

Substantive Change Report

by the Swiss Agency of Accreditation and Quality Assurance (AAQ)

Register Committee

Ref. RC/C54

Ver. 1.0

Date 16/10/2020

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Decision of:	16/10/2020
Report received on:	07/05/2020
Agency registered since:	08/05/2012
Last external review report:	July 2016
Registration until:	31/07/2021
Absented themselves from decision-making:	Andrea Blättler, Jacques Lanarès
Attachments:	1. Substantive Change Report

1. The Register Committee considered the Substantive Change Report of 07/05/2020.
2. The Register Committee took note of the establishment of the three subcommittees of the Commission of AAQ, whereas only one subcommittee is responsible for activities within the scope of the ESG. The Committee considered that this was an internal organisational measure, which did not change the function or responsibilities of the Commission of AAQ.
3. The Register Committee took note of the information in the Report as well as on the AAQ website (<https://aaq.ch/en/accreditation/appeals/>) on the new possibility to make complaints to the Commission.

Given that the scope of complaints was an issue discussed in AAQ's last renewal (see [EQAR Register Committee decision of 3/12/2016](#)), the Committee underlined that the issue should receive further attention in the currently ongoing external review of AAQ.

4. The Register Committee took note of the new programme accreditation Guide for the disciplines nursing, physiotherapy, ergotherapy, midwifery, nutrition and dietetics, optometry and osteopathy, which follows the requirements of the Health Professions Act (HPA) in addition to the generic regulations for programme accreditation.

Based on the last external review of AAQ and the information provided in the Substantive Change Report, the Register Committee had no concerns that the ESG are complied with in this new activity:

- i. The purposes and development of the activity were clear in that it responds to the legal framework; the launch was expected in addition to general medicine programme accreditation. The criteria were developed in cooperation with external subject-specific commissions and otherwise follow AAQ's established processes (ESG 2.2).
- ii. The criteria combine AAQ's generic programme accreditation criteria, which were reviewed previously and incorporate ESG Part 1, with subject-specific ones for each of the disciplines; AAQ's usual decision-making arrangements are used (ESG 2.1 & 2.5).
- iii. The review team composition follows usual AAQ practice, with additional expertise in health professions required (ESG 2.4).
- iv. Site visits are part of the methodology, as in AAQ's general processes (ESG 2.3).
- v. The publication of accreditation reports is stipulated in the applicable guide (ESG 2.6).
- vi. In terms of follow-up, AAQ applies its established process for checking and confirming that conditions are fulfilled, if any (ESG 2.3).
- vii. Decisions can be appealed under AAQ's generic appeals regulations (ESG 2.7).
- viii. All usual internal quality assurance measures and feedback questionnaires of AAQ also apply to this new activities; thematic analyses are planned after a whole cycle has been completed (ESG 3.4 & 3.6).

- 5. The Committee nevertheless expects that this activity will be analysed in full as part of the ongoing review of AAQ.

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EQAR Substantive Change Report

Agency #1	AAQ
Expiry date #1	31/07/2021
Contact #1	Laura Beccari
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Other organisations?	No
A. Has the organisational identity of the registered agency changed?	No
B. Has the organisational structure changed?	Yes

Description

According to the Organisational Regulations of the Swiss Accreditation Council (OReg-SAC) of 12 March 2015 (version of 16 September 2016), art. 15.1.d, the Accreditation Council "may establish a Commission of AAQ as the decision-making authority of the Accreditation Agency in procedures on behalf of third parties and as an authority of internal quality assurance in all procedures of the Accreditation Agency".

According to art. 15.2 the Commission of AAQ
a) assures that the procedures of the AAQ carried out on behalf of third parties comply with the international standards for accreditation and quality assurance; b) adopts the quality standards and guidelines of procedures of the AAQ on behalf of third parties; c) adopts the review panels in all procedures of the AAQ; d) decides on procedures of the AAQ on behalf of third parties.

In 2018 the Commission of AAQ was established, performing the tasks mentioned above. It adopts AAQ Guides for activities on behalf of third parties; it is the decision-making body for Quality Audit and Evaluation procedures; it approves external evaluation reports for System accreditation procedures; it approves lists of experts for all procedures of the AAQ.

The composition of the Commission of AAQ matches so far with the one of the Accreditation Council, the differentiation being implemented at operational level, in meeting agendas and protocols of the Council.

The Commission of AAQ has set up three sub-committees of 5 members each responsible for internal quality and the preparation of decisions for these activities:

- 1) quality audit, evaluations, system accreditation;
 - 2) accreditation of advanced training for specializations within the medical professions
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pursuant to MedPA;

3) accreditation of advanced training for specializations within the psychology professions pursuant to PsyG/LPsy.

Sub-committees 2 and 3 concern external QA activities without the scope of the ESG; in their composition, these committees include each 3 members of the Commission of AAQ and 2 external ones, coming from the specific professional fields. Sub-committee 1 includes 5 members of the Commission of AAQ.

Meetings of the sub-committees are scheduled in association with meetings of the Accreditation Council, but items are listed in separate agendas. Under this perspective, changes do not affect existing AAQ activities - within the scope of the ESG - in their methodologies, criteria and procedures.

As authority of internal quality assurance in all procedures of the AAQ, since 2020 complaints against the conduction of AAQ procedures can be addressed to the Commission of AAQ.

C.i. Are there new types of activities?	Yes
C.ii. Are there changes in existing activities?	No
C.iii. Have some or all existing activities been discontinued?	No

Description new/changed

New activity: Programme accreditation according to the Federal Act on Funding and Coordination of the Swiss Higher Education Sector (HEdA) and the Health Professions Act (HPA)

This activity was developed on the basis of programme accreditation according HEdA, an existing AAQ activity subject to the last external review. It is based on the Health Professions Act (Bundesgesetz über die Gesundheitsberufe, for which no English translation is available; hereby shortened as HPA), entered into force on February 1st, 2020.

According to the HPA, selected health degree programmes leading to a federally recognised title must be accredited.

Federal titles may be obtained in nursing, physiotherapy, ergotherapy, midwifery, nutrition and dietetics, optometry and osteopathy.

According to Art. 10 of the Health Professions Ordinance, the Federal Department of Home Affairs (FDHA) specifies the details of the accreditation procedure in line with Arts. 6-9 of the Health Professions Act. The FDHA also issued the quality standards (after hearing from the responsible organisations) and determined that any agency recognised by the Swiss Accreditation Council is entitled to carry out the external evaluation procedure. The accreditation standards consist in the HEdA quality standards for program accreditation complemented by specific subject requirements derived from the HPA, in the following disciplines: nursing, physiotherapy, ergotherapy, midwifery, nutrition and dietetics, optometry and osteopathy.

The first procedures are likely to start in the second half of 2020.

The AAQ has prepared an own Guide, available in 3 national languages online, which was approved by the Commission of AAQ on

27 March 2020. In approving the Guide, the Commission of AAQ assures that the procedure of the AAQ comply with the international standards for accreditation and quality assurance, more specifically the ESG.

All procedural aspects (criteria used, review team, site visit, report, follow-up, appeals) are specified in the AAQ Guide. The procedure is fully comparable to a program accreditation according to HEdA, with the following 2 distinguishing features:

- 1) The selection criteria for the expert panel include the knowledge of the Swiss health care system, in particular in the field of the study programme concerned.
- 2) The preparation of the expert panel includes the particularities of the health system and the health professions in Switzerland.

As for a thematic analysis, this activity needs to be conducted for a whole cycle, before any consideration can be made. Meantime, all internal quality assurance measures of the agency and feedback questionnaires are applied as in all AAQ activities.
