

**Approval of the Application
by Accreditation Agency for Study Programmes of
Engineering, Information Science, Natural Sciences and
Mathematics (ASIIN)
for Renewal of Inclusion on the Register**

Register Committee

15 October 2021

Ref. RC31/A104

Ver. 1.0

Date 2021-11-22

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Application of:	17/11/2020
Agency registered since:	08/04/2009
External review report of:	06/08/2021
Review coordinated by:	The Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE)
Review panel members:	Fiona Crozier, Aleksandar Šušnjar, Volker Linneweber, Maria João Machado Pires da Rosa
Decision of:	15/10/2021
Registration until:	31/05/2021
Absented themselves from decision-making:	Aleksandar Šušnjar
Attachments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">1. <u>External Review Report and Terms of Reference, 06/08/2021</u>2. <u>Applicant's statement on the report, of 19/07/2021</u>

1. The application of 17/11/2020 adhered to the requirements of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.
2. The Register Committee confirmed eligibility of the application on 03/03/2021.
3. The Register Committee considered the external review report of 06/08/2021 on the compliance of ASIIN with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015 version).
4. The Register Committee further considered ASIIN's statement (of 19/07/2021) to the review report.

Analysis:

5. In considering ASIIN's compliance with the ESG, the Register Committee took into account the following activities within the scope of the ESG:

- Institutional accreditation/evaluation
 - *System accreditation in Germany*
 - *ASIIN seal institutional accreditation*
 - *Institutional/System evaluation*
- Programme accreditation/evaluation
 - *Programme accreditation in Germany*
 - *ASIIN seal programme accreditation*
 - *EQAS-Food Label joint programme review*
 - *EQAS-Food Label review*
 - *AMSE Label joint programme review*
 - *AMSE Label review*
 - *EUR-ACE joint programme review*
 - *EUR-ACE review*
 - *Eurobachelor joint programme review*
 - *Eurobachelor review*
 - *Euro-Inf joint programme review*
 - *Euro-Inf review*
 - *Euromaster joint programme review*
 - *Euromaster review*
 - *Joint programme accreditation*
- *Certification*
- *Evaluations for quality assurance and quality enhancement ("type 1")*

6. The Register Committee found that the report provides sufficient evidence and analysis on ASIIN's level of compliance with the ESG.

7. With regard to the specific European Standards, the Register Committee considered the following:

ESG 2.1 – Consideration of internal quality assurance

8. In its Change Report Decision of 02/11/2020, the Register Committee requested that the next external review of ASIIN considers how the agency ensures sufficient coverage of ESG Part 1 in its combined ("piggybacking") procedures (ESG 2.1).

9. The agency explained that ESG Part 1 is embedded as a standard procedure in every external QA activity carried out (Self Evaluation Report p. 35). Having considered how ESG Part 1 is mapped against ASIIN's seals while also including the standards of the German Accreditation Council, the panel was convinced of the coverage and link to ESG Part 1 in all its

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activities. The documents confirmed that all subject-specific label requirements are assessed in addition to ASIIN's generic standards for degree programmes, which incorporate ESG Part 1. The panel also underlined that SAR templates for each review method were structured to follow ESG Part 1.

10. The Register Committee was therefore satisfied that ESG Part 1 is sufficiently addressed in ASIIN's combined ("piggybacking") procedures.

ESG 2.3 – Implementing processes

11. In its last review the Register Committee noted that ASIIN's policies were not always followed in practice, i.e. use of on-site visits in evaluations and use of evaluation results in programme accreditations. In its current review, the panel stated that it did not find any evidence of deviations from the prescribed procedures and that policies are implemented consistently.

12. The panel, however, remarked that ASIIN could provide better guidance about the site visit schedule and ensure more transparency in the processing of requests deemed potentially problematic from countries of higher education institutions outside of the European Higher Education Area (see also under ESG 3.1).

13. Notwithstanding the above remarks, the Register Committee concurred with the panel's conclusion that ASIIN complies with the standard.

ESG 2.7 – Complaints and appeals

14. The Register Committee considered the panel's findings that show that ASIIN's appeals and complaints processes are not well differentiated and as a result not consistently used, i.e. the institutional accreditation handbook discuss complaints procedure although what is described is the means to appeal a decision, whereas the handbooks for the programme accreditation and certification processes mention appeals procedure, the name of the Appeals/Complaints Committee appear to have four different permutation. The panel further comments on the agency's lack of understanding of the two different concepts.

15. In its response to the review report (19/07/2021) ASIIN's stated that it has revised its documents and website, employing the right terminology. While the Register Committee welcomed ASIIN's corrections, the Committee found the panel's concerns have not been fully address, as the lack of understanding of the two concepts may affect the agency's ability to effectively handle both appeals and complains for all its activities.

16. The Register Committee therefore concurred with the review panel's view and concluded that ASIIN complies only partially with ESG 2.7.

ESG 3.1 – Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance

17. In its last decision, the Register Committee noted that ASIIN continued to use the term evaluation for type 2 evaluations against the panel's

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recommendation, and thus the separation between activities within the scope of the ESG and those that are carried out as type-2 evaluations remained unclear.

18. In its review report the panel considered that the difference made by ASIIN in various documents between type 1 evaluation and type 2 evaluation sufficiently differentiated between accreditation and consultancy.

19. The panel further noted that ASIIN had a policy not to conduct accreditation for those institutions/ programmes at which consultancy activities were carried out, and that this was adhered to in practice (p.31). The Committee therefore concluded that this shortcoming has been addressed.

20. The Register Committee noted that ASIIN's Board of Directors consists exclusively of representatives of member organisations/institutions of ASIIN. The involvement of a diverse set of stakeholders (including students) in the governance of the agency is, however, ensured within the technical committees, Accreditation Commission and Certification Commission.

21. Considering ASIIN's expansion of its external QA activities to other areas the panel underlined that ASIIN should rethink its current structure and broaden its competences (p.16). The panel recommended a stronger involvement of the Board of Directors in the strategic direction of the agency and the monitoring of its strategic goals, while at the same time expanding its membership to also include external stakeholders (including a student member). The Committee underlined that recommendation of the panel.

ESG 3.3 – Independence

22. The Register Committee noted that the members of ASIIN's technical committees can simultaneously hold the position of an external reviewer for ASIIN's review panels, which would put them in a conflict of interest when discussing or assisting to the discussion of the reports prepared by the same panel they have been members of.

23. The Register Committee concurs with the review panel, that ASIIN should avoid concurrent committee and expert panel membership – regardless of the specified abstention from decisions of the technical committee – and instead permit committee members to reactivate their role as an expert reviewer only once their term on the committee had ended.

24. Considering that the current arrangements does not fully safeguard an independent decision making, the Register Committee can not follow the review panel's conclusion of compliance but considers that ASIIN complies only partially with ESG 3.3.

ESG 3.4 – Thematic analysis

25. In its last renewal of registration on EQAR, the Register Committee noted that ASIIN only partially fulfilled the requirement of the standard, since ASIIN did not conduct such analysis on a regular basis and the

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prepared analysis and studies contained only elements of what is understood as thematic analysis.

26. In its current review report, the panel commends ASIIN for its efforts in regularly developing thematic analysis through its impact studies which provide significant insights on the agency's external QA activities. While the panel finds that ASIIN could improve the dissemination of its impact studies among stakeholders, the panel is satisfied that the requirement of the standard is met.

27. Having addressed the earlier concerns in its compliance with ESG 3.4, the Register Committee concurred with the panel's conclusion that ASIIN now complies with the standard.

28. For the remaining standards, the Register Committee was able to concur with the review panel's analysis and conclusion without further comments.

Conclusion:

29. Based on the external review report and the considerations above, the Register Committee concluded that ASIIN demonstrated compliance with the ESG (Parts 2 and 3) as follows:

Standard	Review panel conclusion	Register Committee conclusion
2.1	Full compliance	Compliance
2.2	Full compliance	Compliance
2.3	Substantial compliance	Compliance
2.4	Substantial compliance	Compliance
2.5	Full compliance	Compliance
2.6	Full compliance	Compliance
2.7	Partial compliance	Partial compliance
3.1	Substantial compliance	Compliance
3.2	Full compliance	Compliance
3.3	Substantial compliance	Partial compliance
3.4	Substantial compliance	Compliance
3.5	Full compliance	Compliance
3.6	Substantial compliance	Compliance
3.7	(not expected)	Compliance (by virtue of applying)

30. The Register Committee considered that ASIIN only achieved partial compliance with some standards. In its holistic judgement, the Register Committee concluded that these are specific and limited issues, but that ASIIN continues to comply substantially with the ESG as a whole.

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31. The Register Committee therefore approved the application for renewed ASIIN's inclusion on the Register. ASIIN's renewed inclusion shall be valid until 31/08/2126¹.

32. The Register Committee further underlined that ASIIN is expected to address the issues mentioned appropriately and to resolve them at the earliest opportunity.

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¹ Inclusion is valid for five years from the date of the external review report, see §4.1 of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.



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Your sign

Our sign
mm/GF

Name
Dr. Iring Wasser

Datum
19.07.2021

Dear Mina Dordevic,

many thanks for the detailed report of the peers in the procedure for our continuous registration by EQAR. We also like to thank the peers for the good atmosphere they created in all discussion rounds and for providing their remarks, which are very helpful. We will take up the recommendations and suggestions of the peers for the further development of our internal quality management.

In the following, please find only a few comments on our part, especially regarding ESG 2.7 where meanwhile we have already implemented the necessary changes.

Regarding ESG 2.7

Recommendation of the panel:

The panel recommends that ASIIN uses the guidelines of ESG 2.7 to ensure that its processes differentiate between a complaint and an appeal and revises its procedure accordingly.

The panel recommends that the agency ensures that the body that is responsible for considering complaints and appeals is referred to consistently by one title across all internal and external documentation, including the website and handbooks.

Comment

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We are sorry for the irritation caused by using an inconsistent terminology. We have meanwhile corrected this on the website as well as in the criteria for institutional accreditation and certification following the terminology in the criteria for programme accreditation. Additionally, the panel is now consistently referred to as "Appeals Committee".

Appeals Committee - ASIIN

0.3 Criteria for the Accrediation of Degree Programmes 2015-12-10.pdf (asiin.de)

0.4 Institutional Accreditation Evaluation Criteria for the ASIIN System Seal 2021-06-18.pdf

Standards for the Certification of Further Education and Training 2021-06-18.pdf (asiin.de)

Regarding ESG 2.3

Recommendation of the panel:

The panel recommends that ASIIN redesigns the template for site visits to make sure that they are accurate in mentioning the involvement of external stakeholders

Comment

The schedule for the onsite visit published on our website has been amended and contains the "Meeting with partners from the industry/private sector" at the first day of the audit which is a standard of our accreditation procedures..

ASIIN schedule onsite visit HS Studiengang Datum

Best Regards



Dr. Iring Wasser
Managing Director