementation,
  2. states the form and scope of the self-evaluation report provided for in the alternative accreditation procedure, in accordance with article 3 (2) sentence 1 no. 2 of
  - 30 the Interstate Treaty,
  3. describes the substantial participation of external, independent experts from the fields of society relevant for quality assurance, in particular representatives of the scientific community, professional practice and students, in accordance with article 3 (2) sentence 1 no. 3 of the Interstate Treaty,

4. sets out how, if applicable, the cooperation and approval requirements are observed in accordance with section 25 (1) sentences 3 to 5 of the Specimen Decree,
- 5 shows in what form and by what body a review report is prepared with recommendations for resolutions and assessments according to the standards set out in the Specimen Decree, in accordance with article 3 (2) sentence 1 no. 4 of the Interstate Treaty,
6. sets out how the participation of professors from related subjects is organised, in accordance with article 3 (2) sentence 1 no. 5 of the Interstate Treaty,
- 10 7. elaborates what fundamental knowledge of alternative approaches to external quality assurance is expected to be gained, in accordance with section 34 (3) sentence 4 of the Specimen Decree, and
8. describes the procedure for award of the Accreditation Council seal to the higher education institution's study programmes.

15 The description under item 1 must also cover the detailed design of the envisaged procedure and how it ensures quality assurance in teaching and learning in compliance with Parts 1 to 3 of the ESG, Parts 2 and 3 of the Specimen Decree and article 3 (2) sentence 1 of the Interstate Treaty.

- (4) For the purposes of processing by the Accreditation Council, the consent of the scientific authority under section 34 (3) sentence 1 of the Specimen Decree is deemed to have been granted if the application is forwarded to the Accreditation Council via the competent scientific authority.
- (5) The Accreditation Council may arrange for an external assessment, which normally takes place on the basis of documentation.

#### 25 **Section 4 Agreement**

- (1) Following the granting of consent, the detailed stipulations on assessment and implementation of an alternative accreditation procedure are laid down in an agreement to be entered into between the Foundation Accreditation Council and the applicant  
30 higher education institution.
- (2) In addition, the agreement generally includes the following points:
  1. Obligations on the higher education institution
  2. Obligations on the Foundation Accreditation Council
  3. Monitoring by the Foundation Accreditation Council
  - 35 4. Individual points of agreement

5. Fee amount and due date

- (3) After prior consultation with the higher education institution, the Accreditation Council resolves on the final text of the agreement. If the higher education institution does not sign within a reasonable period of time specified in the resolution, the consent under section 3 expires automatically.

**Section 5 Conduct of the procedure (assessment procedure)**

- (1) Assessment of an alternative accreditation procedure is carried out in accordance with the requirements laid down in article 3 (2) sentence 1 of the Interstate Treaty. The assessment verifies compliance with the formal and academic criteria under the Specimen Decree.

- (2) The higher education institution submits a self-evaluation report based on the application under section 3 (3), containing at least the information required for the application. That report serves as the basis for assessment of the alternative accreditation procedure. The assessment is carried out with the participation of external, independent experts from the fields of society relevant for quality assurance, in particular representatives of the scientific community, professional practice and students.

- (3) Assessment of the alternative accreditation procedure is subject to the principles on appropriate involvement of academia laid down in the Interstate Treaty and the Specimen Decree and to the cooperation and approval requirements under section 25 (1) sentences 3 to 5 of the Specimen Decree.

- (4) The Accreditation Council may carry out the assessment in whole or part; it may delegate this work to third parties.

**Section 6 Application for accreditation (procedure for applications to the Accreditation Council)**

- (1) The Accreditation Council decides on the accreditation, on application by the higher education institution, by determining the equivalence of the alternative accreditation procedure to the procedures under article 3 sentence 1 no. 1 and 2 of the Interstate Treaty. The application includes the self-evaluation report required under section 5 (2), the review report with recommendations for resolutions and evaluations as the outcome of the assessment, and, if applicable, the higher education institution's comments. The application is to be submitted to the Accreditation Council via the competent scientific authority.

- 5 (2) On accreditation, the Accreditation Council awards the alternative accreditation procedure the seal of the Foundation Accreditation Council. This gives the higher education institution the right to award the seal for its study programmes itself provided that they have successfully undergone the examination procedure for study programmes provided for in the accredited procedure.
- (3) Accreditation of an alternative accreditation procedure is limited to a maximum of eight years. Conditions may be imposed.
- 10 (4) If an alternative accreditation procedure is designed to be conducted on a continuous basis rather than over a period of time, the Accreditation Council may grant accreditation subject to reservation (trial accreditation). Trial accreditations involve additional reporting obligations on the higher education institution over the entire duration of the accreditation. Continuous procedures are subject to special monitoring by the Accreditation Council. Details of the reporting obligations and monitoring are specified in the agreement under section 4.
- 15 (5) The decision is made by administrative act.
- (6) The Accreditation Council's decision granting consent, the review report and the seal award decision are published in the central database of accredited study programmes and system-accredited higher education institutions.

## 20 **Section 7 Monitoring by the Accreditation Council**

- (1) The Accreditation Council monitors the alternative accreditation procedure. It may delegate the monitoring in whole or part to its members, employees of the Foundation's Head Office or competent third parties.
- 25 (2) In consultation with the higher education institution, it is to be allowed to inspect the documents to be compiled by the higher education institution as part of the alternative accreditation procedure. The Accreditation Council may participate in all procedural steps within the alternative accreditation procedure.

## **Section 8 Fees**

- 30 The Foundation Accreditation Council charges fees in accordance with its current fee schedule at the time, which is published in the North Rhine-Westphalia Ministerial Gazette and on the Foundation website.

## Section 9 Evaluation

- 5 (1) Two years as a rule before the accreditation period expires, the alternative accreditation procedure is evaluated by an independent institution with close ties to academia, which reports to the Accreditation Council. The Accreditation Council may specify issues and quality goals to be examined in the evaluation; the higher education institution may add its own issues and quality goals. EQAR-listed agencies are independent institutions with close ties to academia within the meaning of section 34 (5) sentence 3 of the Specimen Decree and may carry out evaluations. The Accreditation Council decides on the authorisation of other organisations on a case-by-case basis.
- 10 (2) Based on the findings from the evaluation and from the monitoring of the procedure, the Accreditation Council makes a recommendation as to whether the alternative accreditation procedure should be continued. For the potential reaccreditation of the alternative accreditation procedure, a positive recommendation is equivalent to the granting of consent under section 3. The decision between reaccreditation of an alternative accreditation procedure and returning to programme or system accreditation
- 15 lies with the higher education institution.

## Section 10 Accreditation periods and extension

- 20 (1) A consent application for implementation of an alternative accreditation procedure has to be submitted to the Accreditation Council in due time before expiry of the higher education institution's existing programme accreditation or system accreditation.
- (2) Programme accreditations under section 26 (3) sentence 2 of the Specimen Decree cannot normally be extended for the purpose of preparing for accreditation of an alternative accreditation procedure. The same applies for the extension of system accreditations. The Accreditation Council decides on any exceptions.
- 25 (3) With regard to applications for accreditation of an alternative accreditation procedure, the requirements laid down in section 26 (3) sentence 3 of the Specimen Decree apply accordingly.

## Section 11 Violation of obligations

- 30 In the event of a violation of obligations before adoption of the accreditation decision under section 6, the parties may terminate the agreement as provided for in detail within the agreement. In the event of noncompliance with obligations after adoption of the accreditation decision, the Accreditation Council may, in the case of serious noncompliance, withdraw the accreditation after setting a three-month remedial period. Withdrawal of the accreditation

takes effect at the end of the next semester. Before withdrawal of the accreditation, the higher education institution is given the opportunity to comment.

### **Section 12 Appeals procedure**

- 5 Complaints and appeals are the responsibility of the Foundation Accreditation Council's Appeals Commission.