

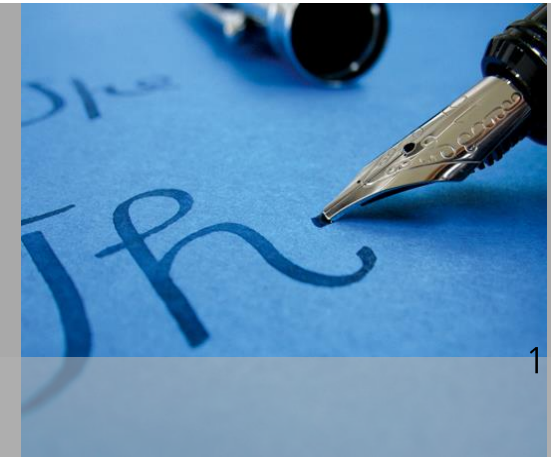
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# Deviations between Accreditation Recommendations of Expert Panels and Final Decisions of the German Accreditation Council

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Marion Moser, Managing Director



## **1 January 2018: Introduction of a new legal basis**

(Interstate Study Accreditation Treaty, Specimen Decree)

### German Accreditation Council (GAC) area of responsibility:

- Takes decision on accreditation of study programmes and quality management systems in teaching and learning of a higher education institutions

### Agency's area of responsibility:

- Organises and conducts an assessment procedure of a study programme or a quality management system of a higher education institution (system accreditation)
- Prepares an *accreditation report* (that consists of two parts: report on formal criteria and content-related report (academic criteria))

### Tasks of higher education institutions:

- Applies for accreditation via digital application system of the GAC (ELIAS) by uploading the *self-assessment report* and the *accreditation report*

## Basis for the decisions of the GAC

- Accreditation report that includes
  - formal report (created by the agency - assessment of formal criteria,)
  - expert report (content-related report = assessment of academic criteria, including an accreditation recommendation of the expert panel)
- In case when GAC deviates in its decision from the accreditation recommendations of the expert panel - the higher education institution has a possibility for a statement
- GAC has to give reasons for taking decisions divergent from expert accreditation recommendations
- Decisions of the GAC is an administrative act
  - (higher education institution is entitled to obtain an accreditation, if formal and content-related criteria are fulfilled)

# Study Programmes assessed by ACQUIN according to the Specimen Decree

## Period January 2019 - March 2020

### 2019:

- 206 study programmes discussed and examined in the accreditation commission and standing expert committees, (32 of them are first-time accreditations)
- Publication of results: So far 174 decisions published in GAC's database ELIAS

### 2020:

- 79 study programmes discussed and examined by the ACQUIN committees (15 first time accreditations). Higher education institutions have already submitted their application to GAC. Decisions are expected to be taken by the GAC in June 2020)
- Publication of results: So far 8 decisions published in ELIAS (due to COVID-19 pandemic)
- 178 study programmes have undergone the assessment procedure until July 2020, decisions are expected to be taken by the GAC in September 2020 )

# Accreditation recommendations of the expert panels

## Expert panels recommended:

- accreditation without conditions for 75 % of the study programmes
- Accreditation with conditions: 25 % of study programmes (in 15 % conditions to formal criteria; in 11 % conditions to academic criteria)

## Modification of the expert panel accreditation recommendation by the Accreditation Commission of ACQUIN:

- Deletion of a condition (for 2 study programmes): based on the statement provided by the higher education institution. The GAC has later followed the recommendation of the ACQUIN's accreditation commission for the deletion of the condition)
- Modification of a condition (for 1 study programme): based on the statement of the higher education institution. The GAC followed this suggestion of modification.
- Additional condition recommended (for 1 study programme) with regard to the ability to complete the study programme within the defined standard period of time. The GAC addressed this aspect to the higher education institution. The statement of the higher education institution clarified this aspect. In consequence, no additional condition by the GAC followed.

# Categories of conditions

## Formal conditions :

- Anchorage of h/ECTS-Credit in examination regulations
- Definition of workload in module descriptions (total workload)
- Definition of types of examination in examination regulations
- Diploma Supplement

## Academic criteria

- Revision of module descriptions (better description of qualification level, better description of the content, correction of inconsistencies etc)
- Strengthening of specific contents with relation to qualification objectives
- Ressources
- Adequate organisation of the study programme

# Deviations of the GAC compared to the expert panel recommendations

In 24 study programmes the GAC **modified** the accreditation recommendation of the expert panels and ACQUIN's Accreditation Commission

## Formal criteria

### Deletion of conditions (8 study programmes)

- Information about total workload of students in module descriptions not required
- More detailed description of requirements for MA students who participate in modules, which are offered for BA and MA students

### Additional Conditions (4 study programmes)

- Binding definition of the type and scope of alternative assessment formats
- Ensuring the degree level when crediting external non-university achievements
- Binding definition of ECTS credits for the admission to a Master programme in the examination regulation (300ECTS regulation)

# Deviations of the GAC compared to the expert panel recommendations

## Academic criteria

### Deletion of the following conditions (5 study programmes)

- English translation of examination regulations for international students
- More detailed description of learning outcomes in module descriptions
- Accordance of study programme title and content
- Description of module prerequisites
- Timetable for new available resources (technical equipment and staff)



# Deviations of the GAC compared to the expert panel recommendations

## Additional conditions (10 study programmes)

- **Ressources** (ensuring teaching by professors, ensuring of a specific discipline for the accreditation period)
- **Cooperation agreements** (Ensuring that the academic responsibility is with the higher education institution)
- Content of modules which are offered by institutions of the **professional practice**, quality assurance of those offerings and ensuring the respective academic level
- Strengthening of specific disciplines in study programmes and anchoring of learning outcomes in examination regulations
- **Specific study programme structure** (part-time, extra-occupational, etc.), anchoring of the specific study programme profile in the objectives of the programme and module descriptions, where applicable Modulbeschreibungen
- Systematic surveys on average of duration of study of students, and success rate
- Confirmation of **professional recognition (for regulated professions)**

## GAC notes (in terms of recommendations) on:

- Quality management (average study time, success rate, distribution of grades)
  - Ressources
  - Organisation of the study programme (distribution of exams, avoidance of overlaps)
  - Information of students (requirements for specific modules, specific requirements for study programmes)
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- Only in few cases the recommendations of the expert panels are mentioned extra (in form of notes) in the GAC decision
  - Notes are also generated out of the report without being extra mentioned by the expert panel

# Conclusion

## Findings

- Basically appropriate assessment of the specimens decree's criteria (formal and academic criteria) by the expert panel
- More flexibility in formal criteria compared to the previous regulations (e.g. h/ECTS definition also in module descriptions possible instead of definition in module handbook)
- Greater attention to respective specific requirements for study programmes with a special profile (part-time, continuing education, extra-occupational), cooperation with non-university institutions
- Stronger focus on assessment of resources (sustainability, condition to increase number of professors instead of proving, that learning and teaching is ensured at an appropriate scientific level by the institution -> **strengthening of this criterion**)

 **ACQUIN informs higher education institutions about the decision making practise of the GAC**

(e.g. with regard to formalities such as diploma supplement, design of dual study programmes, cooperation agreements etc.) for preparation of the self-assessment report, if required, guidelines are revised, new documents are created, as well GAC interpretations of the criteria have to be reflected in the sense of applicability for higher education institutions

# Conclusion

## Open aspects

- Should recommendations of the expert panel for the further development of the study programme be marked extra as recommendation in the report or would a note in the report without extra mentioning separately be sufficient?
- Are there disciplinary differences in the case of additional conditions by the GAC?

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