

ACQUIN

Accreditation,
Certification and
Quality Assurance
Institute

Annual Report 2017

2001

At the time of the initial accreditation by the Accreditation Council in 2001, the Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute ACQUIN was launched with 57 members from four German federal states. By the end of 2017, its membership was held by 167 higher education institutions as well as professional societies and associations from all over Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Bulgaria, Liechtenstein and Lebanon.

Same as in 2006 and 2011, in 2016, the Accreditation Council approved re-accreditation of ACQUIN for a period of five years. In February 2017, the Accreditation Council ascertained fulfillment of conditions imposed in the course of the re-accreditation procedure. The European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) also confirmed compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and extended the ACQUIN listing of with EQAR until 30 June 2021. ACQUIN continues to regard itself as a global actor representing aspiration to contribute to the improvement of the quality of higher education in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and beyond.

In the year under review, over 750 accreditation and evaluation decisions were made (including decisions on the fulfillment of the conditions as well as system accreditations and certifications). With 26 completed system accreditation procedures, ACQUIN plays a leading role in the further development of the accreditation system in Germany. In the course of 16 years of practical work, the operational and organisational structure of ACQUIN has proven its effectiveness and assured a continuous focus on quality.

As a result of the Federal Constitutional Court ruling of 17 February 2016, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the states in the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Rectors' Conference have further developed the accreditation system; now it ensures constitutional conformity of the quality assurance system in higher education. The State Treaty on a country-wide accreditation system for quality assurance in teaching and learning at German universities was ratified at the end of 2017 and came into force on 1 January 2018. In particular, it includes a redefinition of the roles of the Accreditation Council and agencies with the transfer of the accreditation decision to the Accreditation Council, a structural majority of the science representatives in the Accreditation Council as well as a separation of the procedures for the evaluation of the formal criteria, on the one hand, and technical-content-related criteria, on the other hand. The implementation of accreditation procedures, which is carried out after the conclusion of a contract starting from 1 January 2018, is based on the Model Legislative Decree adopted by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the states in the Federal Republic of Germany on 7 December 2017.

With the introduction of new process steps that meet the conditions of the legal requirements, ACQUIN remains a reliable partner of higher education institutions.

2017

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HEAD OFFICE AND COMMITTEES

In 2017 ACQUIN made over 750 evaluation and accreditation decisions (including decisions on the fulfillment of conditions). The evaluation and accreditation procedures were carried out jointly by the accreditation commission, the expert committees, the appointed expert groups as well as the ACQUIN head office in a carefully structured process and in the context of clearly defined division of responsibilities.

*According to the procedure requirements, the **committee structure** is made up as follows:*

- *The effective cooperation of the bodies and committees of ACQUIN is insured by the **board** and the **general assembly**. Both strategic steering committees of ACQUIN are focused on the application and implementation of the objectives and operational principles of ACQUIN when using the criteria and procedures for accreditation and certification. Board elections are held every three years.*
- *The **accreditation commission** renders a comprehensive contribution to the thorough and reliable task fulfillment by ACQUIN. The accreditation commission of ACQUIN is composed of representatives of universities, colleges of art and music, universities of applied sciences, professional practice and students. According to the statute, the chairmanship of the accreditation commission is held by a chairperson. The accreditation commission members are appointed for a period of two years. The Accreditation Commission was re-elected in 2017.*
- *The **expert committees** partially expanded its pool of personnel; long-standing expert committee members were re-elected or replaced by new expert representatives. They are also composed of representatives of higher education institutions, professional practice and students. The expert committee members are appointed for a period of four years.*
- *The **appeals commission** has been appointed to ensure an orderly and independent appeal procedure to address objections of contractual partners of ACQUIN that are related to the accreditation decisions. The appeals commission is made up of five members, with one member per each group of colleges, universities, art and music colleges, professional practice and students. The term of office lasts for three years.*
- *In 2017, approximately 800 **experts** - university faculty members, students and representatives of professional practice - on behalf of ACQUIN evaluated study programmes and internal quality assurance systems at higher education institutions taking into account the criteria of the Accreditation Council and the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" (ESG) as well as the country-specific legal requirements.*
- *In order to meet the requirements of the evaluation and accreditation procedures and to provide the adequate publicity, the **head office** of ACQUIN is always adequately staffed. Following the departure of the long-standing managing director, in the spirit of a collegial management the Executive Board has set up a dual leadership in December 2017.*

THE BOARD

In addition to the general assembly of ACQUIN, the board is a major strategic steering committee of the agency. The board bears the economic responsibility for ACQUIN and thus has a particular interest in the efficiency and effectiveness of the ACQUIN operations. In 2017, the board met four times in order to decide on the membership applications, to make the personnel-related decisions and to discuss matters that are of fundamental relevance for ACQUIN. The board has a crucial part in keeping track of the developments and results of the work of the agency in order to make essential decisions on the further development of the performance capabilities of ACQUIN.

Meetings of the Board:

2 May 2017, Frankfurt am Main
22 May 2017, Munich
10 July 2017, Bayreuth
18 October 2017, Frankfurt am Main

In addition to the re-organisation of the accreditation system in 2017, the staffing of the ACQUIN office was on the agenda. After the departure of the long-standing Managing Director Thomas Reil, a collegial management by two persons was appointed at the head of the office.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

On 22 May 2017, the general assembly of ACQUIN was held at the Ludwig Maximilians University of Munich.

Following the opening statement by the Board Chairman of ACQUIN, Professor Dr.-Ing. Gerd Zimmermann, the assembly was continued by the speech on the future of the accreditation that was given by the guest speaker Barbara Lüddeke who is the Legal Secretary in the Bavarian State Ministry of Education and Culture, Science and Art.

In the subsequent discussion, most notably future structural requirements of politics, structure of decision-making in accreditation procedures and selection of experts were discussed.

This was followed by a debate on the annual report 2016 and the presentation of the audit report. The complied financial report for 2016 was adopted unanimously.

The general meeting participants voted unanimously in favour of the discharge of the

Board and of the adoption of the budget for 2017.

Subsequently, the new rotating elections of the Accreditation Commission were held (see *annexes for composition details*).

With respect to the re-accreditation of ACQUIN, acting Managing Director Marion Moser reported that the fulfillment of the conditions had been confirmed by the Accreditation Council and that the procedure had been completed. The listing in the European register was successfully extended. The ENQA membership was linked to the subsequent fulfillment of the ESG Standard 3.4 *Thematic Analyses* over the period of two years. ACQUIN filed an objection to the decision stating that the analysis of the international procedures, in particular a study on the impact of the assessment procedures in Kazakhstan, is currently being carried out.

MEMBERSHIP

In 2017, ACQUIN was once again able to attract new members. As a result of the 2017 withdrawal of member higher education institutions, the number of members slightly decreased: as of 31 December 2017 ACQUIN consisted of 167 members - in the vast majority higher education institutions (in balanced proportions universities and universities of applied sciences as well as colleges of

art and music) and scientific societies and science-related professional associations. The highest number of members amounted to 172 members and was reached in 2014. The geographical reach extends across all German federal states, Austria, Switzerland, Bulgaria, Liechtenstein and Lebanon.

In 2017 the Board approved the following higher education institutions as new members of ACQUIN:

Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus-Senftenberg
University of Music Würzburg
ESCP Europe Berlin

THE APPEALS COMMISSION

The appeal procedure of ACQUIN includes all elements of the assessment and accreditation procedures. These include rules of the procedure and evaluation criteria used in the procedure as well as appointment of experts, statements of the expert report as well as accreditation decisions. In order to address complaints, careful precautions are taken as they are systematically integrated into the procedures.

The appeal procedure of ACQUIN provides that a higher education institution appeals regarding accreditation decisions are initially submitted to the accreditation commission and then, if the appeal is not rectified, they

are forwarded to the appeals commission for a revision and a statement issuance. Recommendations of the appeals commission are considered by the accreditation commission. In 2017, a complaint against a condition was partially rejected and forwarded to the appeals commission for comment. The appeals commission recommended not to grant the objection and to confirm the decision of the accreditation commission. The Accreditation commission then decided again not to accept the complaint of the university. The opinion of the appeals commission was written in circulation procedure, no meeting of the appeals commission was held.

ACCREDITATION COMMISSION

The accreditation commission is the central decision-making body in the evaluation and accreditation procedures. It has a number of key responsibilities related to the overall coordination of the procedure: it determines the procedural principles and guidelines, discusses and reaches decisions on the evaluation results and makes accreditation decisions based on them. It also appoints members of the expert committees. Its decisions

for accreditation of an individual study programme (programme accreditation) or internal quality assurance systems of higher education institutions in the area of teaching and learning (system accreditation) are based on the expert report, the statement of the concerned higher education institution on the expert report and the statement of the relevant expert committee. The procedures of certification and institutional accreditation are carried out along the same lines.

MEETINGS OF THE ACCREDITATION COMMISSION IN 2017

In 2017 the accreditation commission met four times - in March, July, September and December - in order to come to an agreement apropos of the evaluation criteria and procedural principles, to make accreditation decisions and to deal with the appointment of new or the re-election of standing committee members.

Meetings of the Accreditation Commission:

AC 64 on 27-28 March 2017, Bayreuth
AC 65 on 3 July 2017, Bayreuth
AC 66 on 25-26 September 2017, Bayreuth
AC 67 on 4 December 2017, Potsdam

In the year under review, the members of the accreditation commission dealt with subject-specific and overarching qualification and reference frameworks (in particular certified public accountant examinations, architecture and planning and HQR), took note of the manual European Recognition Manual for Higher Education Institutions and adopted a first draft of the Guide for the Accreditation of PhD Programmes abroad.

In addition, in 2017 the Accreditation Commission discussed in particular the State Treaty on a common accreditation system for quality assurance in teaching and learning at German higher education institutions and

the Legislative Decree and took into account the various analyses and opinions of the different interest groups on this topic (Experts Network (GNW), the German Rectors' Conference (HRK), German Employers' Association (BDA), Coordination Committee of the student accreditation pool (KASAP), German Trade Union Confederation (DGB), National Union of Students in Germany (fzs)). Starting from 1 January 2018, the procedures for accreditation that are contractually agreed with ACQUIN and should run under the new system were debated and outlined in main features.

In addition, the results of the 89th, 90th, 91st, 92nd and 93rd meetings of the Accreditation Council were taken into consideration and discussed (including new rules for the approval of agencies in Germany based on the ESG, new rules for the accreditation of joint programmes and other international study courses as well as consideration of the transformation process into the new structures).

Based on the expert reports, statements of universities and opinions of specialized committees, the accreditation commission made a total of more than 750 decisions on programme and system accreditations as well as certifications and evaluations in 2017 (see *Accreditation and Evaluation Procedures, Accreditation Report*).

In 2017, the accreditation commission meetings were attended by Helke Biehl and

Kateryna Kryvko who represented the head office.

EXPERT COMMITTEES

Since its foundation in 2001, ACQUIN has set up nine expert committees composed of representatives of higher education institutions, colleges of art and music, universities of applied sciences, professional practice and students. The expert committees play a significant role in the evaluation and accreditation procedures, they nominate the experts and ensure the uniformity and appropriateness of the implementation of the procedures on the basis of the evaluation report drawn up by the expert groups and the statement of the respective higher education institution. The performance of the expert committees is therefore essential for the internal quality assurance and quality control. The members of the expert committees fulfill their duties under the coordination of the respective expert committee spokesperson.

The individual expert committees cooperate with each other in the accreditation procedures in order to meet requirements of the profile of individual study programmes in a bundled process and the profile of interdisciplinary study programmes.

A shared exchange of opinions and experiences of expert committees and accreditation commission takes place regularly, as a rule, biannually. No such meeting was held in 2017.

In some expert committees, personnel changes were made. On the one hand, there was a recruitment of additional personnel in order to take proper account of the various academic disciplines; on the other hand, there was a replacement of retired members in order to ensure the professional continuity within the expert committees.

RE-ELECTION AND PERSONNEL CHANGES IN THE EXPERT COMMITTEES

Expert Committee for Architecture and Planning:

- Tim Christossek (Master's student in Architecture at the), appointed since March 2017
- Professor Dipl. Arch. ETH, BSA/SIA Stephan Mäder, (Architecture, Zurich University of Applied Sciences/ZHAW), re-appointed since March 2017

After several years of involvement in the expert committee the following member has resigned:

- Marcel Modes (Architecture and Urban Planning student, RWTH Aachen University)

Expert Committee for Humanities, Linguistics and Cultural Studies:

- Professor Dr. Sabine Reh (General and Historical Education Sciences, Technical University of Berlin), re-appointed since March 2017
- Professor Dr. Peter Ettl (Pre-history and Early History, Friedrich Schiller University Jena), re-appointed since September 2017
- Professor Dr. Marianne Krüger-Potratz (Education Sciences, University of Münster), re-appointed since September 2017
- Professor Dr. Jochen Mecke (Romance Studies, University of Regensburg), re-appointed since September 2017

- Professor Dr. Patrick Rössler (Communications Studies, University of Erfurt), re-appointed since September 2017

After several years of involvement in the expert committee the following member has resigned:

- Professor Dr. Claus Arnold (Catholic Theology, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz)

Expert Committee for Computer Science:

- Professor Dr.-Ing. Michael Weber (Media Informatics, University of Ulm), re-appointed since December 2017

Expert Committee for Engineering Sciences:

- Professor Dr.-Ing. Georg Härtel (Thermal and Environmental Process Engineering, Freiberg University of Mining and Technology), re-appointed since March 2017
- Professor Dr.-Ing. Mario Pacas (Power Electronics and Electrical Drives, University of Siegen), re-appointed since March 2017
- Professor Dr.-Ing. Margot Papenheim-Ernst (Production Management, Heilbronn University of Applied Sciences), re-appointed since March 2017
- Dr. Olaf Weller (Head of the Motorway Administration of South Bavaria in Kempten), appointed since July 2017

After several years of involvement in the expert committee the following member has resigned because he has been appointed to the accreditation commission:

- Dr.-Ing. Stefan Meier, Federal Association of Road Construction and Traffic Engineers in Munich

Expert Committee for Art, Music, and Design:

- Professor Ingo Diehl (Contemporary Dance Education, Frankfurt University of Music and Performing Arts), re-appointed since July 2017
- Professor Dr. Andreas Teufel (Communications Design, University of Applied Sciences Bremerhaven; Shareholder of the Agency Informationsgesellschaft mbH in Bremen), re-appointed since December 2017

Expert Committee for Mathematics and Natural Sciences:

- Professor Dr. Erika Kothe (Microbiology, Friedrich Schiller University Jena), re-appointed since March 2017

Expert Committee for Medical and Health Sciences:

- PD Dr. med. Anne Simmenroth (Institute of General Medicine of the University Medical Faculty in Göttingen), appointed since March 2017
- Dr. Susanne Sehhati-Chafai-Leuwer (Plastic Surgery Clinic, Medical Center Cologne-Merheim), appointed since March 2017

- Mathilde Luise Ruis (Student of Human Medicine, European Medical School Oldenburg-Groningen), re-appointed since July 2017
- Professor Dr. med. Hans-Rudolf Raab (Oldenburg Clinic), re-appointed since December 2017

After several years of involvement in the expert committee the following members have resigned:

- Dr. med. Jennifer Tengler (Gynaecology)
- Professor Dr. med. Ferdinand Hofstädter (Tumour Centre in Regensburg)
- Professor Dr. Dr. med. Walter Wohlgemuth (Institute of Radiodiagnostics, Regensburg University Hospital)

Expert Committee for System Accreditation:

- Professor Dr. Klaus Kreulich (Media Technology, Vice President of the Munich University of Applied Sciences), appointed since December 2017

Expert Committee for Economics, Law and Social Sciences:

- Professor Dr. Uwe Wagschal (Political Sciences, Albert Ludwigs University of Freiburg), re-appointed since March 2017
- Professor Dr. Hans Hopfinger (Cultural Geography, Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt), re-appointed since December 2017

MEETINGS OF THE EXPERT COMMITTEES IN 2017

In 2017, the expert committees held meetings regularly in order to issue the guidelines for the upcoming procedures, to appoint expert groups, to submit statements on the individual procedures and to coordinate the procedure standards for the work of the expert committees. In each session, the agenda

included discussions referred to new developments in the German accreditation system and in the European Higher Education Area. The preparation of the meetings as well as the continuous support of the expert committees are carried out by the responsible coordinators.

Meetings of the Expert Committees

Architecture and Planning:
20-21 March 2017, Regensburg
19 September 2017, Münster

Computer Science:
17 March 2017, Ulm
15 September 2017, Computer Science

Engineering Sciences:
15 March 2017, Bayreuth
13 September 2017, Bayreuth

Humanities, Linguistics and Cultural Studies:
14-15 March 2017, Berlin
11-12 September 2017, Leipzig

Art, Music and Design:
23-24 April 2017, Weimar
12-13 November 2017, Frankfurt am Main

Mathematics and Natural Sciences:
07 March 2017, Bayreuth
12 September 2017, Bayreuth

Medicine and Health Sciences:
07 March 2017, Frankfurt am Main
14 September 2017, Frankfurt am Main

System accreditation:
24 March 2017, Lüneburg
28 August 2017, Frankfurt am Main

Economics, Law and Social Sciences:
18 March 2017, Munich
18 November 2017, Munich

EXPERT GROUPS

In 2017, the expert committees appointed a total of approximately 800 experts for 136 on-site visits in the context of the accreditation procedures. The expert committees preceded under the terms of the handout "Procedures and criteria of the expert appointment" which in 2013 was adapted to the new rules of Accreditation Council for the accreditation of study programmes and for the system accreditation and then updated in 2015/16.

During the process of the appointment of the expert group members, the scientific requirements, student needs and practical professional requirements are taken into account; therefore expert groups alongside academics

also include representatives of students and professional practice. For the evaluation of an individual study programme the expert group consists of at least five members: three professorial representatives, a representative of the professional practice and a student representative. In bundled procedures the number of experts is increased accordingly. In many cases, the expert groups include international experts. The groups are composed of experts who have already participated in the ACQUIN procedures previously as well as new experts.

The preparation of the experts involves several stages. The request of the experts is carried out on behalf of the responsible expert

committee and includes initial information on the accreditation procedure, its timings and content as well as the role, the self-perception and the tasks of the expert group in the accreditation procedure. Subsequently, the self-report and other relevant documents (ACQUIN guides, criteria of the Accreditation Council, resolutions of the Council of Ministers of Culture etc.) are sent in order to get the expert group acquainted with the evaluation criteria and procedures. In addition, password protected documents are available for download on the ACQUIN internal Internet portal. When necessary, experts can get a consultation from the person in charge of the relevant expert committee or a coordinator from the head office. The expert groups are provided with a handout containing detailed information on their roles and responsibilities within the procedure. Furthermore, an online training video was published on the website of ACQUIN in 2016.

A preliminary meeting of the experts is always held before an on-site visit. Depending on the process, it takes two to four hours and is aimed at clarifying the course of proceedings, to exchange views on the self-documentation and to collect questions as well as overall to prepare for the discussions with the higher education institution members. The appointment of a spokesperson from the group of experts is followed by a further insight into the role and self-perception of the experts.

To ensure the independence and impartiality of the experts, those involved in the respective accreditation procedures are asked to sign a declaration of impartiality in accordance with the criterion 2.3.3 of the "Rules for the Accreditation of Agencies" issued on 8 December 2009 and amended on 10 December 2010 (Accreditation Council).

THE HEAD OFFICE

The coordinators of the head office are responsible for the implementation and organisation of the procedures; they also provide a support system for committees, public relations and internal quality assurance. In addition, their scope of responsibilities includes participation in national and international conferences and meetings of scientific associations, maintenance of contacts with higher education institutions in Germany and abroad, and initiation of new co-operation projects.

The office structure is maintained with subdivision into the following categories "Programme Accreditation", "System Accreditation", "International Work" and "Committee Work". In addition, the Team QM is directly accountable to the Management Board and is responsible for cross-sectional tasks in the context of internal quality assurance.

The coordinators are supported by two colleagues from secretarial and accounting ar-

reas. The staff of the office consists of 17 employees (as of 31 December 2017); three of them are employed part-time (full-time equivalent of 1.6).

In 2017, Sonja Völker, Ulf Engert and Thomas Reil resigned from ACQUIN. No recruitment of new employees was carried out. In addition, the office is supported by several student assistants and regularly by trainees or interns. In June and September 2017, Ms Saida Teleuova, a PhD student at the University of Economics in Prague, spent a total of two weeks at the office in Bayreuth. Ms Teleuova comes from Kazakhstan and has participated in the project of the university survey in Kazakhstan.

CHANGE OF THE MANAGEMENT

After the departure of the previous Managing Director Thomas Reil in April 2017, the work processes were initially directed by Marion Moser. Ms Moser has been a coordinator at ACQUIN since 2004 and has recently

held a post of a Deputy Managing Director. By decision of the Management Board, a collegial management was appointed as of 1 December 2017. One of these two positions was filled by Ms Moser. The second position was advertised publicly and after completing the application process, Dr. Stefan Handke was appointed. Mr Handke has been working at ACQUIN since 2012 and was last responsible for international affairs.

CLOSED-SESSION MEETING

On 23 and 24 November 2017, the chairperson and all employees of ACQUIN met for a two-day closed-door meeting to develop strategies and concepts for the design of the new accreditation system in Germany.

Since new rules for the accreditation system in Germany have been applied in the beginning of 2018, new process steps must be defined as they should meet the conditions imposed by the legal requirements. In addition to implementing programme and system accreditation procedures at national level, ACQUIN aims to continue to position itself as a global player claiming to contribute to improving the quality of higher education in the

European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and beyond. Therefore, focal points of international cooperation were discussed at the closed-door meeting.

WORKS COUNCIL

In the first quarter of 2017, the works council presented the evaluation of the voluntary timekeeping of the coordinators' work steps during the second half of 2016.

A staff meeting took place on 21 November 2017. The works council then carried out a survey on the topic of flexibilisation of working hours and asked for an opinion on the planning of holiday periods.

OFFICE PARTIES

The summer party of ACQUIN was held on 21 July 2017 on the premises of the office.

A Christmas party took place on 15 December 2017 in the office. The student assistants took part in both parties, and the summer party was also attended by numerous former employees.

ACQUINUS GMBH

In 2017, the ACQUINUS GmbH continued pursuing the goal of exploring new business fields in the area of consulting services provision for higher education institutions and university-related institutions through careful selection of reference projects. The ACQUINUS GmbH offers services for higher education institutions in the areas of "Preparation for the Institutional Accreditation", "Certification of Module Studies" and "Implementation of a Quality Management System", all of which were further developed in 2017.

In the year under review, the following projects were implemented:

- The consulting services were provided to the University of Rostock in the course of its preparation for the system accreditation.
- The aim of the workshop "Expert competence" at the University of Potsdam was to prepare the newly elected members of the internal accreditation committee for their roles and respective tasks.

ACCREDITATION AND EVALUATION PROCEDURES

Since the foundation of ACQUIN, **programme accreditation** has been one of the main tasks of the agency. A high-quality implementation is ensured in each procedure. The competent expert committees check appropriate combinations of subjects for each bundled programme accreditation procedure and pay attention to the number of courses in terms of feasibility. In 2017, ACQUIN (re-)accredited approximately 464 courses and thus belongs to the four agencies in Germany with most accreditation decisions per year.

The German accreditation system has been further developed with the process of **system accreditation**: from programme accreditation to evaluation of the internal quality assurance system of a higher education institution. ACQUIN announced its first nationwide completion of a system accreditation procedure at a German university in 2011, and now its market share of the ongoing and completed procedures amounts to more than forty percent.

In addition to the accreditation of study programmes and quality management systems in the field of teaching and learning, ACQUIN ensures that a similar programme quality is achieved in advanced scientific training that does not lead to a degree by carrying out **certification procedures**. In 2015 and 2016, five such programmes were evaluated in the course of three procedures in Germany. In 2017, ACQUIN carried out a vocational training certification process for a German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) project in Central Asia.

Another procedure type carried out abroad is **institutional accreditation and evaluation procedures**. The focus of such procedure is the organisation and functioning of an entire higher education institution, and it involves evaluation of the areas of teaching and learning, research and internal self-government. In 2017, the third Institutional accreditation procedure was completed, and the first Institutional evaluation was carried out.

- **Grounds for making a decision** turned out to be extremely varied in 2017. The majority of decisions in the programme accreditation resulted in the accreditation with conditions, whereas in the case of re-accreditations, for the first time, the majority of accreditations were granted without conditions.
- In compliance with the internationalisation principles of ACQUIN, the agency collaborated with **foreign partner institutions** in procedures at higher education institutions abroad in 2017 as well.
- The coordinators of ACQUIN were responsible for the **support of higher education institutions**, they were in charge of providing comprehensive information to the programme and system managers on preparation, implementation and follow-up procedures as well as the committee work associated therewith before signing agreements.

ACCREDITATION SUMMARY OF 2017

In the year under review, ACQUIN brought about 747 programme accreditation decisions.

241 study programmes were accredited for the first time, 223 programmes were re-accredited. Conditions were named in 268 of these accreditations. It has to be stated that the proportion of the conditions for re-accreditation is much lower than for initial accreditation and falls below 50% for the first-time accreditation procedures.

The fulfillment of conditions was confirmed for 270 study programmes, in 13 cases the conditions were only partially fulfilled, and a three-month extension period was granted. The accreditation procedure was suspended for 12 study programmes.

The system accreditation procedures were completed at five higher education institutions; the fulfillment of conditions in system accreditation procedures was confirmed two times. A university was admitted to the system accreditation system for the first time in 2016, while three institutions were approved for system accreditation. The results of the interim evaluation were identified at five universities accredited by ACQUIN. Together with the two procedures under the experimental clause that is accompanied by ACQUIN, at the end of the reporting period the Agency recorded nine ongoing system accreditation procedures in Germany.

Abroad, programme accreditation procedures were carried out and completed at several universities in Kazakhstan, Egypt and Vietnam.

An institutional accreditation was completed at one university in Kazakhstan and an institutional evaluation was carried out at one university in Liechtenstein (*s. Accreditation and Evaluation Procedures in the International Area*).

In case of an accreditation with conditions as well as a rejection of accreditation, there is a possibility of suspension of the accreditation process based on the statement of the higher education institution for a period of time that does not exceed 18 months.

In 2017 ACQUIN

- accredited **241** study programmes for the first time, among them **169** with conditions
- re-accredited **223** study programmes, among them **99** with conditions
- confirmed the fulfilment of conditions for **270** study programmes
- suspended the procedure for **12** study programmes
- enunciated the system accreditation for **5** higher education institutions
- confirmed the fulfilment of conditions in **2** system accreditation procedures
- carried out institutional accreditation procedure in **1** university abroad
- carried out institutional evaluation procedure in **1** university abroad

In 2017, one degree programme accreditation resulted in a rejection. The institution in question requested a suspension of the procedure in order to be able to introduce improvements and to prepare for the proceedings resumption. Three higher education institutions requested suspension before the decision of the Accreditation Commission. For four study courses, the universities applied for a suspension after programme accreditation with conditions.

The requests for suspension were granted in all cases. In one of the suspended proceedings, the university withdrew the application for accreditation of its degree programme during the suspension period.

The decisions on the resumption of a procedure as well as the decisions on the determination of the fulfillment of conditions fall within the competence area of the accreditation commission. The decision of the accreditation commission is made based on the statements of the relevant standing expert committees.

The committees of ACQUIN deal comprehensively with the process of the fulfillment of conditions and the resumption of suspensions. Due to this elaborate monitoring of the follow-up phase after the accreditation decision, ACQUIN ensures a significant contribution to the quality improvement of teaching and learning. In the period under review, accreditation was granted for three study programmes after resumption, in two of those cases there were no conditions imposed.

In individual cases, the accreditation commission had to deal with complaints from the universities. The arguments of the universities were carefully examined in all cases. A total of five complaints on the accreditation decision were submitted; three cases were fully approved, in one case partially approved and in one case a consultation with the Accreditation Council was necessary. Most of them conditions in question that were withdrawn or reformulated on the basis of subsequent explanations provided by the university as well as assessed as fulfilled. One of the proceedings concerned the start of the deadline for submission of documents in order to confirm the fulfillment of conditions following the meeting on which the

conditions were imposed. After clarifying the legal view on setting the deadline with the Accreditation Council, ACQUIN changed its practice to the effect that in the future all deadlines for proof of compliance, resumption of accreditation procedure and filing of a complaint begin with the date of the decision letter with which the higher education institutions officially is informed on the decision of the Accreditation Commission rather than the date of the meeting itself.

A complaint lodged by a university against a condition of the Lisbon Convention, which was only partially granted by the accreditation commission, was forwarded to the appeals commission of ACQUIN. It confirmed the decision of the accreditation commission; thus, the condition remained in its reformulated version.

In addition to the accreditation of study programmes and quality management systems in the field of study and teaching, ACQUIN also carries out certification procedures in which the quality of scientific continuing education courses is examined. In the year under review, a certification procedure was carried out for a German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) project in Central Asia.

DISTRIBUTION OF SUBJECTS

As in the previous year, about half of all programme accreditation procedures were carried out in the fields of Economics, Law and Social Sciences as well as Humanities, Linguistics and Cultural Studies. It can be observed that the proportion of Economic, Legal and Social Sciences has been steadily decreasing in recent years, while the number of Human, Linguistic and Cultural Studies has increased (by 5 percentage points in 2017).

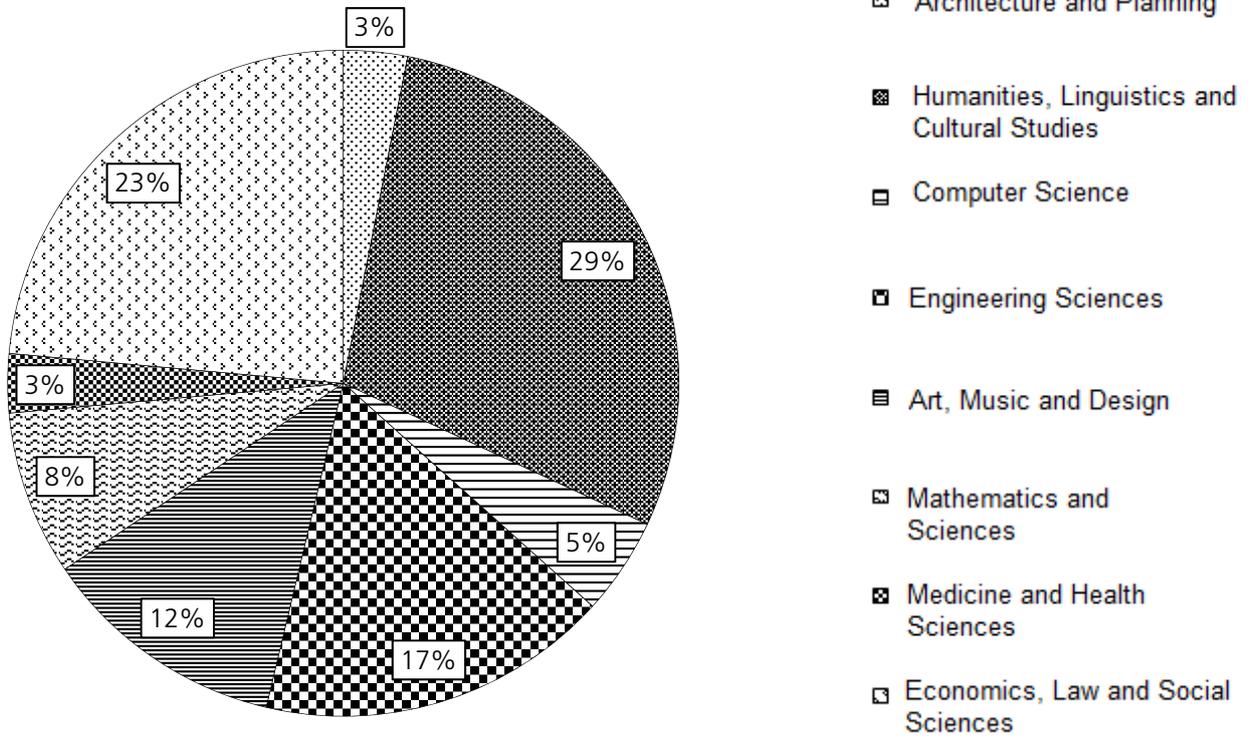
The proportion of Engineering Technology (17 percent) and Art, Music and Design (12

percent) remained largely constant, with a slight increase in the number of procedures by one percentage point each.

The number of procedures in the fields of Mathematics and Natural Sciences as well as Computer Science has decreased slightly (by three and two percentage points respectively).

As in previous years, the lowest number of procedures has been carried out in the field of Architecture and Planning as well as in Medicine and Health Sciences.

Distribution of subjects: accredited programmes in 2017



The percentage breakdown by subject groups illustrates that the claim of ACQUIN that it accredits study programmes of all subject groups remains justified.

CURRENT STATE OF SYSTEM ACCREDITATION PROCEDURES

In 2017, ACQUIN completed five system accreditation procedures and confirmed the fulfillment of conditions for two procedures. In further three ongoing procedures, documents were examined, expert groups were appointed, and on-site visits were organised.

The results of the system accreditation interim evaluation were determined for five higher education institutions. A university was approved for system accreditation, and the process of system accreditation was introduced at three universities.

APPROVAL

In 2017, the University of Erfurt was approved for the system accreditation by the accreditation commission of ACQUIN. The procedure was initiated.

The system accreditation procedures were launched at the University of Saarland, the University of Potsdam and the Technical University of Ilmenau.

FIRST AND SECOND ON-SITE VISIT

At the Otto Friedrich University Bamberg, the first on-site visit was carried out in 2017 as part of the system accreditation.

At the FH Schmalkalden University of Applied Sciences and the Ludwigsburg University of Education, the first and second on-site visits were carried out.

The second on-site visit took place at the universities of the city of Hamburg as part of the partial accreditation of teacher training, same as at the University of Applied Sciences Amberg-Weiden and the University of Hannover.

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

In 2017, decisions on system accreditation were made for the University of Applied Sciences in Kaiserslautern, the European University Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder), the University

of Applied Sciences Amberg-Weiden and the University of Hanover. Teacher education at the universities of the city of Hamburg was partially accredited.

FULFILLMENT OF CONDITIONS

For the University of Duisburg-Essen and the European University Viadrina Frankfurt

(Oder), the fulfillment of the conditions was confirmed in the course of 2017.

INTERIM EVALUATION

In 2017, ACQUIN carried out the process of interim evaluation at the University of Tübingen and the Saarland University.

Also in 2017, the accreditation commission presented the results of the interim evaluations at the University of Potsdam, the

Stuttgart Media University, the Zeppelin University, the University of Tübingen and the Saarland University.

SYSTEM RE-ACCREDITATION - EXPERIMENTATION CLAUSE

The system accreditation at the HHL Leipzig Graduate School of Management is linked to the accreditation procedure of the American

AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business). The procedure is carried out as part of the experimentation clause of

the Accreditation Council and is supported by ACQUIN.

The Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz presented a concept for a collegiate audit as part of the invitation to tender issued by the Accreditation Council for the Experimental Clause. ACQUIN provided support to the university within this concept and held talks at

the university in 2017. For the further development of the procedure, first of all, an opinion of the Accreditation Council is expected to be issued, as it also accompanies the experiment.

ACCREDITATION AND EVALUATION PROCEDURES IN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

In 2017, ACQUIN continued to carry out a number of accreditation procedures outside of Germany. These programmes are not offered in cooperation with German higher education institutions, so ACQUIN does not grant the seal of the German Accreditation Council, instead it awards the quality seal of ACQUIN; if required, an evaluation result is determined, and an accreditation recommendation is provided to a country-specific accreditation authority.

To meet the demands of growing interest of foreign higher education institutions in evaluation procedures by ACQUIN, the agency promotes international composition of its committees wherever possible. This way the committee work is enriched not only by experts with international experience, but also by professors from abroad (Switzerland, Austria, and Lebanon) in several expert committees as well as in the accreditation commission.

KAZAKHSTAN

In the year under review, ACQUIN continued carrying out a large number of evaluation procedures in Kazakhstan.

In May, September, October, November, and December 2017, a total of 11 peer reviews were carried out as part of programme accreditations at the Kazakh National University Al-Farabi in Almaty, the private Central Kazakhstan Academy in Karaganda, the private German-Kazakh University in Almaty, the L. N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University in Astana, and the Kazakh National Academy of Arts in Almaty.

A total of 53 programmes in Kazakhstan were awarded the ACQUIN Seal of Approval in 2017: 19 programmes at the Kazakh Ablai Khan University of International Relations and World Languages in Almaty, nine at the Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University in Almaty, seven at the Kazakh National Uni-

versity al-Farabi in Almaty, 10 at the Karaganda State Technical University and eight at the Rudny Industrial University.

In 2013, the Accreditation Commission decided to extend the deadline for compliance in accreditation procedures at universities in the Republic of Kazakhstan from 9 to twelve months, because degree programmes at the universities there are largely regulated by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan; due to the coordination and decision-making processes between universities and the said Ministry, it is often impossible to fulfill the conditions of specific programmes in accreditation procedures within 9 months. In 2017, the conditions were fulfilled for 26 programmes at three universities in Kazakhstan.

At the Central Kazakhstan Academy in Karaganda, the institutional accreditation process has been completed.

RUSSIA

In the procedure conducted at the State Polytechnic University in Saint Petersburg in cooperation with the Russian accreditation

agency NCPA, the fulfillment of the conditions was determined in the year under review.

LEBANON

The institutional accreditation procedure at the Université Saint-Joseph in Beirut, which

was carried out in French, continued in 2017 and is expected to be completed in 2018.

LIECHTENSTEIN

In 2017, in the context of institutional evaluation at the private university in the Principality of Liechtenstein an evaluation report was drafted.

BULGARIA

In 2017, ACQUIN determined the fulfillment of conditions for three study programmes at

the European Polytechnical University in Per-nik accredited in 2016.

EGYPT

Five study programmes at the German University in Cairo were accredited without

conditions after the on-site visit that took place in July 2017.

VIETNAM

After ACQUIN carried out a structural evaluation at the Vietnamese German University in 2015, two cooperative degree programmes in 2017 were offered by Frankfurt University

of Applied Sciences and Heilbronn University respectively, and they are offered on the Ho Chi Minh City campus.

MONGOLIA

In May 2017, on the basis of the ESG, ACQUIN carried out an evaluation procedure at the German-Mongolian Institute for Resources and Technology (GMIT) in Ulan Bator. In particular, the structure and facilities were evaluated for the Bachelor courses "Mechanical Engineering" (B.Sc.), "Raw Materials" (B.Sc.), "Process Engineering and En-

vironmental Engineering" (B.Sc.) and "Industrial Engineering" (B. B.Sc.) as well as the planned Master programme "International Management of Resources and the Environment" (MBA).

In addition, strategy, research approaches and expansion of the university were the subject of the proceedings. The accreditation of study programmes is planned.

CENTRAL ASIA

As part of cooperation with the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ), ACQUIN carried out a certification procedure for study programmes in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan.

For the GIZ project "Vocational Education in Central Asia", the reference curriculum Vo-

ational Education, focusing on food technology, was assessed. Food technology programmes are to be established and subsequently accredited at the Kyrgyz Technical University, the Kazakh National Agricultural University and the Tajik Technical University.

PARTNERSHIP AND DIALOGUE

In order to achieve its objectives, a continuous dialogue and partnership in national and international context is of great importance for ACQUIN. Goal-oriented cooperation is crucial for the discussion, development and reception of further advancement in the field of quality assurance procedures, and it supports the recognition of the work of ACQUIN.

- **Cooperation with higher education institutions**
ACQUIN cooperates with the mergers of higher education institutions and their initiatives at a European, national and local level in order to jointly analyse the requirements for quality assurance and develop appropriate measures for comprehensive development, assurance, monitoring and improvement of quality in teaching and learning.
- **Cooperation within the German accreditation system**
In the national context, ACQUIN cooperates with the Accreditation Council and the accreditation agencies accredited by the Accreditation Council in order to contribute to the maintenance and development of the accreditation system.
- **Cooperation with students**
ACQUIN cooperates with students and student organisations in order to analyse the concerns of students regarding quality assurance measures and to seek the appropriate solutions jointly.
- **Cooperation within subject areas**
ACQUIN cooperates with the organised forms of disciplines, the departments and faculty conferences as well as scientific societies in order to discuss the subject-specific requirements and conditions in the process of external quality assurance through accreditation and to find the appropriate solutions jointly.
- **Cooperation in international networks**
ACQUIN is a member of the central international organisations and project initiatives that contribute to the achievement of the association goals. ACQUIN is involved in international and particularly European groupings of institutions of external quality assurance. This way ACQUIN is engaged in the development of the European Higher Education Area.
- **Cooperation in partnership-based projects**
The exposure to national and international projects helps ACQUIN to expand its base of experience. Specific concepts are discussed and common solutions for specific issues are developed. The project work is a learning opportunity for ACQUIN as an organisation and the individual experience and expansion of expertise for its employees.

CONTACTS WITH THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

The coordinators and management of ACQUIN conducted a number of discussions (in the head office in Bayreuth or at local higher education institutions) in order to inform those responsible at higher education institutions on criteria and methods of the evaluation and accreditation procedures. In addition, primarily in international procedures and procedures for system accreditation a personal handing-over of the accreditation certificate takes place, occasionally it is accompanied by a festive ceremony or further associated events.

ACQUIN WORKSHOP FOR THE MEMBER HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

On 23 May 2017, ACQUIN organised a workshop on innovations in the European Standards and Guidelines and their effects on quality assurance procedures for the member universities of ACQUIN at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich. An introductory speech by the Acting Managing Director of ACQUIN Marion Moser was followed by several round tables in the plenum. Predominantly, it emphasised the importance of accreditation as an element of quality development for the strategic management of higher education institutions, the inclusion of external expertise for the further development of university management, and the publication

practice regarding accreditation reports at system-accredited universities.

The event took place following the general assembly of ACQUIN and proved extremely popular.

NETWORK QUALITY AUDIT

As part of the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF) network project "Quality Audit", Dorit Gerkens participated as an external expert in the workshop on the "Implementation and Evaluation of Interim Evaluations" in Potsdam in May 2017. The aim of the project of the University of Kaiserslautern, the Leuphana University of Lüneburg, the Saarland University and the University of Potsdam is the further development of the quality management systems of the participating universities through an exchange of contributors to the practical implementation who are responsible for the QM systems at their respective universities. Jointly they develop a quality audit procedure based on this exchange. The experience gained in the course of this procedure should be made available to other universities at the end of the project period.

At the network meeting, the project partners learned about the progress of the interim evaluation and explored the opportunities and limitations of the process.

COOPERATION WITH THE ACCREDITATION COUNCIL AND THE AGENCIES

ACQUIN regularly meets with its partners within the German accreditation system in order to exchange ideas on the advancement in the field of quality assurance procedures.

COOPERATION WITH THE ACCREDITATION COUNCIL

In 2013, Professor Reinhard Zintl, a member of the appeals commission of ACQUIN, was appointed a representative of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) and the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education

and Cultural Affairs of the German states (KMK) in the Accreditation Council on a proposal from the agencies. He attended the meetings of the Accreditation Council on 7 February, 7 June and 27 September in Berlin as well as on 14 December in Bonn.

On 13 November 2017, the Accreditation Council invited ACQUIN to an expert discussion in Berlin as part of its subject-specific sample "System Accreditation". Marion Moser and Dorit Monz took part in this conversation.

AGENCIES MEETINGS

On 2 and 3 February in Mannheim, Thomas Reil and Professor Dr. Reinhard Zintl participated at the agency meeting. Colin Tück from the European Registry and Franz Börsch from the Accreditation Council office also attended this meeting. Participants discussed with the head of the EQAR office the drafting of a separate policy of the register on Agencies' Activities and Quality Assurance outside the ESG („Use and Interpretation of the ESG“) and the drafting a joint position paper. The conversation with the representative of the AR office focused in particular on the design of the new accreditation system and the content of the Model Legislative Decree.

Another agency meeting took place on 30 May in Erfurt. Marion Moser and Mr. Zintl participated in it. It was devoted to the deliberation on the role of the agencies in the new system and invited the Accreditation Council to provide the agencies with the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft Model Legislative Decree.

The Managing Director and a speaker of the Accreditation Council were also invited to the meeting of the agencies on 19 September in Freiburg. ACQUIN was represented by Ms Moser. Dr. Olaf Bartz informed the participants about the status of establishing a digital application processing system at the Accreditation Council and invited the agencies to submit suggestions for the specifications, in particular, in regards to the database, to the office of the Accreditation Council.

Parallel to the last agency meeting of the year 2017 that took place on December 8th in Cologne and was attended by Ms Moser, Dr. Stefan Handke and Mr Zintl, a meeting of the lawyers of the agencies took place once

again, during which the decision-making authority of the agency commissions was intensively discussed in the intensified expert-centered procedures. In addition, it was mainly about the planned expert grid of the Accreditation Council as well as ambiguities regarding the remedy of deficiencies in the context of accreditation procedures. The representatives of the agencies agreed to develop a self-understanding of the German agencies and to put them onto a written form.

In order to ensure the continuity of agency representation in the Accreditation Council during the transitional period, it was decided that Dr. Reinhard Zintl as spokesman of the agencies and Dr. Verena Kloeter who serves as the Commercial Managing Director of AQAS should jointly represent the agencies in the Council until further notice. As a contact person for the student accreditation pool, Dr. Ing. Simone Kroschel, Head of Programme Accreditation at AQAS was appointed.

COOPERATION WITH AKAST

Within the framework of cooperation with the Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Canonical Study Programmes in Germany e.V. (AKAST), ACQUIN undertakes the implementation of accreditation procedures for non-canonical study programmes.

In January 2017, Thomas Reil participated in the general meeting of AKAST in Vallendar. In December 2017, the managing director of AKAST, Barbara Reitmeier, attended the meeting of the ACQUIN accreditation commission in Potsdam. On behalf of ACQUIN, Tobias Auberger attended the meeting of the AKAST Accreditation Commission in Frankfurt am Main in March.

PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS

ACQUIN makes sure students are systematically involved in quality assurance.

In the expert groups set up by ACQUIN students are always represented, ACQUIN acquired valuable experience due to this struc-

EXPERT GROUPS

tural decision. The cooperation with the student accreditation pool has proven itself in principle. The student accreditation pool is a self-regulatory body of students who want to get involved in evaluation and accreditation procedures. ACQUIN and the student accreditation pool agreed that the decision on the expert nominations is made solely by the expert committees.

EXPERT COMMITTEES

Students are represented in all committees. In selecting students ACQUIN cooperates with the student accreditation pool. The decision on the appointment is statutorily made by the accreditation commission.

In 2017, a student member was appointed to the Expert Committee for Architecture and Planning. In this case, this was not a member of the student accreditation pool, as there were no suggestions for the relevant department. In the Expert Committee for Medicine and Health Sciences a representative of the students was re-appointed.

ACCREDITATION COMMISSION

Students are full voting members of the accreditation commission of ACQUIN. According to the statutes, the accreditation commission includes a student of a university and a student of a university of applied sciences and their substitute representatives. When the accreditation commission was elected by the 2017 General Assembly, three of the four positions were filled by members of the student accreditation pool.

MEETINGS WITH THE STUDENT ORGANISATIONS

In 2017, Dr. Simone Kroschel is named as successor for Mr Reil as contact person of the agencies for the student accreditation pool by the agency AQAS. In particular, the financing of the pool remains an issue; as it is up to the German federal states to provide ESG-compliant frameworks in the new system, the agencies no longer see financing the pool as their responsibility. The agencies agreed to maintain the financial support for the pool in 2018, but made it clear that the pool needs to look for other sources of funding. There will be no financial support for restructuring within the new system.

SUBJECT-SPECIFIC AND TOPIC-ORIENTED DISCUSSIONS

In 2017, the coordinators and the management of ACQUIN continued to participate in a series of conferences and events of faculty and departmental meetings as well as scientific associations in Germany and abroad in order to discuss with the representatives of the disciplines the objectives, criteria and procedures of accreditation as well as the prerequisites and framework conditions for securing and improving quality.

In the year under review, the restructuring of the accreditation system in Germany played a major role at numerous events, and the office of ACQUIN was repeatedly asked to provide detailed information on the re-design of the accreditation procedures. For example,

Tobias Auberger presented the re-design of the accreditation system at the Mechanical Engineering faculty in Wismar in October, as did Helke Biehl at the Architecture departmental meeting in Lübeck in November 2017.

Inquiries on detailed questions about the system accreditation were brought to the office of ACQUIN. For example, in April 2017, the project meeting of the Accreditation Group for Architecture and Planning Degree Programs (ASAP) in Berlin introduced system accreditation taking into account the specific architectural and planning features (presentation: Helke Biehl).

PARTICIPATION IN EVENTS IN GERMANY

Date and place	Event
02-03.02.2017, Graz	3rd International Conference on Quality Management and Quality Development in Higher Education at the University of Graz
27.02.-03.03.2017, Bahrain	QAA INQAAHE Conference
24.04.2017, Berlin	Group for Architecture and Planning Degree Programs (ASAP) Dialog project meeting
28-30.04.2017, Zagreb	CEENQA General Assembly and Workshop
04-05.05.2017, Oslo	ENQA Members' Forum
11-13.05.2017, Berlin	Glienicke talks: Digitization in Public Administration
05-07.09.2017, Hamburg	Annual Conference on Key Competences
12-13.09.2017, Berlin	ASIIN Meeting „Times of Change in the German University Landscape“
14-15.09.2017, Potsdam	Plenary session Union Expert /Network and the University of Potsdam
28-29.09.2017, Hamburg	Final conference of the research projects EIQSL, WiQu and WirQung "Control and Effects of Quality Assurance and Quality Management in Study and Teaching"
26-27.10.2017, Sèvres	ENQA General Assembly
26-27.10.2017, Wismar	Departmental conference Mechanical Engineering
02-02.11.2017, Lübeck	Departmental conference Architecture
15-16.11.2017, Detmold	Annual meeting of the network of Music Colleges
29-30.11.2017, Bonn	Annual meeting of the network of Science Management
30.11.2017, Würzburg	Meeting of Vice-Presidents for Studies and Teaching of the Bavarian Universities of Applied Sciences
11-12.12.2017, Düsseldorf	ASIIN/EASPA Global Conference 2017

MEMBERSHIP AND COOPERATION IN INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS

ACQUIN defined priority areas for its activities which are characterised by partnership projects, cooperation in networks and evaluation and accreditation procedures. ACQUIN paid particular attention to the Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe as well as Central Asia and the Arab world in 2017.

- Since 2003 ACQUIN has been a "full member" in the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and maintained an active exchange of information with interested partner institutions from around the world within this global network.
- Since 2004 ACQUIN has been a member of the European Platform European University Association (EUA) with the status of an "affiliate member". The EUA is now an association of approximately 850 higher education institutions and other members in 47 European countries.
- Since 2003 ACQUIN has been a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA); and since 2009 ACQUIN has been listed in

the European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies (EQAR) created by the E4 group (EUA, ENQA, EURASHE and ESU).

- ACQUIN is focused on the region of Central Asia and Central, East and Southeast

Europe, and this focus illustrates that the agency is an active member in the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA).

ENQA

As part of the accreditation by the Accreditation Council, ACQUIN also requested renewal of its membership with ENQA. In order to avoid duplicate external evaluations, the Accreditation Council checked if the agency complies with Part 2 and 3 of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

In March 2017, ACQUIN was informed that the renewal of its full membership in ENQA was under the proviso and that ACQUIN has to demonstrate the realisation and publication of thematic analyses over the course of two years (Standard 3.4 of the ESG *Thematic analysis* was assessed as not fulfilled). ACQUIN objected to the decision, stating that it was launching a thematic analysis for inter-

national accreditation procedures. The opposition was ruled as valid, but there was a condition imposed that the results of this thematic analysis will be published in the future. As part of its international activities, ACQUIN started carrying out an analysis of the effectiveness of external quality assurance in Kazakhstan. In addition, a relevant project tender by INQAHEE was attended. The application for another study on the impact of accreditation procedures of ACQUIN in Kazakhstan was not accepted by the selection committee of INQAHEE.

Stephanie Bernhardt attended the ENQA Members' Forum on 3 May 2017 in Oslo on behalf of ACQUIN. Marion Moser and Valérie Morelle attended the ENQA General Assembly on 26 and 27 October 2017 in Sèvres near Paris.

REGIONS OF CENTRAL, EASTERN AND SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE AS WELL AS CENTRAL ASIA

In order to ensure the implementation of the accreditation procedures in the region, ACQUIN maintains contacts with numerous higher education institutions that request information on the organisation and preparation for the evaluation processes from the

head office. On behalf of the agency, Dr. Stefan Handke and Nina Soroka attended the General Assembly of CEENQA in Zagreb; it took place on 28 - 30 April 2017.

KAZAKHSTAN

In 2012, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan founded the Accreditation Council of the Republic of Kazakhstan and set up the so-called Accreditation Register. The Kazakh Accreditation Council is composed of representatives of

the Ministry, Parliament, higher education institutions and employers.

The Register includes accredited higher education institutions, accredited programmes and accreditation bodies that are approved in Kazakhstan and thus are entitled to carry out

accreditation of institutions and study programmes. ACQUIN was added to the register in 2012 and submitted an application for renewal of its membership in 2017.

The relationship with Kazakhstan was also expanded by ACQUIN with the establishment of a branch office. The foundation of the KAZ-ACQUIN LLP in Almaty was completed in May 2017. It is the subsidiary of ACQUIN and is managed by Stefan Handke. It is conceptualised as a contact for the preparation of evaluation procedures for universities of Kazakhstan.

In addition to conducting its own accreditation procedures in the Republic of Kazakhstan, ACQUIN cooperates with the National Agency IQAA (Independent Kazakh Agency

for Quality Assurance in Education). Furthermore, ACQUIN entered into a cooperation agreement with another Kazakh Accreditation and Rating Agency - Independent Agency for Accreditation and Rating (IAAR). ACQUIN and these two accreditation agencies mutually support each other in the appointment of a national expert for the evaluation of study programmes. As part of the accreditation procedures carried out by ACQUIN at Kazakh universities, Kazakh experts have been appointed by IQAA and IAAR. The first joint accreditation in the Republic of Kazakhstan was carried out jointly with the IAAR at the Eurasian National University in Astana in November 2017.

ARABIAN REGION

With regard to its focal point in the Arab world, ACQUIN and the Arab Organization for Quality Assurance in Education (ARO-QAE) agreed on future cooperation in a "Memorandum of Association" in 2007.

The network is aimed at providing support to Arab states and the respective higher education institutions in developing the quality assurance competences and capacities.

In the period under review, ACQUIN continued to expand its cooperation with higher education institutions from Lebanon and carried on the process of institutional accreditation at the Université Saint-Joseph in Beirut.

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