

HS-QSG - Austria's law on quality assurance in higher education

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Outline

- Reorganization of external quality assurance
- Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education
- Procedures of external quality assurance
- HEI and external quality assurance

Reorganization of external QA

Aims:

- to develop a (more) coherent national external quality assurance system
 - to establish one single agency covering different HE sectors (public and private universities, universities of applied sciences)
- HS-QSG: new framework law for external QA covering all HE sectors - the ESG have been an important guideline in this process;

Act on Quality Assurance in HE (HS-QSG)

The new law

- regulates the main principles and procedures for external QA of
 - universities of applied sciences (“Fachhochschulen”)
 - public universities
 - private universities
 - sets the framework for quality assurance procedures
 - accreditation
 - certification (audit)
 - laid down assessment areas (“Prüfbereiche”)
 - generic areas, should assure comparability and guidance
- ➔ All HEI have to undergo obligatory external QA on a regularly basis.

Act on Quality Assurance in HE (HS-QSG)

The new law

- has been established a new QA Agency
 - „Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria“ (AQ Austria)
 - independent entity governed by public law
 - not bound on instructions
 - responsible for accreditation and certification
 - main tasks: developing and carrying out external quality assurance procedures like audit and accreditation procedures
 - bodies: general meeting, governing committee, board (decision making body), appeals committee, management office;

Procedures of external quality assurance

According to the law the following procedures of quality assurance are in place:

- Accreditation
 - accreditation of higher educational institutions
 - accreditation of degree programmes
- Audits
 - certification of quality management systems of higher educational institutions

Procedures of external quality assurance

- Accreditation
 - is the formal federal recognition of an educational institution (institutional accreditation) or of an degree programme (programme accreditation) based on pre-defined criteria and standards.

- Certification
 - (after an Audit) is the formal certificate of the conformity of an educational institution's quality management system with pre-defined criteria and standards.

Procedures of external quality assurance

- Accreditation procedures - as they are awarding state recognition for the institution or programme - shall be carried out by the national agency (AQ Austria).
 - Regarding Audits HEI have a freedom of choice
 - the Audit according to the assessment areas which are written in the law may be performed
 - by the AQ Austria
 - by a quality assurance agency registered in EQAR
 - or by another internationally recognised and independent quality assurance agency
- ➔ The results of the audit and accreditation procedure shall be published by both the agency and the HEI.

Procedures of external quality assurance

- Assessment areas - institutional accreditation:
 - objectives and profile
 - development planning
 - degree programmes and teaching
 - (applied) research and development
 - organisation of the higher education institution and its activities
 - funding and resources
 - national and international cooperation
 - quality management system

Procedures of external quality assurance

- **Assessment areas - audit:**
 - quality strategy and its integration into the management tools of the higher education institution
 - quality assurance structures and procedures in the areas of degree programmes and teaching, (applied) research and development, organisation and administration and staff;
 - integration of internationalisation and societal objectives into the quality management system
 - information systems and involvement of stakeholder groups

HEI and external quality assurance

- Institutional accreditation and programme accreditation
 - for private universities and universities of applied sciences
- Audits
 - for public universities and (established) universities of applied sciences

HEI and external quality assurance

- Public universities
 - have to undergo a certification of their internal quality management system through an audit of an interval of seven years.

- Private universities
 - have to undergo an initial institutional accreditation as well as institutional re-accreditation, which are both valid for six years (in a further cycle, for twelve years).
 - Degree programmes are subject to a initial programme accreditation which is bound to the period of the institutional accreditation.

HEI and external quality assurance

- Universities of applied sciences
 - have to undergo an initial institutional accreditation before starting their operation. An institutional re-accreditation (after 6 years) is valid for an unlimited period, but is associated with the requirement for a periodic audit (every seven years) of the internal quality management system.
 - New degree programmes in the universities of applied sciences are subject to an initial accreditation which is awarded for the duration of the institutional accreditation.

- ➔ So in the national quality assurance system, internal and external quality assurance procedures are complementary. The external quality assurance, together with the internal quality management system of the educational institutions, is intended to ensure that they meet high standards and continuously enhance their quality.

Thank you for your attention.