

## **Accreditation Report**

**Azerbaijan State Agricultural University  
Azerbaijan**

**Agricultural Management (M.Sc.)**

### **I Procedure**

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**Attendance by ACQUIN office:** Dr. Jasmine Rudolph

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#### **Peer review experts:**

- **Prof. Dr. Elena Kashtanova**, Anhalt University of Applied Sciences, Professor of International Trade in Agribusiness
- **FH-Prof. MMag. Dr. Michael Schmidthaler**, Upper Austria University of Applied Sciences, Professor and Head of study programme Agricultural Management and Innovations
- **Prof. Dr. Thore Toews**, Technical University Bingen, Professor for applied agricultural business management, agricultural accounting and taxation, taxation theory, agricultural business planning and controlling
- **Farhod Ahrorov**, PhD, Vice-Rector Samarkand branch of Tashkent State University of Economics (Uzbekistan)
- **Dr. Alen Mujcinovic**, Associate Professor, Faculty of Agriculture and Food Sciences University of Sarajevo Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- **Professor Anargul Belgibayeva**, Sh. Ualikhanov Kokshetau University, Department of Business and Services
- **Marat Onaev**, Zhangir Khan University (Uralsk, Kazakhstan), Director of the Institute of Agrotechnology

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- **Rinat Fazylbekov**, Deputy Head, Department of technology innovation Kazakh Research Institute of Plant, Protection and Quarantine
- **Professor Dr. Aleksandra Mandych**, State Biotechnological University, (Kharkiv, Ukraine), Economics and Management of Enterprise
- **Professor Dr. Volodymyr Pysarenko**, Poltava State Agrarian University (Poltava, Ukraine), Head of marketing department
- **Professor Valentina Yakubiv**, Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University, Vice-Rector for Research, Department of Business Administration
- **Alina Magomedova**, PhD, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Associate Professor, Department of Business Economics
- **Nurgaziev Mairambek**, PhD, Associate Professor, American University of Central Asia, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan
- **Ulrich Pingel**, CEO, Agralis GmbH
- **Sandra Koop**, University Kiel, Student of Agricultural Sciences (M.Sc.)

The **Assessment Report** of the peer-review experts is **based on** the self-assessment report of the Higher Education Institution (HEI) and extensive discussions with the HEI management, deans and/or heads of the departments, heads of study programme(s), lecturers, staff representatives, students, and alumni.

The basis of the **Assessment Criteria** is part 1 of the “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area” (ESG) in the current official version. At the same time the national context, particularly the national regulations regarding the establishment of study programmes, are taken into account.

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## **II Introduction**

The experts would like to thank the representatives of the HEI as well as students that they have taken part in the discussions and willingly shared information and their views during the site visit. The discussions are valuable not only for the assessment of the institution, but also for a better understanding of the legal and sociocultural context of the local higher education system.

Evaluation basis for the peer-review experts is the self-assessment report of the HEI as well as intensive discussions during the site visit with the HEI management, deans and/or heads of the departments, head(s) of the study programme(s), study programme(s) coordinators, teachers, lecturers, administrative staff, students, and graduates.

Main objective of the accreditation procedure is to assess the quality of the study programmes and compliance with the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" (ESG). The ESG standards are applied as main assessment criteria in the international accreditation procedure.

In addition, the respective country-specific criteria and standards are taken into account.

A group of experts was set up, which ensured that all areas relevant to the accreditation procedure (e.g. legal, structural, social etc. aspects) as well as the ESG and national criteria were considered. The peer-review experts include professors, representatives of the professional practice and the student representative. A certificate with the ACQUIN seal is awarded upon accreditation of the study programme(s).

### **1 Short profile of HEI**

Azerbaijan State Agricultural University was established as a faculty in 1920 and became an independent higher education institution in 1929.

Education system of the university consists of Agronomy, Soil science and agrochemistry, Veterinary medicine, Zooengineering, Engineering, Agrotechnology, Agricultural economics, Agribusiness and management faculties, correspondence education division and master training center. The university provides education in Azerbaijani, Russian and English languages for more than 6000 students from the different regions of the country and abroad.

Modern and refurbished buildings, classrooms, labs, research centers, baseline libraries, and internships in innovative agribusiness companies provide high quality education here. Our campus also has a gym, student leisure centers, summer schools, excursions and other amenities to provide an active student life at the university.

Today, more than 550 professors and teachers work in 8 faculties and 37 departments of ADAU, 33 specialties at the bachelor's, master's and doctoral levels, more than 6,000 students in 75 specializations study full-time and part-time. Teaching is conducted in 6 specialties in English and 10 specialties in Russian. Training of specialists in 14 specialties is carried out only by the state order. The university has partnerships with about 100 universities in more than 20 countries.

As part of this project, since 2003, 8-10 university students have been taking master's courses at the Weihenstephan-Triesdorf University of Applied Sciences every year. Quantitative indicators of the master's course "Agricultural Management" quota formation at the Azerbaijan State Agrarian University, as of 15.09. of the current year Since 2005, under this project, preparation for a bachelor's degree and since 2010 for a master's degree have been carried out annually according to the German program for the subject of agricultural management. On October 27, 2010, ASAU and the Weihenstephan-Triesdorf University of Applied Sciences signed a cooperation agreement in the area of professor, teaching and student exchanges as well as joint seminars and research. At this university it has become possible to get a master's degree in «Agricultural Management» will secure the European level of administration at all levels of administration in agriculture.

### III Implementation and assessment of the criteria

*The peer-review experts assess the quality of the study programme(s) and compliance with the ESG standards as well as with the national standards. The report must document the assessment of each study programme in the cluster, taking into account each criterion. Depending on the criterion, the assessment of criterion may be appropriate at the study programmes cluster level in order to avoid repetition and better describe general context.*

#### 1 ESG Standard 1.1: Policy for quality assurance

**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.**

##### 1.1 Implementation

The mission of the university is taking into consideration global challenges, modern, innovative education and training infrastructure, the university aims to prepare highly qualified specialists through education and research in the agricultural field and thus:

It strives to increase the income of farmers, to increase productivity in agriculture and to contribute to food security.

Strategic vision of the university is to be the university with the most modern and high-quality agricultural education and research that meets the requirements of the labor market in the region.

In order to achieve strategic goals, the university is building its current activities in the direction of achieving the following goals:

- Improving the quality of education and teaching, continuous improvement of the teaching process;
- focusing on the learner and his development;
- Formation of a creative, entrepreneurial and international environment for research;
- Increasing international competitiveness, ensuring the satisfaction of interested parties;
- Digitalization and application of innovative solutions;
- Providing a safe working and learning environment, improving working conditions;
- Strengthening infrastructure and ensuring sustainability;



- Increasing the sense of social responsibility and public reputation.

The staff of the university undertakes the quality of the work they perform, and the top management undertakes the responsibility of creating suitable conditions and providing necessary resources for the implementation of the policy.

Management of quality assurance within the university is carried out with the participation of all structural units of the university, including the Department of Quality Assurance and Strategic Development, as well as teachers, students and teaching staff, including employers, labor market representatives and other stakeholders. Each structural unit, faculty and students, as well as teaching staff perform their functions in quality assurance within the university within the obligations and responsibilities defined by normative documents and explained in the trainings. The Quality Assurance policy is regularly updated to keep up with trends, taking into account changes at the national and international levels.

The university created a quality assurance system in accordance with the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" (ESG) and the "International Organization for Standardization" (ISO) standards based on the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

One of the key activities of the University and the Department of Quality Assurance and Strategic Development is to ensure transparent communication and information to the public and stakeholders. The official website of the university and the "ADAU official" page, which operates on social networks (facebook, instagram, twitter, youtube), actively updates all educational and social processes taking place at the university.

The Regulation and Policy of the Department of Quality Assurance and Strategic Development of the University are posted on the official website of the Azerbaijan State Agrarian University.

## **1.2 Assessment**

Based on the university goals and strategic management, the quality assurance policy has been implemented appropriately in the field of research, teaching and learning. Hence, the quality assurance policy of the University meets the requirements of the Ministry of Education and Science. In addition, the successful results of previous years and promising goals for the future shows the satisfaction of internal and external stakeholders in terms of cooperation.

There are functioning Department of Quality Assurance and Strategic Development, formally responsible for quality assurance within the University. The University creates a quality assurance system by the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" (ESG) and the "International Organization for Standardization" (ISO) standards based on the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Azerbaijan. "Raising the quality of

education and teaching" is one of the aims of "The Azerbaijan State Agricultural University Development Strategy for 2021-2025 years", developed according to the "Socio-Economic Development Strategy for 2021-2025" of Azerbaijan and "Azerbaijan 2030: National Priorities for Socio-Economic Development" approved by the Resolution of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated February 2, 2021, "State Program on Increasing the International Competitiveness of the Higher Education System in the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2019-2023".

The analysis of the internal quality assurance of the programme has shown that the procedures for the development, approval, periodic review and monitoring of the Master's programme "Agricultural Management" (M.Sc.) are carried out in accordance with the study regulations, which indicates that the initiation, development, approval, monitoring, revision and termination of the Master's programme at the University are carried out transparently and in accordance with the approved procedures, in line with the general objectives of the University's development strategy, as well as the students of education participate in the design and improvement of the Master's programme, the evaluation of its components and the quality of teaching.

The quality assurance system for the educational process consists of an internal quality assurance system (administration, department for quality assurance of education, pedagogical and methodological centre for the organisation of the educational process) and external quality assurance.

The main goal of the quality assurance institutions of the Azerbaijan State Agricultural University is to support the achievement of the purposes of the strategic plan - "The Azerbaijan State Agricultural University Development Strategy for 2021-2025 years," adopted by the University. The activity's main direction is to improve personnel training, including the quality of education and development of the University's scientific research potential.

During the meeting with the representatives of the University it was noted and confirmed that the University has a clear quality culture that ensures systematic development of the educational programme. The University has an Education Quality Assurance Department, whose main purpose is to monitor educational activities and evaluate the data of academic activities in order to effectively manage the quality of the educational process.

During the accreditation process, it was noted that the results of external quality assurance of higher education are presented in detail on the University's website, especially the comments and suggestions made during previous accreditations on the official website of the University.

The structural units of the university have their regulation documents, where measures for quality assurance are provided. Additionally, each staff position has job instructions, where quality assurance tasks are provided. Quality assurance policy tasks are carried out with the

participation of all structural units of the university, including students and teaching staff, employers, and labor market representatives.

The structural unit involved in this process, inspection and analysis of faculty and students, is regularly and systematically monitored by members of the Quality Assurance and Strategic Development Department and an independent Quality Assurance Council.

Student satisfaction surveys are conducted with the group's active students during the semester, and dozens of surveys are conducted regularly after graduation.

In the accreditation process, it is clear that employers are constantly involved in the process of periodic revision of the educational programme. The university has consultation and advisory bodies, as well as an expert council of employers and graduates.

QA unit is responsible for strategic development, strengthening measures, and means towards the quality of education and research at ADAU. There is the Quality Assurance and Strategic Development Department as a structural unit of management of the university and the independent Quality Assurance Council, consisting of faculty, students, and external stakeholder. This combination gives solid administrative power to promote QA policy and actions, while an independent Council provides advisory and monitoring functions.

The criterion fulfilled because ADAU presents its formal policy on quality assurance in accordance with the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" (ESG) as well as the "International Organization for Standardization" (ISO) standards.

### 1.3 Conclusion

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

## 2 ESG Standard 1.2: Design and approval of programmes

**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.**

### 2.1 Implementation

According to the Quality Assurance Policy of the Azerbaijan State Agrarian University, educational programs are developed and updated in accordance with international standards, taking into account modern challenges and sustainable development. In general, the structural unit

involved in this process, inspection and analysis of faculty and students, is regularly and systematically monitored by members of the Quality Assurance and Strategic Development Department and an independent Quality Assurance Council.

## **2.2 Assessment**

According to the national standard, the curriculum of the Master's program "Agricultural Management" (M.Sc.) has been successfully adapted to the national standard since 2009 and approved by the Ministry of Education and Science. Hence, in the specialization component, all 18 subjects of the curriculum are approved by HSWT. Currently, all components of the curriculum have been successfully implemented in the practice in terms of education, research and employment. In addition, the current local and global agricultural production system shows the relevance and necessity of this curriculum, as well as the fact that it corresponds to the goals of the Kyrgyz government and national strategies.

The study programme is in line with the University's mission and vision, as well as with the goals of the 2020-2024 strategic plan, particularly with the first 3 objectives of education, research and management.

The content of the educational program has a clear structure; the educational components included in the educational program make up a logical interconnected system and collectively allow the achievement of stated goals and program learning outcomes.

The content of the educational programme corresponds to the subject area of the subject area "Management" of the Master's level of the university. In particular, the ability to solve complex tasks, which fully corresponds to the standard of higher education in the field of knowledge "Management and Administration", is the integral feature of the educational programme. The structure of the educational program provides an opportunity for the formation of an individual educational trajectory, in particular through the individual choice of academic disciplines by students of higher education to the extent provided by legislation.

The educational program and curriculum provide for the practical training of higher education students, which allows them to acquire the competencies necessary for further professional activity.

The scope of the educational program and individual educational components (in credits of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) realistically reflects the actual workload of applicants, is appropriate for achieving the goals and programmatic results of education.

The right to freely choose educational components and form an individual trajectory is provided for by the educational program and regulated by relevant regulatory acts. Students studying in the educational program can individually choose the bases of practice and the topic of the

master's thesis. The educational program provides practical training and allows you to acquire the competencies necessary for further professional activity.

Students' English language skills should be improved. Higher entrance requirements should be created with regard to English skills or students should be offered compulsory language courses to improve their English language skills.

Within the framework of the further development of the curriculum, current topics such as big data and digitalisation should be given greater consideration.

### 2.3 Conclusion

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

## 3 ESG Standard 1.3: Student-centred learning, teaching, and assessment

**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**

### 3.1 Implementation

Student-centred learning is in a view of the university an approach to education, which aims at overcoming some of the problems inherent to more traditional forms of education by focusing on the learner and their needs, rather than being centred around the teacher's input. This approach has many implications for the design and flexibility of curriculum, course content, and interactivity of the learning process.

Student-centred learning teaching and assessment at the university puts emphasis on project-based, interdisciplinary learning, deep connection between curriculum and student interests, assessment as a tool to measure learning and help students grow, meaningful feedback platforms for students and families, learning plans tailored to individual students and flexibility and adaptability—especially evident during the shift to virtual learning.

One of the main goals of the student-oriented education system is to support the active participation of students in the teaching and management process, to develop their self-analytical and analytical thinking skills and to ensure the training of specialists in line with modern market requirements. As one of the requirements of student-centered education, student satisfaction surveys are conducted with the group's active students during the semester, and dozens of surveys are conducted regularly after graduation. Surveys help our graduates build careers in their field or other specialties, identify their strengths and weaknesses by the university, and support us in solving problems in the future. Recognizing that student assessment is an important issue, each teacher's syllabus is updated to ensure that the process is up-to-date,

transparent, and objective, and that these syllabi are presented to students before class begins. In addition, students are given the right to participate in the process when compiling a syllabus, because we can assume the university as a company and the students like our client, if the student wants to see a topic in the syllabus that will develop him/her in the future, then the syllabus is changed. One of the policies pursued by our university in accordance with the requirements of student-centered education is the right of students to submit to the Appeals Commission any questions that fall outside the lecture materials or are incorrectly formulated.

### **3.2 Assessment**

Overall, it can be stated that the teaching methods used promote student-centred learning and are sufficiently diverse. The teaching and learning forms are therefore rated as very good by the evaluators. The students provide information about a very good supervision relationship with the teaching staff. The students are very satisfied with the supervision and emphasised the excellent support and accessibility of the teaching staff. The study advisors advise students on the choice of study programme and the creation of an individual study plan.

Students are continuously supported by the teaching staff in preparing for exams. The examination regulations are also transparent.

All documents relevant to the study programme are available in the university information system.

All information on the study programme is complete and transparent. Interactive teaching methods encourage students to take an active role in the learning process.

Students receive questionnaires to evaluate their courses and the overall learning experience. Discussing the feedback from these surveys with students can be an additional valuable tool in the student-centred quality process. Students can use office hours and the various electronic communication tools to submit complaints or suggestions for improvement.

Students also have various options available for complaints about assessment.

Students are assessed through various methods, e.g. written and oral examinations, presentations and written assignments. The assessment corresponds to the intended learning outcomes. The assessment procedure and regulations are clear to students and are published at the beginning of each course.

Quality control of study preparation takes place throughout the study period and consists of sufficient different control measures:

The University provides equal opportunities for students in all fields of study, regardless of gender, nationality, religion and social status, language and mode of instruction, as well as

taking into account special educational needs and individual opportunities to design an individual educational programme aimed at developing the student's professional competence and cognitive activity.

Thus, the documents and materials provided by the university indicate that the university has developed an effective system of knowledge control. It can be concluded that the university applies the principle of student-centred learning, which aims at the personal development of students and ensures equal opportunities for all groups of students.

The study program Master course in Agricultural Management

integrated to Aim 1 of Azerbaijan State Agricultural University Development Strategy for 2021-2025 years: Raising the quality of education and teaching by adaptation of international educational programs (curriculum), involvement of employers in the process of updating educational plans, integration of business and entrepreneurship training at postgraduate level, modularization of education and Aim 2 - Focusing on student and his/her development. Also, the program helps to enhance the international competitiveness of ADAU.

External stakeholders, job market representatives, and students are actively involved in designing the study program. While compulsory modules and curriculum are taken from HSWT as core, the content of modules, learning outcomes as well as literature are modified and adjusted according to local needs.

The degree program (Master of Science) aims to train specialists in application-oriented agriculture management. It is based on the Master Study Course "International Agricultural Management" (IMA) at the University of Applied Sciences Weihenstephan-Triesdorf (HSWT). Graduates can independently and responsibly perform a wide range of tasks in managing and consulting agricultural businesses, technical training and higher education institutions, professional organizations, international projects, and institutions.

The curriculum of the Master Study Course, "International Agricultural Management" (IMA) at the University of Applied Sciences Weihenstephan-Triesdorf (HSWT), is implemented at ADAU. Modules of IMA (HSWT) program are adapted. Some modifications and adjustments in adapted modules leave gaps in the development of the profile of graduates. For example, in the context of the compulsory module Business management, the topics of Management Accounting and Risk assessment of business projects in agriculture are omitted. The purpose and content of the compulsory module Computer Science for Business and Empirical Social Research (of ADAU) is about the role of science and research in the world today; special features of research activities; types and characteristics of scientific research, general research methodology; characteristics of social events of modernity and study in historical context; the value and prospects of empirical research. In comparison, according to the aims and objectives

of the program, the module should develop the knowledge, skills, and understandings of students: to understand methods of data collection and statistical analysis in social science or economic issues as well as scientific or technical experiments and to apply them to agricultural, horticultural or food value chains and related topics.

Graduates are considered managers who can work along the entire value chain in the agricultural, horticultural, and food industries, in consultancy and research organizations, or for administrative bodies and authorities within higher civil service locally and internationally.

At the curricula, 1st semester is defined as practical semester. Students are placed at agricultural and agribusiness enterprises and mentored by university faculty.

The interdisciplinarity of the program creates a solid base for the sustainability of graduates' employment. Balanced soft and hard skills contribute to lifelong personal development competencies. Introduction of the Computer Science for Business and Empirical, Social Research module contributes to developing research skills.

The program was developed with 120 credits for a period of 2 years (4 semesters) in accordance with the classification of specializations at the master's level of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the rules of master's education. It was approved by the decision of the Scientific Council of the Azerbaijan State Agricultural University on June 29, 2022.

Academic and research potential of ADAU and as well as long term cooperation with IMA program of HSWT allowed to easily adapt and deliver program.

At the same time, comparative analysis of ADAU and HSWT program profiles and modules revealed that content of some modules were significantly changed, while aims, objectives and structure of program remained. Thus, the content of modules, especially compulsory modules should be revised and optimized with purpose of development of defined competences of graduates.

### **3.3 Conclusion**

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

## **4 ESG Standard 1.4: Student admission, progression, recognition, and certification**

<b>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.</b>
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#### **4.1 Implementation**

Applicants must satisfy the requirements for admission to the course of study in question or, provided that the university is satisfied that the applicant is capable of successfully completing the proposed course of study, be dispensed from such requirements.

In addition, the following conditions apply:

Applicants for admission to courses of study leading to the award of an undergraduate degree must satisfy the university general entry requirements as set out in the University Undergraduate Prospectus for admission in the year in question or, provided that the University is satisfied that the applicant is capable of successfully completing the proposed course of study, be dispensed from the general entry requirements. Holders of other qualifications will be considered individually.

Applicants for admission to courses of study leading to the award of a Graduate Diploma will normally be expected to have a degree in an appropriate subject awarded by ADAU or equivalent. Holders of other qualifications will be considered individually.

Applicants for admission to postgraduate courses of study will normally be expected to have an Honours degree in an appropriate subject awarded by a British university or equivalent. Holders of other qualifications will be considered individually.

#### **4.2 Assessment**

The study requirements are clearly defined and can also be viewed by applicants across parents on the university's website. The website in question is easy to find and very clearly laid out. The university has a suitable procedure for recording relevant information on the course of studies and taking action if necessary. The review panel assesses the admission procedure as transparently described and well thought-out. At the beginning of their studies, students are sufficiently informed about the course of their studies and all opportunities to participate in university life. Upon completion of their studies, graduates therefore receive meaningful and transparent documents showing the qualifications and learning outcomes acquired. In addition, the university has sufficient procedures in place to collect information on students' progress.

Admission requirements are clearly defined. Admission in relation to the need for teachers ensures that there is no oversupply of trained teachers. In addition to the regular admission procedure, the university supports disabled students and students from national minorities.

The university monitors the development of students during their studies. An important element of student success is the sharing of information about the structure of the study programme, prerequisites for course selection, course objectives, course assignments, examinations, workload, etc. In the department, a compulsory introductory course is offered to all students, which

introduces them to all the above-mentioned areas. In addition, students receive information from various counselling services throughout their stay at the university.

The degree certificates issued by the university enable students to either continue their education at institutions outside the country or to pursue a professional career abroad.

Overall, it can be said that the university has transparent enrolment procedures, records and monitors the development of students and issues sufficiently meaningful graduation certificates that demonstrate the qualifications acquired in the programme.

### 4.3 Conclusion

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

## 5 ESG Standard 1.5: Teaching staff

**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**

### 5.1 Implementation

Human Resources Department provides education and development opportunities for university staff, faculty members and volunteers. The purpose of these opportunities is to enhance the performance and effectiveness of the participant in his/her current job assignment and to broaden the individual's knowledge and skills for future job responsibilities.

The university reaffirms its commitment that there shall be no discrimination against program participants. The university values diversity and is committed to equal opportunity for persons regardless of age, color, disability, ethnicity, gender identity or expression, genetic information, marital status, military/veteran status, national origin, race, religion/creed, sex, sexual orientation, or any other status protected by law. Further, the university complies with all applicable nondiscrimination laws in the administration of its policies, admissions, employment, and access to and selection for university programs, training and activities.

The university is committed to hiring a diverse workforce whose knowledge, skills, and abilities support the university's mission of teaching, research, and public service. The university Staff system created under the authority of the Restructuring Act encompasses a broad variety of employment types. This policy identifies those categories of university staff employment and the terms and conditions associated with each.

The terms and conditions of employees are dependent on the category of university staff employment. University employees fall into one of three categories: Executive & Senior Administrative, Managerial & Professional, and Operational & Administrative.

The terms and conditions of employees are dependent on their category, and whether the employee is full- or part-time, and whether the position is restricted, includes a probationary period, has a limited term appointment, or an individually negotiated contract. Eligibility for health care benefits, retirement plan options, leave accrual, access to the grievance procedure, and layoff and severance benefits are specific to the employee's category of staff employment. Changes to an employee's category of staff employment can result in changes to the employee's terms and conditions.

All employees must competently perform their assigned duties in compliance with state law and applicable university policies, including avoiding and disclosing in a timely manner conflicts of interests.

## **5.2 Assessment**

In general, according to the University's self-assessment report, the positive trends in education, research and training shows the effectiveness of the University's human resources policy. Also, bilateral and multilateral active cooperation with internal and external partners indicates that the University has been achieving good results in the field of education, research and professional training of teaching staff.

The academic and professional qualifications of the teachers involved in the implementation of the educational program ensure the achievement of the goals and program learning outcomes defined by the respective program.

Procedures for the competitive selection of teachers are transparent and allow to ensure the necessary level of their professionalism for the successful implementation of the educational program.

The procedure of competitive selection for the positions of scientific and pedagogical workers at the University is regulated by the relevant Regulations and determines the main requirements and procedures of competitive selection.

The announcement of the competition is posted on the University's website in accordance with the legislation. When evaluating candidates during the competitive selection of teachers, academic and professional qualifications are taken into account in accordance with the goals of the educational program and professional activity. The level of proficiency in the state language, foreign languages, the presence of an academic title, a scientific degree in the specialty of teaching disciplines is taken into account; availability of scientific publications, including in Scopus, WoS, textbooks, manuals, methodological developments, participation in international projects, internships, experience of teaching and practical work, participation in grant projects and research topics, etc.

The institution of higher education promotes the professional development of teachers through its own programs or in cooperation with other organizations.

The university, together with its partners, provides various forms of professional development of teachers.

Teachers improve their professional qualifications and teaching skills mostly through participation in projects, internships, trainings, etc.

The teaching staff can be hired in the HES based on Article 50 (Regulation of Labour Relations concerning Positions Occupied by Competition) of the Code of Labour of the Republic of Azerbaijan. There are no special programmes for the initial education of future academic staff in the higher education system. Admission criteria to the higher education institutions for those planning to pursue an academic career are equivalent to those anticipated for any other student applying for a higher education programme. Typically, a PhD degree is required for those applying for academic staff positions, although persons with master degree may apply for some positions. Research work and the publication of research papers are highly valued for students aiming for academic career. According to these regulations, every five years, all teaching positions (assistant professor; university lecturer; senior university lecturer; associate professor; university professor) are declared vacant and should be occupied on the competitive basis.

Scientific activities are part of duties and workload of ADAU teaching staff. Faculty members should provide proof of scientific activities annually. All necessary support and conditions as well as research infrastructure provided. The professional development of the academic staff is in most cases based on the scientific work. There are no requirements determined by the Law regarding the professional development on this level, which is therefore most commonly optional, unless required differently by a particular higher education institution. However, the professional development in the form of published scientific papers and other relevant publications is extremely important for career promotion, this being one of the criteria for the teacher's employment and earning a higher-ranking title.

The institution of higher education attracts practicing professionals, industry experts, and representatives of employers to classroom classes.

All teachers of the program improve their professional qualifications on an ongoing basis in the areas of the disciplines they teach. Teachers undergo internships, courses to improve pedagogical skills. The best practices are the academic mobility of teachers, both international and national, to participate in conferences, forums, and seminars. Active academic and professional activity contributes to the internationalization of the educational program and the University. The competitive selection procedure is transparent, takes into account teachers' professionalism, experience, and pedagogical skills.

Professional teaching is assured. Applicant selection and staff development are clearly regulated and meet all standards. There is no doubt about the academic qualifications of the teaching staff. The numerical ratio of teachers to students is very good, which is also appreciated by the students. In the discussions with lecturers and students, the impression was confirmed that the staff is very good, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The students confirmed very good supervision by the lecturers. All lecturers are very well qualified. They describe the situation in class and the contact with the lecturers as extremely pleasant and motivating. Yet, the English language skills of teaching and administrative staff should be improved and corresponding further training courses implemented.

The same standards and uniform application procedures for teaching staff should be prevailed at all partner universities.

Professional practice representatives should be consulted in an institutionalised way in curriculum development.

However, despite the above-mentioned positive trends, the University's human resources policy should continue to increase the transparency of recruitment of the teaching staff and develop new training methods, technologies and their implementation.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

## **6 ESG Standard 1.6: Learning resources and student support**

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

### **6.1 Implementation**

Student Support Services offers services to enhance student learning and academic success. It implements and coordinates student peer tutoring programs, study skills development courses and workshops, services for students with disabilities, and academic counseling. Services are free to all students enrolled in the university.

The Learning Resources Staff conducts Study Skills workshops throughout the year and are available upon request.

Three departments particularly, Education, Science and International Office work with students to evaluate and identify problem areas and develop strategies to improve them.

## 6.2 Assessment

The ratio between the number of students and the teaching materials and spaces is appropriate. Libraries and classrooms are well digitised and it should be mentioned which has a positive effect on the development process of student-centred learning. Therefore, the premises and equipment are adequate to support the effective implementation of the programme objectives and learning success in all respects.

From the meeting with the student council and the self-evaluation report, it can be concluded that the information provided to the students about the service facilities of the university is very good.

The resource facilities of the study programme can be described as very good. The modern and excellent equipment, which corresponds to the subject standards, is suitable for providing students with a sound education. In the opinion of the review panel, the overall resource endowment is thus very well suited for the implementation of the degree programme. Buildings, rooms and technical equipment can be described as exemplary. The library offers students extensive support in searching for information and using the available technology. The university is also well equipped for digital teaching.

The needs of a heterogeneous student body are also adequately addressed. Internal quality assurance takes material resources into account in its evaluation culture and regularly solicits feedback from students. The evaluation team assesses all material, financial and human resources as fully sufficient to achieve the qualification goals of the study programme. The needs of a heterogeneous student body are taken into account in every respect.

For the administrative staff, there is the possibility of individual further development. The scope and qualifications of the non-academic administrative staff can be described as very good. Sufficient opportunities for further training are available.

It can be stated that the degree programme has a high degree of studyability. Yet, the University of Applied Science Weihenstephan-Triesdorf should establish a good administrative infrastructure for all partner universities and create even more support services in general and during student mobility phases with a view to even better studyability.

In order to guarantee the implementation of the study programme, the staff should also grow with the increasing number of students.

## 6.3 Conclusion

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

## 7 ESG Standard 1.7: Information management

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

### 7.1 Implementation

Information management is a broad aspect of collecting and managing information that has been gathered from various sources. The term ideally explains the point of distributing the information to one or more audiences. The issue of distributing information must always consider the right of the audience to the access of the said information. As a business term, management of information will entail planning, controlling, organizing, processing, and evaluating as well as reporting the information. This is done objectively in meeting the functions of an organization as far as information is concerned. There has always been a growing need to train managers and young professionals on how to deal with information issues. This has seen the launch of a Masters degree in Information Management program.

A Master of Information Management is a program designed to enable a reliable link between the dynamics of technology and management in the business world today. IT professionals are to get quality skills and leadership techniques on how to deal with organizational information. The Masters degree in Information Management has become globally recognized with the rising demand for quality information control in organizations.

Those seeking to advance their managerial skills in the IT related field of the business can now enroll for the globally offered Master in Information Management degree. It is a program structured to equip students with interdisciplinary skills and knowledge in knowledge management, business administration, information systems, and information architecture among other fields.

ADAU also offers graduate courses on various specialties to 407 graduate students. Graduate programs provide specialized education based on undergraduate courses.

Management (German program)

The graduate program in management (German program) passed international accreditation with German Accreditation, Certification, and Quality Assurance Institute on December 20, 2019.

### 7.2 Assessment

### 7.3 Conclusion

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

## 8 ESG Standard 1.8: Public information

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

### 8.1 Implementation

The main source of public information about the program is the official website of the university, website of the Faculty of Agricultural Economics, website of the Faculty of Agrobusiness and Management, and website of the Master's Center which is the graduation department for this program.

All persons interested in receiving information about events at the university and, in particular, information updates on program have informational support through close communication using various social networks: Facebook, Instagram. The Master's Preparing Center additionally highlights all information related to the program on its official Facebook page. Considerable attention is paid to the coverage of all events related to the organization of the educational process, the life of students and graduates. The university has its own YouTube channel, where all scientific and educational events of the university are covered and students upload videos. Students can find here the information about the history of successful partnership, advantages of studying the master's program etc.

### 8.2 Assessment

The main source of public information about the study program "Agricultural Management" (M.Sc.) is the official website of the university, the website of the Faculty of Agricultural Economics, the website of the Faculty of Agrobusiness and Management, and website of the Master's Center which is the graduation department for this study program.

All persons interested in receiving information about events at the university and, in particular, information updates on program have informational support through close communication using various social networks: Facebook, Instagram. The Master's Preparing Center additionally highlights all information related to the program on its official Facebook page. Considerable attention is paid to the coverage of all events related to the organization of the educational process, the life of students and graduates. The university has its own YouTube channel, where all scientific and educational events of the university are covered and students upload videos. Students can find here the information about the history of successful partnership, advantages of studying the master's program etc.

The university offers detailed information on studying and teaching as well as on the university's main research areas. Organisational documents and relevant regulations are made available on the website. Contact persons and contact points for the degree programme and student life are clearly and transparently named.



The information provided to the public about the degree programme is satisfactory overall. There are many opportunities for prospective students to find out about the university and student life.

Information about study programmes is publicly available (admission criteria, learning outcomes, qualifications awarded, information about employment of graduates, etc.). Information about the study programme that is in line with the university's mission is secured. High school graduates, students, graduates and other interested groups can find out about the university's activities and offers on its homepage. In addition, contact persons are named for further information and questions. Yet there should be better strategic communication activities developed to publicise the study offer in order to arouse the interest of potential applicants in the long term.

The university provides information about its activities, such as the degree programme and the selection criteria for admission, the intended learning outcomes of the degree programmes, the teaching, learning and examination methods, the student success rates and the qualifications of the teaching staff.

In addition, the university provides information on its homepage about its academic achievements, such as publications, external and internal conferences and events, as well as non-academic achievements, such as cultural and social projects and activities.

The study-related documents and information are to be accessible to both students and prospective students. In addition, contact persons are named for further information and questions.

The university provides information about its activities. The University conducts its activities based on the principles of transparency, openness, involvement and awareness-raising of all stakeholders in educational activities: One of the main means of providing information is through the use of information technology and media. In addition to the information on the University's website, the public and applicants are provided with information on the specifics of the study programme under accreditation through events such as the Open Day.

### **8.3 Conclusion**

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

## **9 ESG Standard 1.9: On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes**

**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.**

## 9.1 Implementation

The university determines the mechanisms for monitoring and periodic evaluation of the study program to ensure the achievement of the goal and meet the needs of students, society and show the focus of the mechanisms on the continuous improvement of the EP.

Monitoring and periodic evaluation of the EP includes following aspects

- the content of the programs in the light of the latest achievements of science in a particular discipline to ensure the relevance of the discipline taught;
- changes in the needs of society and the professional environment; workload, performance and graduation of students; the effectiveness of student assessment procedures;
- expectations, needs and satisfaction of students with the study program training; educational environment and support services, and their compliance with the objectives of the EP.

The management of the study program must demonstrate a systematic approach in monitoring and periodically assessing the quality of the program.

The university, the management of the study program should determine the mechanism for informing all interested parties about any planned or undertaken actions in relation to the EP. All changes made to the study program must be published.

Monitoring and periodic evaluation of accredited educational programs are aimed at achieving the goals of the study program and the full formation of the planned learning outcomes. The university administration has defined its own requirements for the format of monitoring and periodic evaluation. The procedure for monitoring and periodic evaluation of the study programs at the university is carried out on the basis of internal regulations.

Monitoring of progress and development of the curriculum takes place regularly as part of the program. The assessment procedures at the university are determined centrally within the framework of the Rules for conducting intermediate attestation of students at the university, approved by the decision of the Academic Council and are necessarily reflected in the syllabuses of disciplines.

An important part of the monitoring and evaluation of educational programs is the feedback from students, which is received during an anonymous student survey conducted at the end of each semester.

The university management demonstrates its openness and accessibility for students, teaching staff, and employers. As a communication channel for proposals, traditional forms of feedback are used - meetings with the leadership and administration of the university. The university on a systematic basis provides a review of the content and structure of educational programs, which strengthens the procedures for continuous monitoring of the study program.

## **9.2 Assessment**

The Examination of the regulatory documents in the Academic Policy section of the University's website, the self-evaluation report, the results of the faculty and student survey, and the results of the online survey confirmed that monitoring and regular evaluation of the study programme "Agricultural Management"(M.Sc.) is carried out at the University.

The schedule of activities for monitoring the quality of education was approved, according to which the University monitors and regularly evaluates the study programmes in order to achieve the objectives and meet the needs of students and society. In order to determine the level of satisfaction of internal needs, the University organises and conducts a survey among students, faculty and University staff every academic session.

The survey is conducted to determine the level of satisfaction with the students' educational needs, their attitude towards the educational process, the socio-cultural environment, etc.

The results of the survey are statistically analysed, discussed in the administrative meetings and taken into account in the further planning of educational activities. According to the monitoring statistics, the programme management analyses and compiles the survey results in order to initiate the necessary measures to achieve the desired results.

The existing quality management seems to function according to a hierarchical principle. However, the goal is a functioning control circle between the participants in order to improve the quality of research and teaching (Circle of Quality). This Circle of Quality functions according to the bottom up - top down principle.

The university regularly reviews the strategy and policy in the area of quality and monitors its implementation.

Overall, it should be noted that responsibilities are clearly and comprehensibly regulated, not least because the core processes of quality assurance are documented in the university's regulations.

Feedback between students and teachers is a prerequisite for improving teaching and should be introduced. The evaluation results of the anonymous course evaluations will be presented to the students after the surveys and discussed with them in order to derive concrete measures for improving teaching.

It became clear in the discussions that there is definitely close contact with the graduates and that they are surveyed very soon after graduation.

The course evaluations thus serve the continuous development and improvement of quality and studyability. The student workload is continuously surveyed in the course evaluations; corresponding questions are included in the questionnaires. An evaluation of the workload through a module should take place at regular intervals.

Students are made aware of the student workload and examination requirements by the lecturers at the beginning of the course. In the degree programme, the measure of how many hours one ECTS point corresponds to the student workload is anchored in the regulatory documents.

With regard to the quality of teaching, it should be noted that measures to ensure it begin with the recruitment of teaching staff. In addition, the university offers teaching staff various further training opportunities, both on technical and didactic topics.

It can be stated that there is a combination of internal and external quality management in order to offer its own study programmes in a generally ESG-compliant manner.

The study programme “Agricultural Management”(M.Sc.) is regularly evaluated to ensure quality and to check compliance with the high quality standards. Ongoing monitoring of the study programme is carried out in accordance with the quality assurance policy. The programme is reviewed regularly and if changes are required, they are made. This process is exemplary. The study programmes thus have suitable and different procedures for internal quality assurance.

The University has a systematic procedure of analysis, development, monitoring and periodic revision of the educational program. Employers who confirmed this process as transparent, understandable and accessible are involved in the improvement of the educational program. A culture of quality has been formed in the academic community of the University, which contributes to the continuous development of the educational program and educational activities under this program.

The process of collecting proposals from various groups of stakeholders is insufficiently organized. It is recommended to strengthen work on the organization of the process of collecting proposals from various groups of stakeholders.

Standardised evaluation procedures should be introduced, in order to advance the quality assurance of the study programme and, if necessary, to be able to derive recommendations for action.

### **9.3 Conclusion**

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

## 10 ESG Standard 1.10: Cyclical external quality assurance

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

### 10.1 Implementation

The main goal of the quality assurance institutions of the Azerbaijan State Agrarian University is to support the achievement of the goals of the strategic plan adopted by the university. Taking into account the high level of material and technical base of the university, the main direction of activity is to improve the training of personnel meeting the requirements of modern times, including the quality of education and further development of the university's scientific research potential.

The main targets are

- Improving the position of Azerbaijan State Agrarian University in the international rankings;
- Training of specialists who will meet the requirements of modern times;
- Attracting high-potential staff to the university that meets modern standards;
- Achieving the quality of education;
- Support for the development of research work;
- Focus on student-centered learning;
- Support for the development of specialists within the university to meet modern standards;
- Support the formation of subject programs and syllabuses at the university in a way that meets modern standards;
- Support to improve the professional quality of lecturers;
- Support for the creation and improvement of electronic applications for teachers and students at the University;
- Support in the development of international exchange between universities based on international experience;
- Support to improve the quality of teaching and practical work;

## 10.2 Assessment

As far as the legal framework of quality assurance is concerned, the study programme is conducted in accordance with the regulations and guidelines. For this purpose, the university has a combination of internal and external quality management to offer the study programme in accordance with the ESG. The University has undergone institutional accreditation. The accreditation results are incorporated into the structuring of the University's business processes. Of particular importance is the cooperation with external stakeholders such as partner universities, graduates, industry and employers in order to gain impetus for continuous internal quality development.

Quality management ensures very well that the general quality assurance measures and instruments are constantly up-to-date and transparent. The University fulfils all obligatory aspects of external quality assurance: the different organisational units and levels are adequately in place and were explained in detail in the interviews with the HEI. Both internal and external quality assurance of the University's measures take into account all legal requirements and benefit from each other to advance the quality development of the study programme. External quality assurance extends to all necessary organisational levels such as financial operations and educational provision. The internal and external quality assurance mechanisms for the continuous development of the programme is well developed and the cyclical functioning of the programme's quality assessment is effective. The quality of the surveys and the processing of the results can be rated as very good. No specific problems in the cyclical external quality assurance were reported for the study programme.

The follow-up activities of the university's external quality assurance in preparing the next procedure are generally well thought out. The results of the external assessment and recognition of the quality of the study program (reports, expert opinions, etc.) are published on the university's website.

In conclusion, the coherence between external and internal quality assurances is well structured.

## 10.3 Conclusion

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

#### IV Recommendation to the Accreditation Commission of ACQUIN

##### 1 **Assessment of compliance the Standards and Guidelines in the Higher European Area (ESG) in the actual official version**

The study programme „**Agricultural Management**” (M.Sc.) was assessed on the basis of the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" (ESG) and the national or other relevant regulations.

The expert group concludes that the **ESG standards** 1.1 (Policy for quality assurance), 1.2 (Design and approval of programmes), 1.3 (Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment), 1.4 (Student admission, progression, recognition and certification), 1.5 (Teaching staff), 1.6 (Learning resources and student support), 1.7 (Information management), 1.8 (Public information), 1.9 (On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes) and 1.10 (Cyclical external quality assurance) are fulfilled.

The assessment criteria are as follows:

**Standard 1.1 Policy for quality assurance:** Universities have a publicly accessible quality assurance strategy, which is part of their strategic management. This strategy is developed and implemented by internal stakeholder representatives through appropriate structures and processes, involving external stakeholders.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

**Standard 1.2 Design and approval of programmes:** Universities have procedures for the design and approval of their courses. The courses are designed in such a way that their objectives, including the desired learning outcomes, can be achieved. The qualification obtained during a degree program is clearly defined and communicated; it refers to the corresponding level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, the qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

**Standard 1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment:** Universities ensure that the courses offered are carried out in such a way as to encourage students to play an active role in the design of the learning process and that this approach is also taken into account when assessing students / examinations.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

**Standard 1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification:** Universities ensure that the courses offered are carried out in such a way as to encourage students to play an active role in the design of the learning process and that this approach is also taken into account when assessing students / examinations.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

**Standard 1.5 Teaching staff:** Universities ensure the competence of their teachers. They use fair and transparent procedures for the recruitment and further training of their employees.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

**Standard 1.6 Learning resources and student support:** The university has adequate funding to finance study and teaching and ensure that there is always a sufficient and readily available range of learning and support available for their studies.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

**Standard 1.7 Information management:** Universities ensure that they collect, analyze and use the relevant data relevant to the successful conduct of studies and other activities.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

**Standard 1.8 Public information:** Universities publish easily understandable, correct, objective, up-to-date and well-accessible information about their activities and courses of study.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

**Standard 1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes:** Universities are constantly monitoring their courses and regularly reviewing them to ensure that they achieve the goals set and meet the needs of students and society. The tests lead to a continuous improvement of the courses. All affected parties will be informed about any measures planned or resulting from this.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

**Standard 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance:** Universities regularly undergo external quality assurance procedures in accordance with the ESG.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.



The peer-review experts note that the recommendations from the previous accreditation procedure have been adequately taken into account.

## 2 Accreditation Recommendation

The peer-review experts recommend an unconditional accreditation of the study programme „**Agricultural Management**” (M.Sc.) with the following **recommendations**:

1. The content of modules, especially compulsory modules should be revised and optimized with purpose of development of defined competences of graduates.
2. Students' English language skills should be improved. Higher entrance requirements should be created with regard to English skills or students should be offered compulsory language courses to improve their English language skills.
3. Within the framework of the further development of the curriculum, current topics such as big data and digitalisation should be given greater consideration.
4. The same standards and uniform application procedures for teaching staff should prevail at all partner universities.
5. The English language skills of teaching and administrative staff should be improved and corresponding further training courses implemented.
6. Professional practice representatives should be consulted in an institutionalised way in curriculum development.
7. The HSWT should establish a good administrative infrastructure for all partner universities and create even more support services in general and during student mobility phases with a view to even better studyability.
8. In order to guarantee the implementation of the study programmes, the staff should also grow with the increasing number of students.
9. Better strategic communication activities should be developed to publicise the study offer in order to arouse the interest of potential applicants in the long term.
10. Standardised evaluation procedures should be introduced, in order to advance the quality assurance of the study programme and, if necessary, to be able to derive recommendations for action.

## V Decisions of the Accreditation Commission of ACQUIN

Based on the evaluation report of the expert group and the statements of the Higher Education Institutions the Accreditation Commission of ACQUIN makes on the 09 May 2023 the following decisions unanimously:

**The study programme “Agricultural Management” (M.Sc.) at the Azerbaijan State Agricultural University is accredited without any conditions.  
The accreditation is valid until 30. September 2029.**

The following recommendations are given for the further development of the study programme:

- Students' English language skills should be improved. Higher entrance requirements should be created with regard to English skills or students should be offered compulsory language courses to improve their English language skills.
- Within the framework of the further development of the curriculum, current topics such as big data and digitalisation should be given greater consideration.
- The same standards and uniform application procedures for teaching staff should be prevailed at all partner universities.
- The English language skills of teaching and administrative staff should be improved and corresponding further training courses implemented.
- Professional practice representatives should be consulted in an institutionalised way in curriculum development.
- The HSWT should establish a good administrative infrastructure for all partner universities and create even more support services in general and during student mobility phases with a view to even better studyability.
- In order to guarantee the implementation of the study programmes, the staff should also grow with the increasing number of students.
- Better strategic communication activities should be developed to publicise the study offer in order to arouse the interest of potential applicants in the long term.
- Standardised evaluation procedures should be introduced, in order to advance the quality assurance of the study programme and, if necessary, to be able to derive recommendations for action.
- It is recommended to carry out further development of the internal quality assurance system by timely response to legislative changes, and by improving the coordination of measures to monitor the quality of the educational programme and educational activities at the University level.
- The expert group recommends involving students more in the work of the department in order to take their wishes and suggestions more into account when planning and implementing the educational process, selecting, reviewing and updating the educational programme.
- It is recommended to ensure the teaching of professional disciplines by a specialist with appropriate qualifications.