Accreditation System and Joint Programs: German Experiences

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Part I: German accreditation system
Part II: Provisions for joint programs
Part III: Transnational Programmes – European Approaches
Part IV: German experiences with joint programs/HEIs abroad
Basic Information ZEvA

- Founded 1995 to conduct evaluations at universities in Lower Saxony; in 2000 accredited as first German accreditation agency
- Activities: program accreditation, system accreditation, evaluation and consultation, recently also certification procedures (also on international level)
- More than 3,000 study programs in Germany accredited – all subjects and in all German Länder
- Networking Europe: member in ENQA, founding member of ECA, registered in EQAR
Legal framework: federal and federal state law

Framework act for higher education (§ 9 para. 2 HRG)

Common structural guidelines of the Länder pursuant to § 9 para. 2 HRG

Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany

Agencies

Study programmes

Act for higher education of the Länder

“Study courses leading to the degrees of Bachelor and Master must be accredited.”

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“The Länder shall jointly ensure that the equivalence of corresponding course and examination credits and degrees and the possibility of transferring to other institutions of higher education are guaranteed.”

“The Länder will transfer to the Foundation the observance of their tasks in fulfilling the common structural guidelines”
Accreditation Agencies

The following agencies are authorised to award the quality seal of the Accreditation Council:

- **ACQUIN**  Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute
- **AHPGS**  Accreditation Agency for Study Programmes in Health and Social Sciences
- **AKAST**  Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Canonical Study Programmes
- **AQ Austria**  Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria, Austria
- **AQA**  Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance
- **AQAS**  Agency for Quality Assurance by Accreditation of Study Programmes
- **ASIIN**  Accreditation Agency for Degree Programmes in Engineering, Informatics/Computer Science, the Natural Sciences and Mathematics
- **evalag**  evaluation agency Baden-Württemberg
- **FIBAA**  Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation
- **OAQ**  Swiss Center of Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education
- **ZEvA**  Central Evaluation- and Accreditation Agency Hannover
The Accreditation Council has the following tasks:

- Accreditation and re-accreditation of accreditation agencies (Agencies)
- Compilation of the common and the specific structural guidelines of the Länder into binding guidelines for the Agencies,
- Regulation of minimum requirements for accreditation procedures
- Monitoring of accreditations undertaken by the agencies.
German „landscape“ of HEIs

- 387 universities in Germany with a combined student population of approx. 2.4 million. 110 are universities, 221 are universities of applied sciences (in German ‘Fachhochschulen’) and 56 are colleges of art or music.

- HEIs are either government-funded or government-accredited.

- 279 HEIs are government-funded compared with 108 private. Almost 94 % of all students are matriculated at public HEIs.

- Approx. 9.500 different undergraduate and around 6.800 postgraduate degree programmes are on offer.
Accreditation private vs state…

State universities:
- government funded (Länder) and program or system accreditation

Private universities:
- Government accredited (Länder) and program accreditation (system accreditation) and Institutional accreditation by the Wissenschaftsrat (German Council of Science and Humanities)
Foreign HEIs in Germany:

- Foreign HEIs need to obtain the (German) state approval unless they origin from a EU-member state where they are officially approved.

- Approved foreign HEIs from the EU have to indicate their study offer at least 6 months before their start at the respective ministry.

- Study programs have to be accredited!
In most states program accreditation is obligatory.

11 standards/quality criteria are defined by the accreditation council for program accreditation (in addition documents/recommendations e.g. by the KMK (Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany)).
Accreditation documents

- Rules for the Accreditation of Study Programmes and for System Accreditation (Resolution of the Accreditation Council of 08.12.2009, last amended on 20.02.2013)

- Common structural guidelines of the Länder for the accreditation of Bachelor’s and Master’s study courses (Resolution of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany of 10 October 2003 as amended on 4 February 2010)
Criteria for the Accreditation of Study Programmes (1)

- Qualification Objectives of the Study Programme Concept
- Conceptual Integration of the Study Programme in the System of Studies (*Framework of Qualification for German Degrees; Common Structural Guidelines of the Länder*)
- Study Programme Concept
- Academic Feasibility
- Examination System
- Programme-related Co-operations
Criteria for the Accreditation of Study Programmes (2)

- Facilities and Resources
- Transparency and Documentation
- Quality Assurance and Further Development
- Study Programmes with a Special Profile Demand
- Gender Justice and Equal Opportunities
Part II:

Special Provisions for the Accreditation of Joint Programmes
Joint Programmes: when is accreditation necessary?

The German university awards the degree!

In this case an accreditation according to the rules of the German Accreditation Council is required - leading to the award of the seal of the agency and the council.

Borderline case:

Study programs that offer a Double Degree option (Y-models)
Special Rules for the accreditation of Joint Programmes (1)

- It must be ensured that facilities and the organisational structure of studies at all locations adhere to the requirements.

- At least at one location of the programme an on-site visit has to take place. (...interviews with persons in charge of programme design, with students and teachers of all locations; modern forms of communication may be implied for this purpose.)

- Experts with international experience must be involved.
Special Rules for the accreditation of Joint Programmes (2)

- Procedures may be carried out in co-operation with a foreign agency.

- The agencies involved should prepare a joint catalogue of the assessment criteria to be used.

- An Accreditation Agency licensed by the Accreditation Council may recognise decisions for programme accreditation adopted by an Agency, which is not licensed by the Accreditation Council - but listed in the European Quality Assurance Register or is/are full member(s) of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).
Accreditation of Joint Programmes must integrate all partner universities whereas the accreditation decision in most cases will be only valid for one partner country.

Consequences for the program:

- in case, several work and cost intensive accreditation procedures;
- in case, different time frames of accreditation in different countries;
- in case, multiple evaluations on the basis of different and even contradictory sets of criteria;
- in the worst case: non-accreditation in some/one of the partner countries.
General acceptance of accreditation decisions of foreign agencies are so far not integrated into the procedural rules of the Accreditation Council. Still, if certain conditions are given these decisions can be accepted for accreditation in Germany.
International Programs vs National Program Accreditation (3)

Solution offered so far by the AC:

- If necessary, accreditation will be requested in each partner country.
- Procedure will be carried out with two or several Agencies that will agree on a common set of criteria and will develop a joint report.
- Acceptance of the decision of a foreign agency which is ENQA-member and/or registered with EQAR.
Part III

Transnational Programs – transnational Accreditation?

Solutions on European Level!
JOQAR-Project (ECA)

**ECA**: The European Consortium for Accreditation in higher education (ECA)

**JOQAR (Joint programmes: Quality Assurance and Recognition of degrees awarded)**: was completed in October 2013.

**Project goal**: The overall purpose of the project is to ensure that Erasmus Mundus programmes (and joint programmes in general) are facilitated in two specific areas: accreditation and recognition.

http://ecahe.eu/w/index.php/Portal:Joint_programmes
Important aspects of the JOQAR Project:

- Multilateral Agreement on the Mutual Recognition of Accreditation Results (MULTRA), until now 13 member agencies, two outside of Europe
  - NVAO - has recently recognised accreditation decisions taken by two German accreditation organisations (approx. 4000 joint programmes in the European Higher Education Area).
- Single Accreditation Procedures
- Establishment of „European Coordination Point“ for the quality assurance of Joint Programmes
Goal: transnational accreditation of Joint Programmes in one procedure, only one agency is taking over the coordination and selects the experts.

Implementation:

- Set of criteria by ECA plus recognition and application of national criteria.
- Experts coming from various countries having international experience and expertise with quality assurance.
- Decision of accreditation according to the rules of the respective country based on the same report.
Single Accreditation Procedures (2)


Set of criteria by ECA for the evaluation of Joint Programmes:

- **General Conditions** (recognition, cooperation agreements, added value of programme)
- **Intended Learning Outcomes**: Joint development of learning outcomes according to the adequate qualification level?
- **Programme concept** (matriculation, selection procedure, structure and content of curriculum, Credits)
Single Accreditation Procedures (3)

- Internal QA-System (joint responsibility of all partners for QA, integration of stakeholders, continuous further development)
- Resources and Studyability (facilities but also student counseling and support, services to increase mobility at all locations)
- Teaching and Learning (staff, examination system, achievement of intended learning outcomes)
- National criteria (Germany: transparency; equal opportunities, special guidelines of the Länder)
The Coordination Point:

- offers information, which is relevant for joint programmes,
- maintains the functioning and the extension of MULTRA
- coordinates single accreditation procedures of joint programmes in cooperation with quality assurance agencies

http://ecahe.eu/home/services/joint-programmes/coordination-point-for-joint-programmes/
ECA already offers following services:

- Qrossroads-Databank (www.qrossroads.eu)
- European Experts Exchange Platform (www.expertsplatform.eu)
- Publications on methods and Best Practices regarding the accreditation of Joint Programmes (www.ecaconsortium.net)
- ECApedia (www.ecaconsortium.net/ecapedia/)
- In planning: support for the coordination of transnational accreditation procedures through the means of the „Coordination Point“
EQAR - Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG)

- European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes (October 2014), endorsed by the BFUG, subject to approval by EHEA ministers)

- Background report gives details of hindrances as different time frames and detailed use of ECTS in member states

Part IV

German experiences: Learning from mistakes?
Global Studies (EMGS) Leipzig
consortium of five degree-awarding European universities
(Germany, England, Denmark, Poland and Austria).
According to mobility track a joint degree or a double degree is awarded.

Procedure:
The accreditation report is based on the self-report as well as the on-site talks in Leipzig
in which faculty and students of all degree-awarding institutions participated. Students of
other degree awarding institutions participated by video-conference.

The evaluation of the program is predicated on the rules and criteria of the German
Accreditation Council and the Common Structural Guidelines of the Länder.

☑ Recognition of other (foreign) parts of the program:
quality assurance must be guaranteed.
Joint Degree: Goethe-Universität Frankfurt/M. „International Master Film and Audiovisual Media“ with 12 other universities in 7 countries!

Was accredited by AQAS in 2011 at the 2nd German location - Ruhr-Universität-Bochum,

According to regulations it was not necessary to conduct an on-site-visit in Bochum. Representatives participated in the meeting and in addition, video conferences were used.

☑ Recognition of former accreditation by accepting decisions of other agencies.
Joint Accreditation with another organisation:

- Joint accreditation with AEC
- Development of joint set of criteria
- Selection of experts by AEC but approved by the Standing Accreditation Commission of the ZEvA
- On-site visit chaired by AEC
- Joint report but individual decisions by both organisations

University of Music Karlsruhe:
Conclusion

If national prerequisites are too detailed they become an additional hindrance to the accreditation of Joint Programmes.

Hence:

European solutions and a reduction of bureaucratic barriers at national levels are required!
Future steps (national level):

- The Federal Government and the Länder are asking the Accreditation Council to make a proposal for a joint procedure with a single agency for the entire course of study.... In progress!

- Offer of special trainings for experts

- Increased consultation and support of universities by agencies on the topic of quality assurance in particular for joint program accreditation

- A general increased focus on further development and content quality of study programs instead on formal requirements.
Future steps (European level):

- Establishment of a central place for the resolution of appeals in the context of transnational accreditation procedures
- Harmonising accreditation period for Joint Programmes in case of transnational procedures including more than one agency
Transnational Education

HEIs
Types of common activities in transnational education

- Often German study programs are offered in cooperation with a partner HEI abroad (DAAD)
- The foundation of German universities abroad
- Franchising and opening university branches (according to German law)
Transnational Education Support

Activities abroad are supported by the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) with financial means of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. The support comprises:

- „seed money“ for several years
- Events like workshops/seminars and publications
- Support with project management
- Offer of consultation even after funding ended
- Brief presentations of recently funded projects online
German universities abroad

- Examples are Türkisch-Deutsche Universität (TDU) in Istanbul and the German University in Cairo, GUC. (altogether 9 universities). They are “foreign backed universities”: the Egyptian Private University is founded under Egyptian law.

- Typical institutional set-up: The German University in Cairo is an independent, non-profit oriented Egyptian private institution, managed by a consortium of Germans and Egyptians.
Thanks a lot for your attention.

Do you have any further questions?