

Quality assurance of Bachelor's and Master's programmes in Germany – the system of programme accreditations

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Accreditation on the basis of European standards

- Quality assurance is one of the key instruments for the realisation of the European Higher Education Area.
- Comparable criteria, methods and standards are the basis for the recognition of degrees and the promotion of transnational mobility.
- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education (ESG) (2005/ 2015).
- Reference framework for internal and external quality assurance and for quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area.
- Basis for the criteria and procedural rules for the accreditation of study programmes and internal quality management systems by the Accreditation Council in Germany.

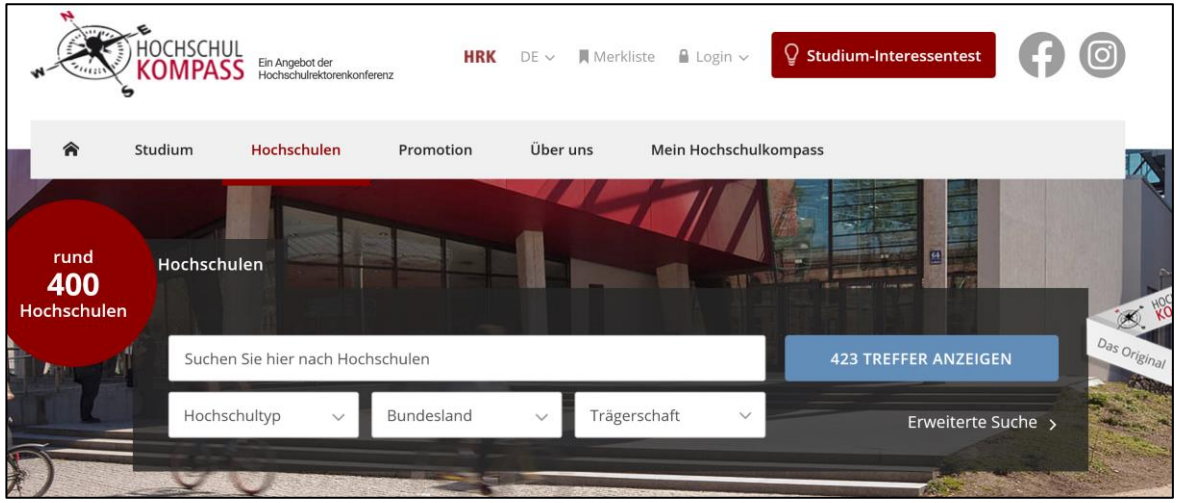
Framework in Germany

- **German Accreditation Council** [Stiftung Akkreditierungsrat]
- Interstate Treaty on the organization of a joint accreditation system to ensure the quality of teaching and learning at German higher education institutions (Interstate study accreditation treaty) [Studienakkreditierungsstaatsvertrag]
- Accreditation Council Act [Akkreditierungsratsgesetz]

GERMAN
Accreditation Council

Programme accreditation

- **Subject of programme accreditation** are Bachelor's and Master's programmes offered by state or state-recognised higher education institutions in Germany.
- Successful accreditation is a prerequisite for the **state recognition** of a study programme.
- **Evaluation:** The accreditation procedure is a multi-stage process based on the principle of **peer review**.



PROGRAMM AKKREDITIERT
Akkreditierungsrat

Programme accreditation

FIRST STEP: the university commissions an approved agency.

- The agency appoints a **review panel** whose composition reflects both the subject matter and the specific profile of the study programme.
- The review panel includes **representatives** of all relevant interest groups, namely
  - at least two subject-related professors,
  - one subject-related representative with professional experience,
  - one subject-related student.

Authorised Agencies in Germany

The following agencies have been authorised by the Accreditation Council to operate in Germany:

- AAQ Swiss Agency for Accreditation and Quality Assurance
- ACQUIN Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute
- AHPGS Accreditation Agency in Health and Social Sciences
- AKAST Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Canonical Programmes
- AQ Austria Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria
- AQAS Agency for Quality Assurance through Accreditation of Study Programmes
- ASIIN Accreditation Agency for Study Programmes in Engineering, Informatics, Natural Sciences and Mathematics
- evalag Evaluation Agency Baden-Württemberg
- FIBAA Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation
- MusiQue Music Quality Enhancement
- ZEvA Central Evaluation and Accreditation Agency

Programme accreditation

SECOND STEP: the university prepares a self-report on the basis of defined criteria.

- **Legal framework**: Specimen decree pursuant to Article 4, paragraphs 1 – 4 of the interstate study accreditation treaty (Resolution of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany of December 7, 2017)
- Defined criteria: **Formal criteria** and **academic criteria** for study programms and quality management systems

KULTUSMINISTER KONFERENZ

Programme accreditation: Self report

Formal criteria for study programmes:

1. Structure and duration of higher education studies
2. Profiles for study programmes
3. Admission requirements and transitions between different courses
4. Qualifications and qualification designations
5. Modularisation
6. Credit points system
7. Special criteria for cooperations with non-university institutions
8. Special regulations for joint degree programmes

Programme accreditation: Self report

Academic criteria for study programmes and quality management systems:

1. Qualification goals and qualification level
2. Coherent study programme concept and adequate implementation
3. Subject-content organisation of the study programmes
4. Academic success
5. Gender equality and compensation of disadvantages
6. Special regulations for joint degree programmes
7. Concept of the quality management system (goals, processes, instruments)
8. Measures to implement the quality management concept
9. Cooperations with non-university institutions
10. Cooperations between higher education institutions

Programme accreditation

THIRD STEP: peer review process and site visit at the university by the review panel.

- **Site visit**: talks with representatives of the university.
- Representatives:
  - University Management
  - Head of study programme
  - Teachers
  - Students and graduates
  - Administration and quality management

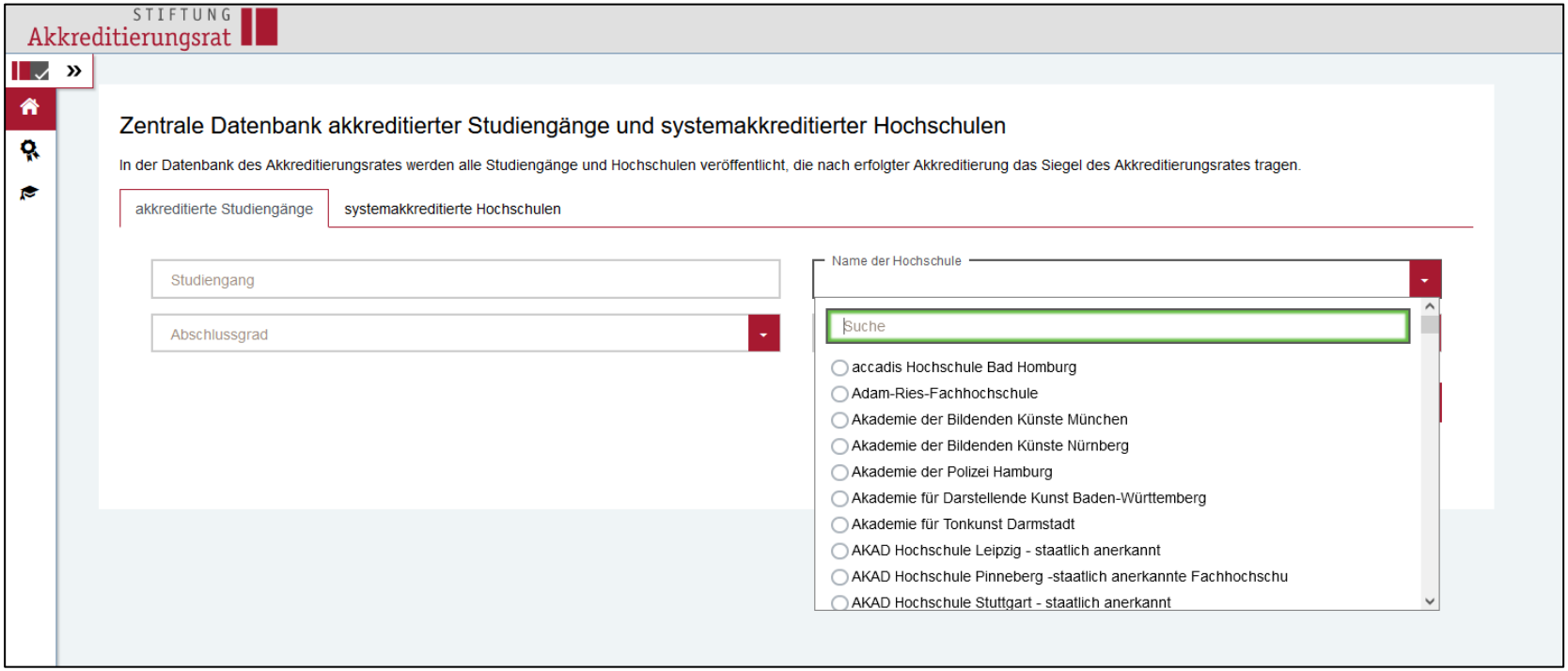
	Typical schedule of a site visit
9:00	Initial discussion with the university management
9:30	Internal meeting of the reviewers
10:00	Kick-off meeting with the head of the study programme
11:00	Break
11:30	Group discussions with the teachers (both full-time and part-time lecturers).
12:30	Break and lunch
13:30	Group discussion with students and graduates
14:15	Group discussion with administration and quality management
15:00	Passage through building (seminar rooms, PC room, library etc.)
15:30	Retreat of the reviewers
17:00	Final discussion with the university management

Programme accreditation

- **FOURTH STEP**: Agency and review panel prepare an audit report.
- The university takes a position and corrects the report if necessary.

- **FIFTH STEP**: The report is submitted to the Accreditation Council.
- The Accreditation Council decides on the accreditation of the study programme.
- If the Accreditation Council intends to deviate significantly from the experts' recommendation, the higher education institution is given the opportunity to comment before the Accreditation Council's decision.
- Positive accreditation decision: the study programme will bear the **Accreditation Council's quality seal.**
- The Accreditation Council publishes its decision and the expert report in the central database of accredited study programmes.
- Accreditation is granted for a limited period of **eight years**.

ELIAS – Central Database



Challenges of programme accreditation

- Time for preparation and implementation
- Fees for the agency and the accreditation council
- Forces regular evaluations such as teaching evaluation, alumni surveys and others surveys (e.g. partner companies, student satisfaction)
- Quality Management Team
- Implement a quality management system

Opportunities of programme accreditation

Opportunities for universities:

- Peer review brings external expertise into programme development
- Enables reflection on one's own activities
- Leads to state-of-the-art study programmes
- Makes the quality of the programmes transparent

Opportunities for students and the public:

- Enables the recognition of study achievements between the universities
- Enables mobility within the European area
- Transparency about the offered study programmes
- Promotes trust in the university

How to become a Mercedes among study programmes!



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