
Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany

Accreditation Council ■■

The Quality Assurance System in German Higher Education

Study Seminar: NIAD-UE / German Accreditation Council
7. October 2015 in Tokyo

Dr. Olaf Bartz

Content

- I. General View: The Accreditation System
 - II. The Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany
 - III. Regulations for the Accreditation Council
 - IV. Quality Approach
 - V. System Accreditation
 - VI. Student Mobility
 - VII. Challenges
-

The Accreditation System in Germany I

1. Programme Accreditation

Subject matter: single study programme

Accreditation period: 7 years (first accreditation 5 years)

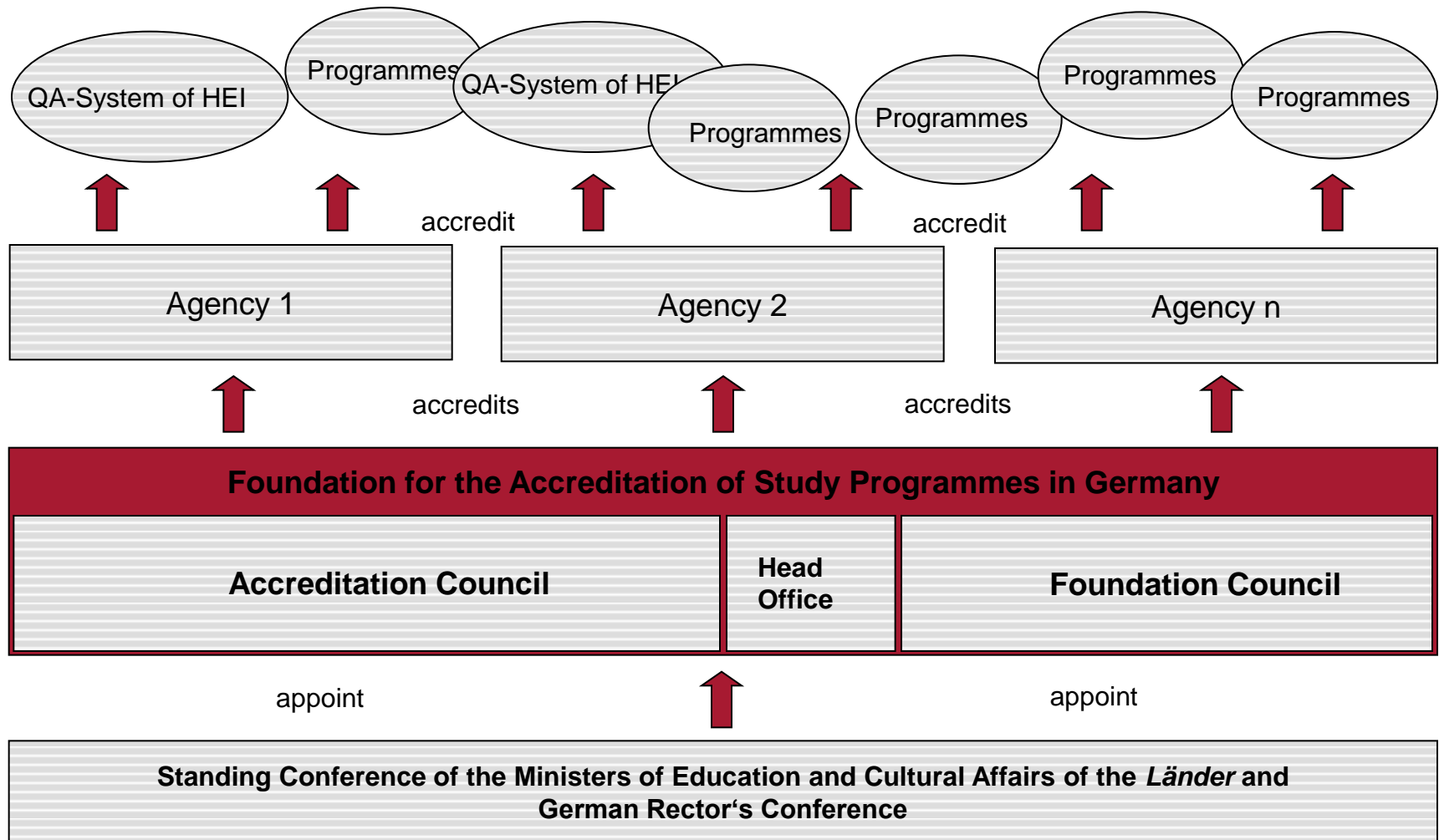
2. System Accreditation

Subject matter: internal quality assurance system of HEI;

effects of decision: all study programmes of HEI are accredited

Accreditation period: 8 years (first accreditation 6 years)

The Accreditation System in Germany II



Discipline-oriented Accreditation Agencies in Germany

- AHPGS** Accreditation Agency for Study Programmes in Special Education, Care, Health Sciences and Social Work
- AKAST** Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Canonical courses of Studies in Germany (accredited only for programme accreditation)
- ASIIN** Accreditation Agency specialised in accrediting Degree Programs from the fields of Engineering, Informatics/Computer Science, the Natural Sciences and Mathematics.
- FIBAA** Foundation for Business Administration Accreditation
-

Multidisciplinary Accreditation Agencies in Germany

AAQ	Swiss Agency of Accreditation and Quality Assurance
ACQUIN	Accreditation-, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute
AQAS	Agency for Quality Assurance in the course of the Accreditation of Study Programmes
AQ Austria	Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria
evalag	Evaluation Agency Baden-Württemberg
ZEVA	Central Evaluations- and Accreditation Agency Hannover

The Foundation

Board

Executes the Accreditation Council's resolutions

Accreditation Council (GAC)

Is essentially responsible for performing the
Foundation tasks
makes decisions on all matters of the Foundation

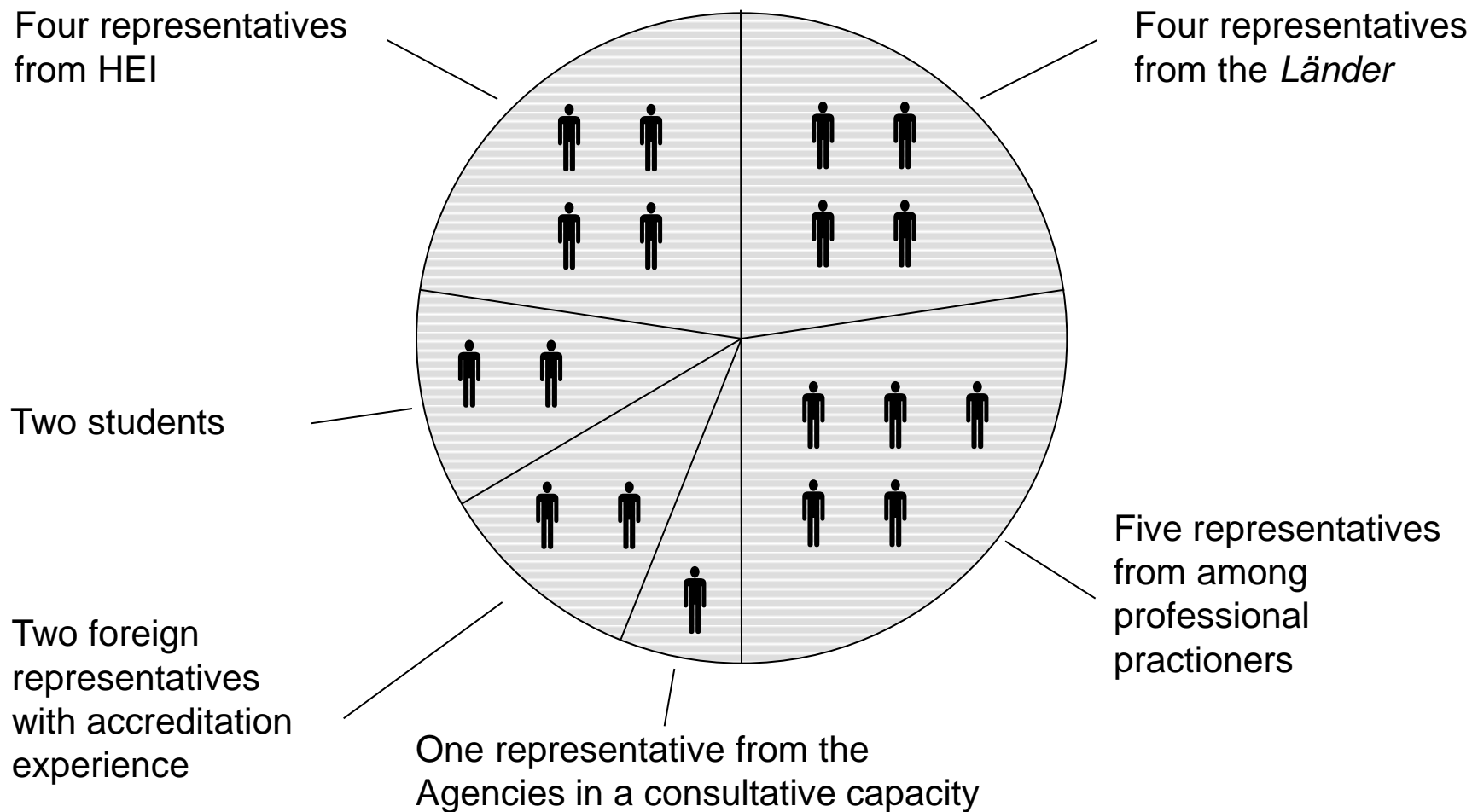
Foundation Council

Monitors the lawfulness and efficiency
of the foundation activities carried out
by the Accreditation Council and the
Board

Head Office

Supports the execution of Foundation business

Composition of the Accreditation Council



Tasks according to the Foundation Law (1)

§ 2 Central Aims of the Foundation

(1) The Foundation serves to fulfil the following tasks:

1. Accreditation and Reaccreditation of accreditation agencies
 2. Compliance of the common and specific structural guidelines of the Länder into a set of binding guidelines for the agencies
 3. Regulation of “minimum requirements” for accreditations
 4. Monitoring of accreditations awarded by the agencies
-

Tasks according to the Foundation Law (2)

§ 3 Collaboration between the Foundation and the Agencies

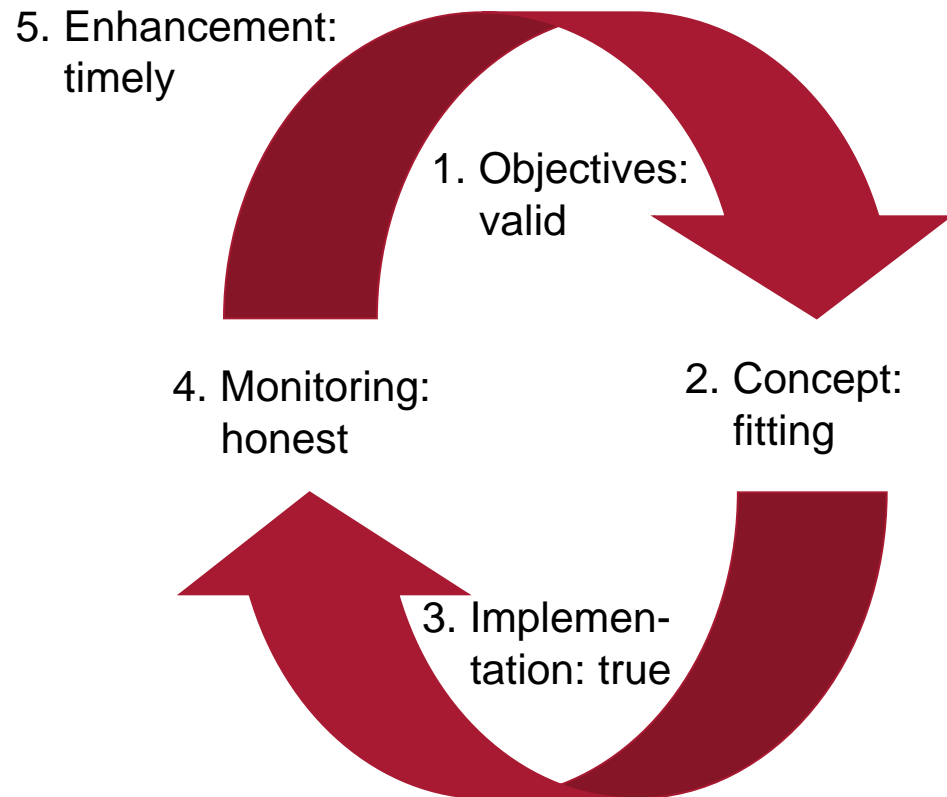
(2) The subject matter of the agreements between the Foundation and the respective Agency includes, in particular

1. Compliance with the common structural guidelines of the *Länder*
 2. Compliance with the minimum requirements for accreditation procedures, including the prerequisites and limits of bundled accreditations
 3. Quality requirements with regard to the internal organisation of the agency
 4. The commitment of the agency to the principle of good faith in dealing with the seal of the Foundation
 5. Reporting obligations of the agency with regard to the Accreditation Council
-

The Quality Approach of Accreditation

The Quality Circle

The Accreditation Council's concept of accreditation is based on the **fitness of** und **fitness for purpose** approach: The underlying quality assessment takes into account the intended learning outcomes of a programme identified and made transparent by the higher education institution as well as the question, if the proposed study concept is likely to achieve the valid learning outcomes.



Subject Matter of the Review

“Subject matter of the system accreditation is the internal quality assurance system of a Higher Education Institution in the field of teaching and learning. The structures and processes relevant for teaching and learning are assessed with regard to their appropriateness for achieving the qualification objectives and for ensuring high quality of the study programmes, with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG), the guidelines of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK) and the criteria of the Accreditation Council being applied.”

Story behind the introduction of System Accreditation

Objectives

- (1) Strengthen responsibility and management ability of the universities
- (2) Promote continuous quality development
- (3) Contribute to the formation of an individual university's profile
- (4) Promote development of a quality culture

Criticism of the program accreditation

- (1) Too little relevant management-related knowledge about the quality of teaching and learning
 - (2) Tendency to maintaining the status quo and thus too little quality enhancement
 - (3) Too many study programmes having to be accredited
-

Status of System Accreditation

Outline Data (October 2015):

36 HEIs with finished system accreditation

26 HEIs in progress, so

System accreditation covers >15% of German HEIs (of all kind)

Observations:

- (1) Procedure works as such
 - (2) System accreditation needs initial investment of time, money, and thought. So a first system accreditation may be more onerous than a routine programme reaccreditation
 - (3) Figures will raise, but not as a landslide
 - (4) Too early to compare the quality of study programmes at system accredited HEIs with other programmes
-

Impact of System Accreditation – the view of HEI

Comment of a former university's president in the System Accreditation Forum (January 2015):

“The system accreditation acts as the pressure required from outside. No organization starts without external pressure to deal with themselves. The System Accreditation has already helped us to think about what we can do better.”

- Internalisation of quality control → strengthening of university autonomy and the management ability of universities
 - Incentive for the development of an internal quality assurance system and of a quality culture in universities
 - System accreditation initiates internal discussion processes on quality assurance and development
 - System accreditation increases the acceptance of quality assurance procedures within HEI
-

Student Mobility

1. Criteria of the German Accreditation Council:

Recognition of credits achieved at other higher education institutions in accordance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention (criterion 2.3).

Possibly planned mobility windows are integrated in the curriculum (criterion 2.3).

2. European standards and Guidelines (ESG)

Institutions should consistently apply predefined and published regulations covering all phases of the student “life cycle”, e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification (standard 1.4).

Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning are essential components for promoting mobility.

Challenges of Quality Assurance and Accreditation

- (1) New approach: Shift from compliance to quality enhancement (compliance with given rules still important but rather taken for granted)
 - (2) Internationalisation: Accreditation of Joint Programmes and Transnational Programmes: Increase efficiency
 - (3) Re-Accreditation as a rule in the procedures of System Accreditation
 - (4) Implementation of the so called “trial clause” of the GAC and evaluation of the results
 - (5) Awarding the quality seal of the GAC by the HEI: balance between control and trust in the system accredited HEI
 - (6) The meaning of subject-specific and professional-related criteria in the accreditation procedure
 - (7) Consistency of the agencies’ accreditation decisions in the System Accreditation
 - (8) Relation between GAC, agencies and system accredited HEI
-



Thank you for your attention!

Dr. Olaf Bartz

Managing Director / Board Member

German Accreditation Council (GAC)

More information available at:

www.akkreditierungsrat.de
