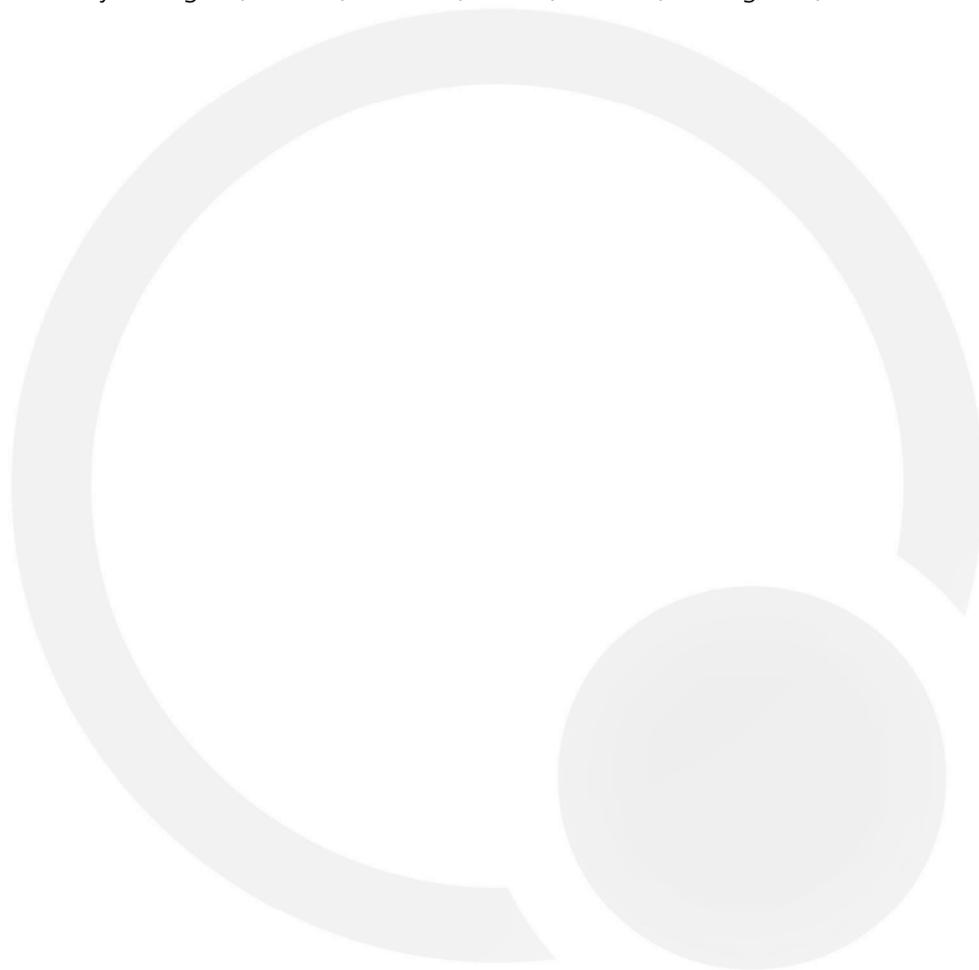# Guidelines for Doctoral

Study Programme Accreditation Procedures

Specification of procedural principles

Instructions for the preparation of the self-assessment report

Since its foundation in 2001, the German Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute (ACQUIN) has been carrying out assessments and accreditations in the higher education sector. The main aim of ACQUIN is to contribute to shaping the European Higher Education Area and to ensure the comparability of the quality of higher education qualifications. Based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, ACQUIN carries abroad international programme and institutional accreditations as well as certifications in all subjects and at all types of higher education institutions. ACQUIN staff has intercultural and multilingual competences and offers native language proficiency in English, French, German, Greek, Kazakh, Portuguese, Russian and Ukrainian.

Content

I OVERVIEW

ACQUIN Guidelines for Doctoral Study Programme Accreditation apply to the structured external audit of third cycle educational programmes on a tertiary level: While the first (undergraduate) cycle covers in general a bachelor's degree, the second (graduate) cycle usually comprises of a master programme. The third and final cycle compasses the doctoral phase and can show a broad variety of phases from structured doctoral study programmes to more (or fully) independent research.

These guidelines describe the contents, the criteria and the process of the external quality audit. ACQUIN Guidelines provide assistance to the Higher Education Institution (HEI) in preparing for the accreditation procedure. The following chapters introduce the objectives, criteria and process of the programme accreditation.

As an external quality assurance instrument, programme accreditation aims both at assessing the doctoral programmes' existing quality and at recommending improvements. Accountability and enhancement are at the core of the accreditation. Peer-review experts evaluate and assess the doctoral programme. To guarantee impartiality, the experts scrutinize the doctoral programme against a set of criteria. The competence of the experts in their respective field of expertise assures the quality of the external audit.

ACQUIN's accreditation procedures base on the "*Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*" (ESG). The ESG define both assessment criteria and criteria for the accreditation process. For a thorough and comprehensive assessment, the ESG standards are supplemented with additional criteria especially for doctoral study programmes.

1 Accreditation criteria

The ESG represent the essential basis for ACQUIN's approach covering three areas: internal quality assurance, external quality assurance and quality assurance agencies. While part 1 describes the standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance, part 2 defines the approach of the external quality assurance and is therefore relevant for ACQUIN's international programme accreditation procedures. Part 3 specifies the standards and guidelines for quality assurance agencies.

These principles provide a framework for quality assurance processes, which may also integrate national and/or subject-specific standards. Hence, they are universally applicable – even outside the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Under certain circumstances, incompatibility between national standards and the ESG can occur. The experts will address this issue in the assessment report and the Accreditation Commission of ACQUIN will consider this when making a decision.

In addition to the criteria defined by ESG part 1 the assessment of doctoral programmes follows the so-called *Salzburg principles*: As a result of a Bologna Seminar hold in Salzburg (Austria) by relevant actors

of the "European Higher Education Area" (EHEA) and the "European Research Area" (ERA), the Salzburg principles reveal themselves as a set of ten basic standards which can underpin further considerations of the key role of doctoral programmes and research training in the Bologna Process. They are elucidated and specified in the *Salzburg recommendations* ("Salzburg II", in the following referred to as SR).

2 Process

ACQUIN's accreditation process follows the structure according to the ESG:

- ACQUIN and the HEI define the design and scope of the doctoral programmes' accreditation based on the criteria mentioned above and in accordance with legal requirements. (ESG 2.1, 2.2)

- The HEI submits a self-assessment report to ACQUIN. In addition, ACQUIN conducts a site visit, which includes discussions with all relevant stakeholders, e.g. lecturers and students resulting in an assessment report by the experts with clearly defined follow-up measures. (ESG 2.3)

- The external audit is performed as a peer-review procedure. ACQUIN composes a group of experienced and trained experts in consensus with the HEIs. The experts are both qualified in matters of accreditation and the subject of the respective study programmes. The expert group consists typically of professors, professional practitioners and students. It may include national and/or special experts if necessary, e.g. from national institutions of the HEI's country. (ESG 2.4)

- The peer-review experts evaluate study programmes by pre-defined and published criteria and scientific standards. Depending on the level of compliance with these standards, experts propose conditions, recommendations and suggestions. (ESG 2.5)

- ACQUIN publishes the assessment report of the experts. The report includes general information about the accreditation procedure and the experts, evidence, analysis, findings, and conclusions regarding the doctoral programmes as well as a context description of the HEI. The HEI may point out factual errors before the report is finalised. The Accreditation Commission of ACQUIN supplements its appraisal to the experts' recommendations for follow-up actions based on the HEI's statement to the report. (ESG 2.6)

- The HEI has the right to complain and appeal at any given step of the accreditation process. The HEI may object to one or more experts chosen by ACQUIN if reasonable evidence is brought forward (e.g. suspicion of bias, conflict of interest). Finally, the HEI may appeal against the accreditation decision. The Accreditation Commission of ACQUIN takes a decision on the appeal. If the HEI does not agree with the result of this revision, it may turn to ACQUIN's Appeals Commission. (ESG 2.7)

II   THE DOCTORAL STUDY PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION PROCEDURE AT A GLANCE

Phases	ACQUIN	Peer-review experts	Higher Education Institution (HEI)
Contract between HEI and ACQUIN			
Nomination of the peer-review experts			HEI sends preliminary information about the doctoral programmes (profile information)
	ACQUIN appoints experts		
			HEI accepts the peer-review experts
Self-assessment report			HEI prepares and submits self-assessment report
	ACQUIN checks validity and completeness of the self-assessment report		
Organising the site visit	ACQUIN programme manager as a contact person accompanies and supports the HEI in organising the site visit		HEI organises the site visit in co-ordination with the programme manager
	ACQUIN programme manager provides experts with the essential information and prepares them for their task		
Site visit and reporting	Programme manager coordinates and accompanies the site visit	Experts discuss with HEI representatives	HEI management, teaching staff, and students provide comprehensive insight in study programme(s)
		Experts compile an assessment report	
Accreditation decision			HEI gives a statement on the report – if necessary
	Accreditation Commission of ACQUIN decides about the accreditation		
	ACQUIN publishes the assessment report including the formal accreditation decision		HEI is informed about the decision and receives certificates and documents

ACQUIN's programme managers

The programme manager is responsible to experts and HEI representatives concerning all emerging questions regarding the course of the procedure, the interpretation of formal and subject-specific criteria, deadlines etc. The programme manager accompanies experts during the site visit and is responsible for all organisational issues regarding the visit as well as for the flow of information between the HEI, the experts and ACQUIN. They do not act as experts during the accreditation procedure.

Accreditation procedure

Accreditation procedure is the entire process of the accreditation from conclusion of a contract between the HEI and ACQUIN to the decision by the Accreditation Commission.

Self-assessment report

Self-assessment report is the basis for the evaluation of doctoral programmes by peer experts. Prior to the site visit, the HEI prepares and submits the self-assessment report to ACQUIN. The self-assessment report indicates the ways in which the programme complies with the standards. If applicable, the HEI can address national criteria in the report. Experts are asked to review the self-assessment report prior to the visit.

Peer-review experts

A group of experts consists of professors, professional practitioners and students. The number of experts (per subject area) depends on the number of study programmes being evaluated and/or the subject-specific clustering of the study programmes. Experts usually have broad international experience; if appropriate, national expertise is embedded (by bringing in one or more national experts). In case of cluster accreditation procedures (two or more study programmes), the number of appointed university, non-university and student experts increases. The Accreditation Commission of ACQUIN officially appoints peer-review experts. ACQUIN informs the HEI about the officially nominated experts.

Experts are prepared for their role in the accreditation procedure by individual training or workshops and by an extended preliminary meeting and discussion with the programme manager of ACQUIN preceding the site visit.

Site visit

The purpose of the site visit is to assess compliance with the standards, as well as to clarify information provided in the self-assessment report. The site visit to the HEI typically lasts two to three days. It starts with a preliminary meeting of experts and the ACQUIN programme manager. The programme manager introduces experts to technicalities of the visit and the role of experts during the discussions with the HEI's representatives. A spokesperson will be selected among the peer experts. This role may be rotating in the course of the talks. The spokesperson mainly chairs the discussions during the visit.

The site visit consists of meetings with the representatives of the HEI (teaching staff, HEI management, students and alumni) and observation of the facilities.

Assessment report by the experts

Following the site visit, members of the expert group compile the assessment report. The report includes information on the fulfilment of accreditation criteria, as well as observations of strengths and weaknesses and findings concerning the doctoral programme(s). The HEI may comment on the report for the purposes of correcting or clarifying factual matters relevant to the accreditation of the programme.

ACQUIN's Accreditation Commission

ACQUIN's Accreditation Commission is an independent decision-making body, which makes official decision on the accreditation of a doctoral programme. Thus, the expert group's judgement is in a way a preliminary result. Based on the experts' report, the responding statement of the HEI, the decision of the Accreditation Commission may differ concerning fulfilment of specific conditions or recommendations. This procedure guarantees an independent, comprehensible and balanced accreditation result.

Reporting

ACQUIN publishes the decision accompanied with the full assessment report. The reports are publicly available on our website. In addition, the report, certificate of accreditation and a letter confirming the decision of the Accreditation Commission are sent to the HEI. Furthermore, the full assessment report and the result of the procedure are published on the website of Database of External Quality Assurance Reports (DEQAR).

III   ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

According to the ESG, the following ten basic criteria of internal quality assurance are evaluated:

ESG Standard 1.1 – Policy for quality assurance

ESG Standard 1.2 – Design and approval of programmes

ESG Standard 1.3 – Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

ESG Standard 1.4 – Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

ESG Standard 1.5 – Teaching staff

ESG Standard 1.6 – Learning resources and student support

ESG Standard 1.7 – Information management

ESG Standard 1.8 – Public information

ESG Standard 1.9 – On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes

ESG Standard 1.10 – Cyclical external quality assurance

Within the ESG framework, the accreditation procedure may check the compliance of study programmes with national legislation, as well as national and international scientific standards such as qualification frameworks or the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS).

The currently valid version of the ESG (including additional information and supplementing commentaries) is available in several languages on the website of the *European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education* (ENQA) www.enqa.eu.

In addition, the following recommendations build on the Salzburg Principles are considered for doctoral study programmes:

Salzburg Recommendation 1: Research as the basis and the difference

Salzburg Recommendation 2: Critical mass and critical diversity

Salzburg Recommendation 3: Recruitment, admission and status

Salzburg Recommendation 4: Supervision

Salzburg Recommendation 5: Outcomes

Salzburg Recommendation 6: Career development

Salzburg Recommendation 7: Credits

Salzburg Recommendation 8: Quality and accountability

Salzburg Recommendation 9: Internationalisation

Salzburg Recommendation 10: Funding

Salzburg Recommendation 11: Autonomy

Salzburg Recommendation 12: Legal framework

Salzburg Recommendation 13: Intersectoral collaboration

These recommendations are meant as a set of guidelines for a diverse landscape of doctoral schools and programmes, rather than a standardised checklist. They complement the ESG and are in line with them. Therefore, these standards as well as other additional criteria can be sorted into the ESG standards. More information about the Salzburg principles can be found on the website of the *European University Association* (EUA) www.eua.eu.

In summary, on that basis the following issues are subject to an in-depth assessment:

- Uniform **principles**, based on best international practices and agreed upon at the university level, shall be followed while implementing doctoral programmes and assuring the quality of the doctoral studies (including **supervision of doctoral theses**).

- The launch and development of doctoral study programmes are based on the national legislation, national strategies, university development plans, the performance of research and development, various analyses (including labour market and feasibility analyses); striving for **the best overall programme quality**.

- Doctoral study programmes **consist mainly of research**, development or other creative work by doctoral students, making the results thereof public in (international) peer-reviewed research journals or in other ways.

- Doctoral study programmes should incorporate **doctoral student participation in conferences** and/or other professional activities and be counted towards the completion of the study programme.

- Doctoral study programmes should enable doctoral students to acquire **leadership and teamwork skills**, develop coaching and teaching skills as well as a **proficiency in foreign languages** at the level needed for successful participation in international working environments.

- In conducting doctoral programmes, an adequate number **of teaching staff and researchers** participate, who hold the appropriate qualifications required to carry out doctoral studies and supervise doctoral theses in a given study programme.

- **Teaching staff further their skills** at foreign universities or other research institutions, participate in international research and creative projects, and present papers at high-level conferences.

- **Resources** (teaching, learning and research environments; libraries; resources required for teaching, learning and research) support the achievement of objectives setout in doctoral study programmes as well as the actual teaching, learning and research at the level of doctoral studies.

IV POSSIBLE OUTCOMES OF THE PROCEDURE

In the assessment of each standard, peer experts distinguish between (*full* or *substantial*) *compliance*, *partial compliance* and *non-compliance*. Depending on the level of fulfilment, the procedure of doctoral programme accreditation can have three different results:

Unconditional accreditation: Compliance with the standards

The doctoral programme fulfils all criteria. In case of substantial compliance, the experts may express recommendations for further improvement. These recommendations may be taken into account by the HEI with regard to the further improvement of quality.

Accreditation with conditions: Partial compliance with the standards

The doctoral programme does not completely fulfil at least one criterion. Certain aspects must be revised to ensure compliance with the standards. Unfulfilled criteria are likely to be met and must be fulfilled within the specified time period. As soon as condition(s) are fulfilled, the accreditation is granted for the complete accreditation period.

Refusal of accreditation: Non-compliance regarding one or more standards

The doctoral programme does not fulfil one or more standards. Major deficiencies and weaknesses are so significant that they are unlikely to be rectifiable within a reasonable period of time. In this case, the Accreditation Commission refuses the accreditation.

The HEI can suspend the procedure in order to extend the timeframe to rectify the major deficiencies.

V   STRUCTURE OF THE SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT

The HEI's self-assessment report is the essential document for the discussions during the site visit and the evaluation by the peer-review experts.

The structure of the self-assessment report should follow the ESG as well as incorporating the additional sets of criteria. Additional (national) criteria can be integrated in the assessment, if appropriate.

The self-assessment report should contain the following parts:

1. General information: Cover sheets, brief background of the institution, basic information on the assessed programmes

2. Description of design, concept, implementation, and internal quality assurance of the doctoral programme:

   o   ESG Standards Part 1 under consideration of the Salzburg recommendations (SR)

3. Appendix (official / legal / supplemental documents)

The requirements on the composition of these three parts will be described in more detail in the next chapters.

1   Part 1: General information

1.1   Cover sheet

The self-assessment report should contain a cover sheet (for each doctoral programme) with the following information:

- Provider of the doctoral programme (HEI, department / faculty)

- HEI site(s) where the programme is provided

- Title of the doctoral programme

- Degree

- Date or planned date of introduction

- Subject field (multiple classifications possible)

- Regular study duration

- Number of ECTS credits (if awarded)

- Matriculation periods (e. g. winter semester / summer semester)

- Frequency of the offered programme (e. g. annually / semi-annually)

- Capacity per year (number of students to be admitted)

- Number of students currently enrolled

- Average number of graduates per year

- Tuition fees

- Type of studies (e. g. full-time / extra-occupational / distance learning / part-time)

1.2 Overview of the curriculum

- Modules / course / academic schedule (preferably as graphic representation or table)

1.3 Short portrait of the HEI

- History and profile

- Numbers of faculties / departments

- Numbers of students, teaching staff, administrative staff

1.4 Additional information on the assessed study programme(s)

- History / purpose / aims / development etc.

2 Part 2: Description of design, concept, implementation, and internal quality assurance of the doctoral programme

The ESG provide ten standards and corresponding guidelines for internal quality assurance. Each standard should be described in detail regarding the explanation stated in the corresponding guideline. In addition to the ESG standards, the self-assessment report should address the recommendations for the Salzburg principles. In some cases, Salzburg recommendations and ESD criteria are congruent while in other cases specific aspects of an ESG criteria are highlighted or enhanced.

The following part mirrors the ESG ten standards and guidelines and the additional criteria brought in by the Salzburg recommendations by pointing out exemplary documentation for the verification of fulfilment for each single standard.

Supporting records or otherwise supplemental documents should be listed as appendices. Although some documents may apply to more than one standard, it should be attached only once.

2.1 Policy for quality assurance

> **ESG Standard 1.1:** *Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.*

ESG Guidelines:

Policies and processes are the main pillars of a coherent institutional quality assurance system that forms a cycle for continuous improvement and contributes to the accountability of the institution. It supports the development of quality culture in which all internal stakeholders assume responsibility for quality and engage in quality assurance at all levels of the institution. In order to facilitate this, the policy has a formal status and is publicly available.

Quality assurance policies are most effective when they reflect the relationship between research and learning & teaching and take account of both the national context in which the institution operates, the institutional context and its strategic approach. Such a policy supports

- the organisation of the quality assurance system;

- departments, schools, faculties and other organisational units as well as those of institutional leadership, individual staff members and students to take on their responsibilities in quality assurance;

- academic integrity and freedom and is vigilant against academic fraud;

- guarding against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against the students or staff;

- the involvement of external stakeholders in quality assurance.

The policy translates into practice through a variety of internal quality assurance processes that allow participation across the institution. How the policy is implemented, monitored and revised is the institution's decision.

The quality assurance policy also covers any elements of an institution's activities that are subcontracted to or carried out by other parties.

Salzburg Recommendation 8: Quality and accountability:

It is necessary to develop specific systems for quality assurance in doctoral education based on the diverse institutional missions and, crucially, linked to the institutional research strategy. For this reason, there is a strong link between the assessment of the research of the institution and the assessment of

the research environments that form the basis of doctoral education. Assessment of the academic quality of doctoral education should be based on peer review and be sensitive to disciplinary differences.

In order to be accountable for the quality of doctoral programmes, institutions should develop indicators based on institutional priorities such as individual progression, net research time, completion rate, transferable skills, career tracking and dissemination of research results for early stage researchers, taking into consideration the professional development of the researcher as well as the progress of the research project.

Salzburg Recommendation 12: Legal Framework:

The national and European legal frameworks must give institutions the possibility to engage in innovative doctoral programmes and take the necessary institutional responsibilities. Institutions must be able to develop their systems for quality assurance and enhancement independently within their national frameworks. They must have the freedom to develop their own indicators for quality that correspond with the standards of the individual disciplines as well as with the overall institutional strategy.

Salzburg Recommendation 13: Intersectoral collaboration:

All stakeholders should engage in measures to facilitate cooperation between providers of doctoral education and the non-academic sectors to the mutual benefit of all partners. It is essential to create awareness about the qualities of doctorate holders as well as to build trust between universities and other sectors. Such trust is, for example, built on formalised but flexible research and research training collaboration between industry and higher education institutions, including joint research projects, industrial doctorates or similar schemes.

Exemplary documentation for appendix:

- Official and published documents that define the HEI's quality assurance system, both internally and externally.

- Research Ethics Policy / Code of Conduct

- Publication Guidelines of the HEI

- Guidelines for safeguarding Good Research Practice in cases of misconduct

- Guidelines for Research Data Management

2.2 Design and approval of programmes

ESG Standard 1.2: *Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.*

ESG Guidelines:

Study programmes are at the core of the higher education institutions' teaching mission. They provide students with both academic knowledge and skills including those that are transferable, which may influence their personal development and may be applied in their future careers.

Programmes

- are designed with overall programme objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes;

- are designed by involving students and other stakeholders in the work;

- benefit from external expertise and reference points;

- reflect the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe (cf. Scope and Concepts);

- are designed so that they enable smooth student progression;

- define the expected student workload, e.g. in ECTS;

- include well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate;

- are subject to a formal institutional approval process.

Salzburg Recommendation 11: Autonomy:

Institutions need autonomy to be able to establish, and be accountable for, diverse structures with different research strategies and strengths. The use of specific tools must be decided autonomously within the institution in accordance with the profile of the doctoral programme and the needs of the doctoral candidate.

Salzburg Recommendation 1: Research as the basis and the difference:

In line with the first Salzburg Principle, the goal of doctoral education is to cultivate the research mindset, to nurture flexibility of thought, creativity and intellectual autonomy through an original, concrete research project. It is the practice of research that creates this mindset.

Doctoral research takes place in a research environment with doctoral candidates as fellow researchers; this demands that institutions base their strategies for doctoral education on their research capacity, critical mass, diversity, and ability to create inclusive environments that will make doctoral candidates active participants in the on-going research.

It is hence essential that the development of doctoral education should follow its own path and not use the same tools as the first and second cycles.

Structuring doctoral education is to create a supportive environment. Setting up structures means taking institutional responsibility for training through research, as defined in the second Salzburg Principle. Doctoral education is an individual journey, and structures must give support to individual development, and not produce uniformity or predictability. The goals of structuring doctoral education must be to assure diverse and inclusive research environments of a high quality as the basis of doctoral education. This includes critical mass, transparent admission procedures and high quality of supervision.

Structuring doctoral education also means achieving flexible structures to expose early stage researchers to a wide range of opportunities, ensuring personal and professional development and to provide institutional support for career development and mobility. Taught courses are to be seen as a support to the individual professional development of doctoral candidates; they are not central to the meaning of structure.

When establishing structures, the importance of diversity as stressed in the third Salzburg Principle is crucial. Many different structures and diverse strategies will enrich doctoral education in Europe.

Structures should be developed at the appropriate level of governance and not be imposed on or within the institution. It is essential that academic staff takes responsibility and ownership of these structures through inclusive procedures.

Salzburg Recommendation 2: Critical mass and critical diversity:

Doctoral education is dependent on the research environment. Institutions must develop a critical mass and diversity of research in order to offer high quality doctoral education. Critical mass does not necessarily mean a large number of researchers, but rather the quality of the research. In line with the sixth Salzburg Principle, Europe's universities have developed diverse strategies to assure critical mass and diversity, building their areas of strength through focused research strategies and engaging in larger research networks, collaborations or regional clusters.

Salzburg Recommendation 5: Outcomes:

The main outcome of doctoral education are the early stage researchers and their contribution to society through knowledge, competences and skills learnt by undertaking research, as well as awareness and

openness towards other disciplines. The outcome of their research must testify to the originality of the research and be suitable for dissemination within the scientific community.

Salzburg Recommendation 7: Credits:

Applying the credit system developed for cohorts of students in the first and second cycles is not a necessary precondition for establishing successful doctoral programmes. Some universities consider credits useful for the taught components of doctoral education, especially in cross-institutional (joint) doctoral programmes. Credits, however, do not make sense when measuring the research component or its associated dissemination outputs. Applied wrongly, rigid credit requirements can be detrimental to the development of independent research professionals. High quality doctoral education needs a stimulating research environment driven by research enthusiasm, curiosity and creativity, not motivated by the collection of credits.

Salzburg Recommendation 9: Internationalisation:

Internationalisation strategies should be a tool in increasing the quality in doctoral education and in developing institutional research capacity. Internationalisation in doctoral education is understood and interpreted in different ways, ranking from internationalisation at home (using the international profile of the home institution such as international doctoral candidates, staff, events and guest researchers), collaborative doctoral programmes (with individual mobility – such as co-tutelle) to international joint doctoral programmes (joint, integrated curricula, joint committees and juries, and the joint degree). As stressed in the ninth Salzburg Principle, doctoral education should include the possibility for mobility experiences. The choice among these different models of internationalisation must be coherent with the research strategy of the institution and the individual needs of the doctoral candidate. The mobility of doctoral candidates must be driven by the research project.

Salzburg Recommendation 6: Career development:

Career support for doctoral candidates must take into account individual goals and motivations and acknowledge the wide range of careers for doctorate holders. While the doctoral candidate is responsible for their career choices given the situation on the labour market, it is the institution's responsibility to provide support structures for professional development. Offering training in transferable skills, including understanding the ethics of research, is central, and should be a priority for doctoral schools and programmes. Professional development of doctoral candidates includes awareness about skills attained through doing research as well as of the wide range of career choices for doctorate holders. Building ties to the other sectors contributes to bridging the communication gap with potential employers and recruiters.

Exemplary documentation for appendix:

- Guidelines for designing doctoral programmes

- Learning outcome matrix

- Curricular overview

- Syllabi

- Internship regulation

- Diploma Supplement

- Rules and Regulations for PhD Studies

- Internationalisation strategy (interdisciplinary and intersectoral mobility and international collaboration)

2.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

ESG Standard 1.3: *Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.*

ESG Guidelines:

Student-centred learning and teaching plays an important role in stimulating students' motivation, self-reflection and engagement in the learning process. This means careful consideration of the design and delivery of study programmes and the assessment of outcomes.

The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching

- respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths;

- considers and uses different modes of delivery, where appropriate;

- flexibly uses a variety of pedagogical methods;

- regularly evaluates and adjusts the modes of delivery and pedagogical methods;

- encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher;

- promotes mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship;

- has appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints.

Considering the importance of assessment for the students' progression and their future careers, quality assurance processes for assessment take into account the following:

- Assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field;

- The criteria for and method of assessment as well as criteria for marking are published in advance;

- The assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the learning process;

- Where possible, assessment is carried out by more than one examiner;

- The regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances;

- Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures;

- A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.

Salzburg Recommendation 4: Supervision:

As stressed in the fifth Salzburg Principle, supervision plays a crucial role. Supervision must be a collective effort with clearly defined and written responsibilities of the main supervisor, supervisory team, doctoral candidate, doctoral school, research group and the institution, leaving room for the individual development of the doctoral candidate. Providing professional development to supervisors is an institutional responsibility, whether organised through formal training or informal sharing of experiences among staff. Developing a common supervision culture shared by supervisors, doctoral school leaders and doctoral candidates must be a priority for doctoral schools. Supervisors must be active researchers.

Exemplary documentation for appendix:

- Supervision regulations und agreements

- Study and examination regulations

- Syllabi

- Blended Learning concepts

2.4   Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

ESG Standard 1.4: *Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student "life cycle", e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.*

ESG Guidelines:

Providing conditions and support that are necessary for students to make progress in their academic career is in the best interest of the individual students, programmes, institutions and systems. It is vital to have fit-for-purpose admission, recognition and completion procedures, particularly when students are mobile within and across higher education systems.

It is important that access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner. Induction to the institution and the programme is provided.

Institutions need to put in place both processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression.

Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components for ensuring the students' progress in their studies, while promoting mobility. Appropriate recognition procedures rely on

- institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition

- Convention;

- cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country.

Graduation represents the culmination of the students' period of study. Students need to receive documentation explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed.

Salzburg Recommendation 3: Recruitment, admission and status:

Structured programmes should develop recruitment strategies that correspond to their particular mission and profile. Recruitment strategies should be connected to explicit outcomes, identifying clear profiles of the candidates wanted. Such profiles should build on the parity of esteem of a range of different qualities and ensure equality of opportunity. In this manner, recruitment policies could take into account criteria such as international recruitment, gender equality, social background or different age groups.

Recruitment should value the research potential of the candidates over past performance and above all the candidates' potential to succeed in the programme to which they are being admitted.

Admission to a doctoral programme is an institutional responsibility, which must include the strong involvement of research staff. Admissions policies must be transparent and accountable and should reflect the research, supervisory and financial capacity of the institution. Admissions policies should also provide the appropriate flexibility in the choice of supervisor. Transparency and accountability will be strengthened by having a single, identifiable place to apply, at least at programme level. Admissions should be based on a well-defined, public set of criteria. Institutions should accept risk in admitting doctoral candidates and allow them to demonstrate their potential through a monitoring system.

Doctoral candidates should be recognised as early stage researchers with commensurate rights and duties. Regardless of legal status, they are to be seen and treated as professionals as stated in the fourth Salzburg Principle.

Exemplary documentation for appendix:

- Admission regulations

- Recognition regulations

- Mentoring/Tutoring guidelines

- Mentoring Agreement

- Graduation certification

- Diploma Supplement

- Transcript of Records

2.5   Teaching staff

> **ESG Standard 1.5:** *Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.*

ESG Guidelines:

The teacher's role is essential in creating a high quality student experience and enabling the acquisition of knowledge, competences and skills. The diversifying student population and stronger focus on learning outcomes require student-centred learning and teaching and the role of the teacher is, therefore, also changing (cf. Standard 1.3).

Higher education institutions have primary responsibility for the quality of their staff and for providing them with a supportive environment that allows them to carry out their work effectively.

Such an environment

- sets up and follows clear, transparent and fair processes for staff recruitment and conditions of
- employment that recognise the importance of teaching;
- offers opportunities for and promotes the professional development of teaching staff;
- encourages scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research;
- encourages innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies.

Exemplary documentation for appendix:
- Staff recruitment policy (including level of competence)
- Staff development policy
- Overview of the faculty staff

2.6   Learning resources and student support

> **ESG Standard 1.6:** *Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.*

ESG Guidelines:

For a good higher education experience, institutions provide a range of resources to assist student learning. These vary from physical resources such as libraries, study facilities and IT infrastructure to human

support in the form of tutors, counsellors and other advisers. The role of support services is of particular importance in facilitating the mobility of students within and across higher education systems.

The needs of a diverse student population (such as mature, part-time, employed and international students as well as students with disabilities), and the shift towards student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources and student support.

Support activities and facilities may be organised in a variety of ways depending on the institutional context. However, the internal quality assurance ensures that all resources are fit for purpose, accessible, and that students are informed about the services available to them.

In delivering support services the role of support and administrative staff is crucial and therefore they need to be qualified and have opportunities to develop their competences.

Salzburg Recommendation 10: Funding:

The tenth and final Salzburg Principle underlines the importance of sustainable funding. Universities as well as doctoral candidates are still underfunded. High quality doctoral education requires adequate, sustainable and doctoratespecific funding opportunities.

Making a structured programme a success requires more than funding for grants or salaries for doctoral candidates and research equipment. Strategic leadership, supporting structures and career development all need resources. The same goes for the management of the physical space where the programmes are located. Experiments with new types of research environments, open offices, retreats or similar have proven effective in creating inclusive research communities. Governments and funding organisations should be aware of these needs in their initiatives for doctoral education.

Giving doctoral schools and programmes the sustainable financial means to recruit candidates would improve the competitiveness of European doctoral education. Letting high quality doctoral schools administer resources for grants and salaries will strengthen the capacity of doctoral schools to engage in flexible recruitment strategies to attract the best candidates for their profile. Funding schemes that aim at increasing the number of doctoral candidates should take into account the quality and capacity of the programmes.

Exemplary documentation for appendix:

- Resource overview:
  - Infrastructure
  - Equipment

- o Finances

- o IT infrastructure

- o Libraries

- o Study facilities

- Support Staff overview

2.7 Information management

ESG Standard 1.7: *Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.*

ESG Guidelines:

Reliable data is crucial for informed decision-making and for knowing what is working well and what needs attention. Effective processes to collect and analyse information about study programmes and other activities feed into the internal quality assurance system.

The information gathered depends, to some extent, on the type and mission of the institution. The following are of interest:

- Key performance indicators;

- Profile of the student population;

- Student progression, success and drop-out rates;

- Students' satisfaction with their programmes;

- Learning resources and student support available;

- Career paths of graduates.

Various methods of collecting information may be used. It is important that students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.

Exemplary documentation for appendix:

- Evaluation regulations

- Data collection policy

2.8 Public information

> **ESG Standard 1.8:** *Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.*

ESG Guidelines:

Information on institutions' activities is useful for prospective and current students as well as for graduates, other stakeholders and the public.

Therefore, institutions provide information about their activities, including the programmes they offer and the selection criteria for them, the intended learning outcomes of these programmes, the qualifications they award, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used, the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to their students as well as graduate employment information.

Exemplary documentation for appendix:

- Information materials (e.g. flyer, website)

- Annual report

- Publicly accessible information on study programme(s) (e.g. admission criteria, learning outcomes, qualification awarded, teaching, learning and assessment procedures, pass rates, learning opportunities, graduate employment information)

2.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes

> **ESG Standard 1.9:** *Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.*

ESG Guidelines:

Regular monitoring, review and revision of study programmes aim to ensure that the provision remains appropriate and to create a supportive and effective learning environment for students.

They include the evaluation of:

- The content of the programme in the light of the latest research in the given discipline thus ensuring that the programme is up to date;

- The changing needs of society;

- The students' workload, progression and completion;

- The effectiveness of procedures for assessment of students;

- The student expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme;

- The learning environment and support services and their fitness for purpose for the programme.

Programmes are reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders. The information collected is analysed and the programme is adapted to ensure that it is up-to-date. Revised programme specifications are published.

Exemplary documentation for appendix:

- Quality management:

  o Quality management policy

  o Quality management manual

  o Quality management report

- Evaluation regulations

2.10 Cyclical external quality assurance

ESG Standard 1.10: *Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.*

ESG Guidelines:

External quality assurance in its various forms can verify the effectiveness of institutions' internal quality assurance, act as a catalyst for improvement and offer the institution new perspectives. It will also provide information to assure the institution and the public of the quality of the institution's activities.

Institutions participate in cyclical external quality assurance that takes account, where relevant, of the requirements of the legislative framework in which they operate. Therefore, depending on the framework, this external quality assurance may take different forms and focus at different organisational levels (such as programme, faculty or institution).

Quality assurance is a continuous process that does not end with the external feedback or report or its follow-up process within the institution. Therefore, institutions ensure that the progress made since the last external quality assurance activity is taken into consideration when preparing for the next one.

Exemplary documentation for appendix:

- Quality management:

    - Quality management policy

    - Quality management manual

    - Quality management report

3   Part 3: Appendix

Particularities, amendments, supporting materials (if needed official, legal or otherwise supplemental documents) should be placed in this section. It is important to structure this section comprehensibly (e. g. proper naming of the files).

For further information please contact us under:

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