

Report

on the decision of the Accreditation Council, of 22.06.2006, on the application of the Accreditation Agency for Study Programmes of Engineering, Information Science, Natural Sciences and Mathematics (reg ass) (ASIIN) for reaccreditation, of 21.02.2006

issued on 26 January 2009

This report was compiled on request of ASIIN. The purpose of the report is to demonstrate why the Accreditation Council concluded that ASIIN complies with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). For this purpose the following two documents are adapted according to the sequence of the ESG:

- Decision of the Accreditation Council, of 22.06.2006, on the application of the Accreditation Agency for Study Programmes of Engineering, Information Science, Natural Sciences and Mathematics (reg ass) (ASIIN) for reaccreditation, of 21.02.2006 (*Referred to hereafter as “extract from the decision.”*)

and for further information about the reasons for the decision

- Survey report with decision recommendation as to the application of the Accreditation Agency for Study Programmes in Engineering, Informatics, Natural Sciences and Mathematics [Akkreditierungsagentur für Studiengänge der Ingenieurwissenschaften, der Informatik, der Naturwissenschaften und der Mathematik e. V.] (ASIIN) for re-accreditation dated 21st February 2006 (*Referred to hereafter as: Extract from survey report*)

Please note:

This report invariably contains parts from the above mentioned original documents which were only put in new order. No changes like updating information etc. have been made. This is not to be considered as a new evaluation report.

With its decision from 22 June 2006 the German Accreditation Council granted ASIIN re-accreditation under certain conditions. These conditions have been fulfilled meanwhile, which was certified by the Accreditation Council by decision of 15 February 2007

The report comprises three chapters:

Chapter "A) The accreditation decision" contains the relevant paragraphs of the accreditation decision of the German Accreditation Council on ASIIN, dated from 22 June 2006

Chapter "B) The review process" contains paragraphs from the Survey report and describes the course of the accreditation process.

Chapter "C) Findings" contains the relevant paragraphs from the "survey report" which relate to the respective standards of the ESG. This chapter starts with a short description of the agency.

A) The accreditation decision

Extract from the decision:

I.

The Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany ('Foundation') accredits, in accordance with section 2 para. 1 No. 1 of the 'Act on the Creation of a Foundation' 'Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany' , the Accreditation Agency for Study Programmes of Engineering, Information Science, Natural Sciences and Mathematics (reg ass) (ASIIN) pursuant to the following provisions, thus granting it the authority to accredit study programmes by awarding the seal of the foundation.

II.

The decision in accordance with the above Item I. takes effect on 1 July 2006, but subject to the resolving, yet non-reactive condition that an agreement with the foundation pursuant to section 3 of the act for creation of a foundation 'Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany' be signed by 30 September 2006. In addition, the decision is subject to a resolving condition in the event of the invalidity of the above-mentioned agreement as a whole or of specific provisions thereof, with the resolving effect taking place for the period commencing on the day of any such judgement becoming incontestable.

III.

The accreditation and the authority pursuant to the above Item I. are granted for a term of five years, with the right of revocation according to Item V. reserved. According to section 1 para. 1 clause 2 of the resolution 'Decisions of the Accreditation Council: Types and Impacts ' of 15.12.2005, the accreditation expires on 30 September 2011. Should ENQA decide by 31.12.2009 that, according to general European standards, accreditation with a longer term than five years is admissible, the accreditation term will then automatically extend to the maximum term admissible according to general European standards, but no longer than by another three years."

Note: As the Accreditation Council did not include a special chapter concerning the ESG in the decision on the application of ASIIN, the following general statement from the decisions on the other German agencies can be helpful to understand chapter C of this report:

“To facilitate the international recognition of decisions made by the accreditation council and the accreditation agencies, the accreditation council primarily applied, for the adoption of their accreditation criteria dated 15 December 2005, the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, such as those criteria for higher education adopted by the competent ministers from the Bologna succession conference in Bergen in May of 2005. The following overview shows where ESG Standards 3.1 to 3.8 find their equivalent in the Criteria for the Accreditation of Accreditation Agencies:

ESG, 2.6 Part 3: European standards and guidelines for the external quality assurance agencies	Criteria for the Accreditation of Accreditation Agencies (decision dated 15 December 2005, Criteria); “Law establishing a foundation ‘Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Courses in Germany’” (ASG)
2.6.1	Criteria of Part I, Criteria of Part II
2.6.2	ASG § 2 no. 1.1; Criteria 2.1 and 2.2
2.6.3	ASG § 2 no. 1.1 and § 9; Revision Field 1
2.6.4	Revision Field 5
2.6.5	Revision Field 1
2.6.6	Criteria 2.12, 2.13 and 16.2
2.6.7	Criteria of Part II; Revision Fields 3 and 4; Criteria 2.9, 15, 16 and 18.1
2.6.8	ASG § 1 no. 1; Revision Fields 4 and 6; Criteria 1.1, 17.2 and 19.1

“

B) The review process

Extract from survey report:

“2. Basic Principles of the Procedure

2.1 Statutory Mandate

According to § 2 section 1 no. 1 of the law regulating the establishment of a foundation ‘Foundation for Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany’ [‘Stiftung zur Akkreditierung von Studiengängen in Deutschland’] it is the foundation’s mandate to accredit and re-accredit accreditation agencies, thereby bestowing the authorisation upon them to accredit courses of studies by awarding the foundation’s seal.

In its meeting of 15th December 2005, the accreditation council adopted ‘Criteria for the accreditation of accreditation agencies’ providing the basis for accreditation decisions.

2.2 International Recognition

To further the international recognition of the decisions of the accreditation council and the accreditation agencies, the accreditation council included the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) in the adopted accreditation criteria. Those criteria were adopted by the ministries and ministers responsible for university education at the Bologna follow-up conference in Bergen in May 2005. Further sources for the wording of the criteria were the Code of Good Practice of the European Consortiums for Accreditation of 3rd December 2004 and Guidelines of Good Practice of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) of April 2005.

Furthermore, on 15th December 2005 the accreditation council stipulated the course of the procedure to be carried out in three steps upon the basis of the resolution ‘Implementation of the Re-accreditation of the Agencies ACQUIN, ASIIN and ZevA’.

- Application with written explanatory statement of ASIIN*
- Survey and visit to the location by a group of experts (one member of the accreditation council, one national expert, one international expert, one student member) and survey of two sets of documentation of the procedure by the foundation office*
- Decision to be made by the accreditation council after a hearing*

3. Course of Procedure

The ASIIN agency [Akkreditierungsagentur für Studiengänge der Ingenieurwissenschaften, der Informatik, der Naturwissenschaften und der Mathematik e. V., ASIIN] submitted the application for re-accreditation as an accreditation agency with their letter of 21st February 2006 to the accreditation council.

In their letter dated 23rd February 2006, ASIIN presented the reasons for their application next to additional documents. Within the course of the procedure, ASIIN subsequently filed further documents or rendered already submitted documents more precisely on 5th April 2006 upon the experts' requests.

On the basis of the accreditation council's resolution dated 2nd – 10th January 2006 (circulating resolution) the following experts were appointed:

- *Gerd Köhler, Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft [education and science trade union], member of the accreditation council (Chairman)*
- *Dr. Günther Heitmann, Technical University of Berlin, national expert*
- *Professor Dr. Helmut Konrad, Graz University, international expert*
- *Lars Schewe, Technical University of Darmstadt, student member*

On the part of the foundation office, the experts were supported by the managing director Dr. Achim Hopbach.

On 23rd and 24th March, the experts visited the location in Frankfurt a. M. for the first time.

Having held preliminary talks on 23rd March 2006, the group of experts took part in the meeting of the Accreditation Commission I on 23rd March 2006 and on the following day in the joint meeting of the Accreditation Commissions I and II. The experts had duly received the respective documents prior to the meeting. After the joint meeting of the Accreditation Commissions, a discussion was held with the vice-chairman of the Accreditation Commission I, Professor Dr. Hannemann (on behalf of the chairman who had fallen ill), the chairman of the Accreditation Commission II, Professor Dr. von Hoyningen-Huene and Dr. Iring Wasser, managing director of ASIIN. Afterwards, the impressions gained so far were discussed by the experts, as they did in a meeting in the evening of 23rd March 2006, in an internal dialogue.

On 11th April 2006 another discussion of the group of experts (without Professor Dr. Konrad) with the chairman of ASIIN, Professor Dr. Burkhardt Rauhut as well as

Ms Birgit Hanny and Mr Christoph Heumann took place in Bonn. This second discussion served above all the purpose of the clarification of open questions in connection with the written explanatory statement regarding the application for re-accreditation.

The office subjected the documentation relating to two accreditation procedures filed on the 23rd February 2006 to a critical examination. (Annex 3)

Within the framework of its 47th conference on 5th May 2006, the accreditation council heard the chairman of the Accreditation Commission II, Professor Dr. von Hoyningen-Huene, the vice-chairman, Dr. Klockner, and the managing director, Dr. Wasser.

At the time of the conference, the explanatory statement of ASIIN and a preliminary statement of the chairman of the group of experts were available to the accreditation council.”

C) Findings

Extract from survey report:

“4. The ASIIN agency [Akkreditierungsagentur für Studiengänge der Ingenieurwissenschaften, der Informatik, der Naturwissenschaften und der Mathematik e. V.]

4.1 Development

ASIIN was created on 19th February 2002 on the basis of the fusion of two existing accreditation agencies accredited by the accreditation council, the ASI [Akkreditierungsagentur für Studiengänge der Ingenieurwissenschaften und der Informatik] and the A- CBC [Akkreditierungsagentur für die Studiengänge Chemie, Biochemie und Chemieingenieurwesen an Universitäten und Fachhochschulen]. The merged agency was accredited by the accreditation council with effect from 12th December 2002 to 11th December 2005. On 25th April 2005, the accreditation was extended until 30th June 2006, due to transfer of the accreditation council into a public-law foundation and the accompanying revision of the principles of procedure and criteria of the German accreditation system.

4.2 Organisation

The agency is supported by an autonomous, independent exclusively non-profit association.

The association consists of four member groups:

- 1. Coordination group of the universities, organised by the Akkreditierungsverband für Ingenieurstudiengänge e.V. – AVI (voluntary union of 33 national and foreign universities of applied sciences focussing on engineering sciences)*
- 2. Coordination group of the technical colleges within German technical colleges (work group of the general meeting of the technical colleges at the conference of university vice-chancellors)*
- 3. Industrial associations and umbrella associations of the social partners*
- 4. Technical and scientific associations and professional organisations*

The bodies of the association comprise the general meeting, the managing committee, the Accreditation Commissions, the Technical Committees and the office.

The general meeting approves of the budget, discharges the management and decides on the charter or rules of internal procedure, respectively.

The managing committee appoints the Accreditation Commission, accepts new members and concludes agreements with other national and international accreditation institutions.

Two Accreditation Commissions share the decision competence as to accreditation matters, one for engineering sciences and informatics, the second for natural sciences and mathematics. The particular responsibilities are as follows:

- Stipulation of the principles of procedure and standards of accreditation*
- Taking the necessary measures to ensure international recognition of the accredited final degrees*
- Appointment of the auditors under consideration of the suggestions made by the technical committees*
- Adopting resolutions as to accreditation applications on the basis of the survey reports of the auditors and the Technical Committees*
- Appointment of the Technical Committees*

The members of the Accreditation Commissions are appointed by the managing committee and are composed of – according to ASIIN – one third each of representatives of the universities, technical colleges and the industry. Further members of the commissions are international advisors, representatives of students and employees.

In addition, ASIIN has 13 Technical Committees (mechanical engineering/process engineering; electrical engineering/information technology; civil engineering/surveying; informatics; physical technologies, materials and processes; economic engineering; economic informatics; agricultural and nutritional sciences and landscape management; chemistry/technological chemistry, life sciences; geosciences, mathematics, physics).

Responsibilities of the Technical Committees:

- a) Development and revision of standards*
- b) Elaboration of the documentation*
- c) Instruction of auditors*
- d) Proposals of auditors*
- e) Taking note of the auditors' reports*
- f) Statement on the auditors' report*

4.3 Field of Activities

ASIIN accredits interdisciplinary courses of studies of engineering sciences, informatics, natural sciences and mathematics. According to ASIIN, they act on the basis of a technically oriented understanding of quality, in which Input and Outcome interact and are responsible factors for the level of educational quality. The examination approach of ASIIN was based on the stipulation and revision of general technical input and output-oriented quality standards, they claimed. Moreover, the international recognition of the courses of studies accredited by ASIIN had a high priority in the strategic planning of the management of the association, it was said.

5. Assessment

The assessment is based on the criteria for the accreditation of accreditation agencies [‘Kriterien für die Akkreditierung von Akkreditierungsagenturen’] adopted by the accreditation council on 15th December 2005, requiring the agencies to issue written statements on a total of 20 revision fields. ASIIN has complied with this request in their application for re-accreditation dated 21st February 2006. After the group of experts forwarded their queries, the statements were specified in the letter dated 5th April and in the discussion with Prof. Dr. Rauhut on 11th April 2006, based on which the group of experts worded the following statement.”

ESG Standard 3.1 (Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education):

The external quality assurance of agencies should take into account the presence and effectiveness of the external quality assurance processes described in Part 2 of the European Standards and Guidelines.

Guidelines:

The standards for external quality assurance contained in Part 2 provide a valuable basis for the external quality assessment process. The standards reflect best practices and experiences gained through the development of external quality assurance in Europe since the early 1990s. It is therefore important that these standards are integrated into the processes applied by external quality assurance agencies towards the higher education institutions. The standards for external quality assurance should together with the standards for external quality assurance agencies constitute the basis for professional and credible external quality assurance of higher education institutions.

Extract from survey report:

“Revision Field 7: System Control of the University

ASIIN states that ... “in relation to structural and formal requirements...(e.g. module structure, awarding of credit points, maximum burden)...(yet) no uniform, joint quality understanding of the applying universities between them and between auditors and universities can be observed (6).

- The experts are of the opinion that the accreditation council and the accreditation agencies must discuss the measures with which the implementation of the new procedures can be improved.*
- Teachers, students and the persons responsible for the (self) management of the universities must be better prepared and qualified for the reforms, if they plan to cause sustainable changes.*

Revision Field 8: Educational Objectives

In the experts’ opinion, it is a particular concern of the Bologna process to raise the topic of the relationships between study period and profession, university and labour market: Against this background, the universities are called upon to state reasons for the introduction of the new courses of studies.

This is virgin soil for most of the universities and many faculties which is proven by the largely differing statements on their educational goals.

The accreditation agencies cannot and ought not predefine positions for the universities neither as to the professional development of the scientific disciplines nor to the development of the labour market, claims ASIIN. However, they are to initiate the examination of such topics and to request a description of the applicants of

their position, claims the accreditation council. Many of the university statements read by the experts do not attest to an open debate. They mostly remain formulaic and vague.

- The experts suggest that the accreditation council and the accreditation agencies discuss the question how the discussion on the educational objectives, in particular the professional perspectives of BA and MA graduates, can be intensified. ASIIN is to present a paper on the topic by the end of 2006.*
- The same applies to the debate about 'learning-outcomes' and the quality levels thusly strived for. The introduction of the 'National Qualification Framework' ['Nationaler Qualifikationsrahmen'] and the 'European Qualification Frameworks' have not yet got beyond insider circles. The transition to competence orientation is taking place in a very hesitant manner. (vide Revision Field 12)*
- As the acceptance of the consecutive study programmes and the new final universities degrees was not universally safeguarded, the respective regulations for the transition from the bachelor to the master courses would have to be precisely defined and well-founded. According to the experts, penetrability would have to be ensured as far as possible, in order to avoid de-qualification vis-à-vis the old study programmes and dead ends with a view to labour market policy.*

Revision Field 9/10: Feasibility of the Studies

As there are large differences in the definition of educational objectives, contents and the quality rating of modules from university to university and subject to subject, orientation aids need to be established in the a dialogue between the universities and the accreditation institutions. They are to facilitate the development of study programmes and to safeguard connectivity of the study performances rendered, when changing universities. In this respect the students reported on a number of mobility obstacles.

The examination of feasibility requires empirical studies of the factual study burden, which are so far largely missing. They need to consider the social and financial framework conditions of the students.

- The experts recommend the participation of ASIIN and the other accreditation agencies in the development of an adequate statistic relating to the*

course of the study programmes, which will be facilitated by the possibility of ex post accreditations in the future.

- *In this context, it will be sensible to develop an adequate examination statistic, which will inform about the examination burden of teachers and students in connection with the introduction of modules and credit points.*

Revision Field 11: Equipment of the Study Programmes

With the purpose to provide the students with more security in the choice of the location of their studies, ASIIN inquires after the personal, factual and financial equipment of the accredited study programmes in its accreditation procedure.

In the random testing of the question according to which criteria the equipment with personnel and the sustainability of the theory are assessed, doubts arose among the experts, which were also addressed in the discussions with the ASIIN panels. It must be ensured that the accreditation of courses offered by state and public universities demands for the same strict criteria and standards.

In the accreditation application for the online study programme 'Media-Informatics' it is said that 'due to the new development of the faculty of informatics, the MD.H (Medien Design.Hochschule), as a public university, is not in a position to employ professors to the desired extent before the course has enough students. All the more so....since a significantly smaller number of enrolments was registered with 24 students each per semester in the developing phase' (application dated 13th January 2005, p. 18). Moreover, it is said that 'the appointment of tutors is not possible at present'.

It is not clear to the experts, how under such circumstances the shown quality of the courses offered can be safeguarded in such a way that the students can complete their studies with a final examination. The operation of the courses is maintained by one scientist who has (not yet) been awarded a doctorate and 21 assistant lecturers. Owing to the want of tutors, neither advice nor study groups are possible, without which the online locations cannot cope either. The information provided by ASIIN that the Hochschulverbund Virtuelle Fachhochschule (VFH) network guaranteed for the quality of the MD.H course, was not comprehensible for the experts.

...."

ESG Standard 3.2 (Official status):

Agencies should be formally recognised by competent public authorities in the European Higher Education Area as agencies with responsibilities for external quality assurance and should have an established legal basis. They should comply with any requirements of the legislative jurisdictions within which they operate.

Extract from survey report:

“4. The ASIIN agency [Akkreditierungsagentur für Studiengänge der Ingenieurwissenschaften, der Informatik, der Naturwissenschaften und der Mathematik e. V.]

4.1 Development

ASIIN was created on 19th February 2002 on the basis of the fusion of two existing accreditation agencies accredited by the accreditation council, the ASII [Akkreditierungsagentur für Studiengänge der Ingenieurwissenschaften und der Informatik] and the A- CBC [Akkreditierungsagentur für die Studiengänge Chemie, Biochemie und Chemieingenieurwesen an Universitäten und Fachhochschulen]. The merged agency was accredited by the accreditation council with effect from 12th December 2002 to 11th December 2005. On 25th April 2005, the accreditation was extended until 30th June 2006, due to transfer of the accreditation council into a public-law foundation and the accompanying revision of the principles of procedure and criteria of the German accreditation system.

4.2 Organisation

The agency is supported by an autonomous, independent exclusively non-profit association.

The association consists of four member groups:

- 5. Coordination group of the universities, organised by the Akkreditierungsverband für Ingenieurstudiengänge e.V. – AVI (voluntary union of 33 national and foreign universities of applied sciences focussing on engineering sciences)*
- 6. Coordination group of the technical colleges within German technical colleges (work group of the general meeting of the technical colleges at the conference of university vice-chancellors)*
- 7. Industrial associations and umbrella associations of the social partners*
- 8. Technical and scientific associations and professional organisations*

The bodies of the association comprise the general meeting, the managing committee, the Accreditation Commissions, the Technical Committees and the office.

The general meeting approves of the budget, discharges the management and decides on the charter or rules of internal procedure, respectively.

The managing committee appoints the Accreditation Commission, accepts new members and concludes agreements with other national and international accreditation institutions.

Two Accreditation Commissions share the decision competence as to accreditation matters, one for engineering sciences and informatics, the second for natural sciences and mathematics. The particular responsibilities are as follows:

- Stipulation of the principles of procedure and standards of accreditation*
- Taking the necessary measures to ensure international recognition of the accredited final degrees*
- Appointment of the auditors under consideration of the suggestions made by the technical committees*
- Adopting resolutions as to accreditation applications on the basis of the survey reports of the auditors and the Technical Committees*
- Appointment of the Technical Committees*

The members of the Accreditation Commissions are appointed by the managing committee and are composed of – according to ASIIN – one third each of representatives of the universities, technical colleges and the industry. Further members of the commissions are international advisors, representatives of students and employees.

In addition, ASIIN has 13 Technical Committees (mechanical engineering/process engineering; electrical engineering/information technology; civil engineering/surveying; informatics; physical technologies, materials and processes; economic engineering; economic informatics; agricultural and nutritional sciences and landscape management; chemistry/technological chemistry, life sciences; geosciences, mathematics, physics).

Responsibilities of the Technical Committees:

- g) Development and revision of standards*
- h) Elaboration of the documentation*
- i) Instruction of auditors*
- j) Proposals of auditors*

- k) *Taking note of the auditors' reports*
- l) *Statement on the auditors' report"*

ESG Standard 3.3 (Activities):

Standard:

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities (at institutional or programme level) on a regular basis.

Guidelines:

These may involve evaluation, review, audit, assessment, accreditation or other similar activities and should be part of the core functions of the agency.

Extract from survey report:

"4.3 Field of Activities

ASIIN accredits interdisciplinary courses of studies of engineering sciences, informatics, natural sciences and mathematics. According to ASIIN, they act on the basis of a technically oriented understanding of quality, in which Input and Outcome interact and are responsible factors for the level of educational quality. The examination approach of ASIIN was based on the stipulation and revision of general technical input and output-oriented quality standards, they claimed. Moreover, the international recognition of the courses of studies accredited by ASIIN had a high priority in the strategic planning of the management of the association, it was said."

ESG Standard 3.4 (Resources):

Standard:

Agencies should have adequate and proportional resources, both human and financial, to enable them to organise and run their external quality assurance process(es) in an effective and efficient manner, with appropriate provision for the development of their processes and procedures.

Extract from survey report:

"Revision Field 5: Agency Personnel

Next to the managing director, ASIIN employs seven research associates, among whom one fully qualified lawyer. Three of the employments are unlimited, four are limited to two years each.

In addition, there is one person in charge of secretarial work and fund control. Moreover, students are employed.

The seven (as per 1st April 2006) research associates have a minimum of one university degree in biology, geography, veterinary medicine, history, law, regional

sciences, politics and economics. It is striking that the courses of studies ASIIN primarily concentrates on are not represented.

The employees participating in the consultations have made competent contributions to the technical discussions and have shown a large degree of commitment.

- *As there is a high fluctuation in personnel, the experts recommend improving the working conditions, systematic qualification programmes and additional measures for personnel development for the employees (end of 2006).”*

ESG Standard 3.5 (Mission Statement):

Standard:

Agencies should have clear and explicit goals and objectives for their work, contained in a publicly available statement.

Guidelines:

These statements should describe the goals and objectives of agencies quality assurance processes, the division of labour with relevant stakeholders in higher education, especially the higher education institutions, and the cultural and historical context of their work. The statements should make clear that the external quality assurance process is a major activity of the agency and that there exists a systematic approach to achieving its goals and objectives. There should also be documentation to demonstrate how the statements are translated into a clear policy and management plan.

Extract from survey report:

“Revision Field 1: Understanding of the Task of Accreditation

ASIIN’s understanding of quality is expressed in the general criteria and basic principles of procedure [‘Allgemeine Kriterien und Verfahrensgrundsätze’] and the Subject-specific Criteria [‘Fachspezifisch ergänzenden Hinweisen (FEH)’].

It was ‘developed and defined in a continuous discussing process by persons within and outside the agency.’ (1) Participants are the members of the Accreditation Commissions and Technical Committees ... ‘; all in all around 165 persons coming from the universities, technical colleges, the circle of students and professionals employed with companies and private or public organisations’, according to ASIIN. (2)

[..] It is recognised by the experts that ASIIN adopts competence orientation and states ‘learning outcomes’ in the ‘General Criteria’. However, they see a need for adjustment with a view to the ‘Subject-specific Criteria’ [‘Fachspezifische ergänzende Hinweise’], which are far too much characterised by outdated and largely input-oriented ‘check lists’.

[...]

- *The ‘Subject-specific Criteria’ are to be revised by the end of 2006, with the purpose to word the educational objectives in accord with the General Criteria and in relation to the national and international reference framework in the form of ‘Learning Outcomes’.*¹

ESG Standard 3.6 (Independence):

Standard:

Agencies should be independent to the extent both that they have autonomous responsibility for their operations and that the conclusions and recommendations made in their reports cannot be influenced by third parties such as higher education institutions, ministries or other stakeholders.

Guidelines:

An agency will need to demonstrate its independence through measures, such as:

- Its operational independence from higher education institutions and governments is guaranteed in official documentation (e.g. instruments of governance or legislative acts).
- The definition and operation of its procedures and methods, the nomination and appointment of external experts and the determination of the outcomes of its quality assurance processes are undertaken autonomously and independently from governments, higher education institutions, and organs of political influence.
- While relevant stakeholders in higher education, particularly students/learners, are consulted in the course of quality assurance processes, the final outcomes of the quality assurance processes remain the responsibility of the agency.

Extract from survey report:

*“**Revision Field 1:** In the discussions, the problems of the term ‘majority-compliant understanding of quality’ were expounded: Who defines it? Which role do professional associations and bodies play? Which chances do ‘lateral thinkers’ have, who do not share the ‘majority-compliant understanding of quality’ and therefore do not belong to the ‘predominant theory’? [...]*

- *It must be ensured that creative and innovative positions are fostered in the reform process and that the relevant study programmes can achieve accreditation*
- *The appointment of panels’ members must be regulated more clearly. The impression that the mainstream is continued by way of self-cooptation must not be created.*

¹ This recommendation has led to a condition in the decision, which has been fulfilled meanwhile.

In particular in the co-operation with ASAP, it must be safeguarded by means of a transparent appeal procedure that a 'dependence on instructions' is not created. The contract concluded with ASAP is not acceptable in its current version.

The same applies to the co-operation with ASBau.²"

ESG Standard 3.7 (External quality assurance criteria and processes):

Standard:

The processes, criteria and procedures used by agencies should be pre-defined and publicly available. These processes will normally be expected to include:

- a self-assessment or equivalent procedure by the subject of the quality assurance process;
- an external assessment by a group of experts, including, as appropriate, (a) student member(s), and site visits as decided by the agency;
- publication of a report, including any decisions, recommendations or other formal outcomes;
- a follow-up procedure to review actions taken by the subject of the quality assurance process in the light of any recommendations contained in the report.

Guidelines:

Agencies may develop and use other processes and procedures for particular purposes. Agencies should pay careful attention to their declared principles at all times, and ensure both that their requirements and processes are managed professionally and that their conclusions and decisions are reached in a consistent manner, even though the decisions are formed by groups of different people. Agencies that make formal quality assurance decisions, or conclusions which have formal consequences should have an appeals procedure. The nature and form of the appeals procedure should be determined in the light of the constitution of each agency.

Extract from survey report:

"Revision Field 4: Reporting

Upon completion of the accreditation procedure, the university is to be presented with a report containing a description of the procedure and the survey report.

Revision Field 15: Acquisition – Consulting – Accreditation

The accreditation council imposed the condition on the accreditation agencies not only to separate accreditation and evaluation clearly from each other, but also consulting and coaching on the one hand and the accreditation on the other. It is therefore the objective to ensure the independence of the accreditation procedure.

ASIIN restricts itself accordingly to the conduction of accreditation procedures. No additional consulting services are offered, writes ASIIN (7). The 'accompaniment of the applicants' in the 'preparation of the accreditation procedure' 'is restricted to

² This recommendation has led to a condition in the decision, which has been fulfilled meanwhile.

the formal pre-examination of the application documents, to ensure that the self-reports contain all information relevant for the auditors.'

- *The experts request ASIIN to report about any possible other business fields (international activities, accreditations without the accreditation council's seal...) by the June meeting of the Accreditation Commission.*
- *The experts request ASIIN to render its positions as to the accreditation of doctorate courses. (8)*

Revision Field 16: Conduction/Relevant Interested Parties

If – like demanded in criterion 2.9 of the revision fields of the accreditation council, 'the interested parties [in particular scientists, students, representatives of professional practice] relevant for fulfilment of performance ... are represented', is not clearly shown in the updated overview of the members of the panels.

- *The collaboration with the students' accreditation pool ['Studentischer Akkreditierungspool'] has improved considerably compared with the year before. It would be appreciated by the experts, if the sustainability of this cooperation could be safeguarded beyond the re-accreditation phase.*

The standing rules of ASIIN provide for four member groups with an equal amount of votes in the general meeting. It remains unclear, who appoints the representatives of the third group 'central associations of the industry and social partners' to the Technical Committees and the audit teams, and how the representation of professional practice is regulated.

- *The experts request a clear survey of the representation of the employees, professional practice and the 'central associations of social partners' to be submitted by the June meeting of the Accreditation Commission: Who is a member, suggested by whom, appointed or named by whom.*
- *The experts call upon ASIIN to identify in the year-end accounts which efforts were made, with which results, to comply with the requirements of gender mainstreaming."*

ESG Standard 3.8 (Accountability procedures):

Standard:

Agencies should have in place procedures for their own accountability.

Guidelines:

These procedures are expected to include the following:

1. A published policy for the assurance of the quality of the agency itself, made available on its website;
2. Documentation which demonstrates that:
 - the agency's processes and results reflect its mission and goals of quality assurance;
 - the agency has in place, and enforces, a no-conflict-of-interest mechanism in the work of its external experts;
 - the agency has reliable mechanisms that ensure the quality of any activities and material produced by subcontractors, if some or all of the elements in its quality assurance procedure are subcontracted to other parties;
 - the agency has in place internal quality assurance procedures which include an internal feedback mechanism (i.e. means to collect feedback from its own staff and council/board); an internal reflection mechanism (i.e. means to react to internal and external recommendations for improvement); and an external feedback mechanism (i.e. means to collect feedback from experts and reviewed institutions for future development) in order to inform and underpin its own development and improvement.
3. A mandatory cyclical external review of the agency's activities at least once every five years.

Extract from survey report:

“Revision Field 4: Reporting

[...] The accreditation council will also be forwarded this report. The names of the auditors will be stated in the accreditation report and thereby will be disclosed to the applicants and the Accreditation Commission (4).”

Revision Field 6: Quality Management

According to ASIIN, there are no formal requirements for the procedure of self-evaluation of the panels and teams of auditors. Any emerging strengths and weaknesses of the criteria and codes of procedure are processed in direct discussions, writes ASIIN. ‘With relatively little organisational expense...(one could thus)....(reach) a continuous improvement process, based on proposals put forward by the numerous participating auditors, responsible persons on the part of clients and the members of the panels.’ (5)

- *The experts encourage ASIIN subjecting their work to a regular self-evaluation and documentation of the results.³*
- *The work of the auditors is also to be evaluated by way of interviewing the applicants (universities/faculties/teachers/students). The ‘Customer Satisfaction Surveys’ presented, neither seem to be representative nor particularly meaningful. The statements given by the accredited institutions, with and*

³ This recommendation has led to a condition in the decision, which has been fulfilled meanwhile.

without having been imposed conditions upon, and those of the rejected ones need to be identifiable.

- *Furthermore, the expert recommend introducing a systematic qualification or further education measure, respectively, for the experts by 31st December 2006.”*