

**Receiver(s): ENQA Review Panel, ENQA secretariat**

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### **Supplementary Information requested by the ENQA secretariat**

The following is further explanations and comments regarding the supplementary information requested by the ENQA secretariat on January 25 2016. This brief is divided into four subsections corresponding to the questions from the ENQA secretariat.

#### **1. Perspectives on the practice of Accreditation Institution regarding study programmes abroad**

The Accreditation Act clearly defines that the Accreditation Institutions area of operation is limited to HEIs under the jurisdiction of the Danish Ministry of Higher Education and, with the approval of the minister, HEIs and study programmes under the auspices of other ministries<sup>1</sup>. Thus all HEI's in the Accreditation Institutions area of operations have their home location in Denmark

On the HEIs in Denmark, there can be some study programmes, however, intended to be offered abroad – either by the HEI itself or in cooperation with HEI's based in other countries. The latter is the case for joint Masters in the Erasmus+ programme or study programmes intended for the Danish-Chinese University center in China.

In the case of a study programme intended for offer abroad, the HEI can choose whether the study programme should be quality assured by the Accreditation Institution or another Quality Assurance Agency. If the HEI chooses the Accreditation Institution, the HEI must cover the expenses<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> From the Accreditation Act: §1. The Act applies to the accreditation of institutions of higher education under the Danish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Higher Education and to the accreditation of the study programmes offered by these educational institutions. The Act also applies to the accreditation of the maritime educational institutions.

(2) The Minister for Science, Innovation and Higher Education may determine that the Act applies to the accreditation of study programmes and educational institutions under other ministries, as well as salaried higher study programmes undertaken with an employer in the course of employment.

<sup>2</sup> From the Accreditation Act: §24. The educational institutions' range of study programmes offered abroad are governed by the rules in this Act, cf. (3), however. On the accreditation of their programmes, the universities may, however, themselves choose which quality assurance institution to use, cf. Section 3 a of the Danish University Act. If the educational institution chooses to use the Danish Accreditation Agency for the accreditation of its programmes, payment will be required, cf. Section 27(3).

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The HEI sends an application for a new study programme (*ex ante*) to the Accreditation Institution. Guides for applications for study programmes offered abroad are published on our website ([www.akkr.dk](http://www.akkr.dk)). The accreditation process takes the standard criteria as points of departure, but special significance is given to the issue of how the Danish HEI assume responsibility and assure the quality of the study programme abroad. With a positive institutional accreditation, HEIs are expected to be able to carry out this quality assurance themselves.

Below is the list of the 6 new study programmes offered by a Danish HEI abroad that the Accreditation Institution has accredited in the period 2012-2016.

- Professional Bachelor of Architectural Technology and Construction Management - Vietnam (University College North)

#### *Erasmus +/Erasmus Mundus Programmes*

- Master in Global Innovation Management – Erasmus Mundus (Aalborg University)
- Master in Advanced Development in Social Work– Erasmus Mundus (Aalborg University)

#### *Sino-Danish University Center*

- Kandidatuddannelse i kemisk og biokemisk teknologi, biomasse og energi – (Danish Technical University)
- Kandidatuddannelse i omics –(University of Southern Denmark)
- Kandidatuddannelse i nanoscience og teknologi – (University of Copenhagen)

To sum up, the Accreditation Institution only cover HEIs in Denmark. If a HEI wants to offer study programmes abroad, the HEI may use the Accreditation Institution as quality assurance agency. In the last 4 years 6 new study programmes intended for offer abroad has been quality assured by AI.

## **2. The Danish Accreditation Institution's international engagement and relations**

During the last 2-3 years, The Danish Accreditation Institution (AI) has entered a more visible role internationally. This is a result of a strategy about both being an active stakeholder in the European network of external quality assurance agencies and collecting new, international knowledge about the development of quality assurance issues. In the first years after the establishment of the accreditation system in Denmark in 2007, the focus was very much on building up the robustness of the system and gaining the first experiences with programme accreditation in a national context. Now, AI has gained sufficient resources to put an effort into international activities. Today, international networks, sharing of knowledge with international stakeholders and participation and contribution to international conferences and forums are a natural part of AI's activities.

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(2) If the universities use another quality assurance institution, cf. (1), second sentence, the quality assurance is based on this institution's criteria.

(3) The rules for pre-qualification of new programmes abroad only apply to new study programmes and offerings of study programmes for which state grants are rendered.



The following is a selection of the international activities in the last years to give an impression of AI's international dimension:

**International networks:**

ENQA member  
EQAR member  
INQAAHE member  
QAN member  
NOQA member  
ECA member

**Participations and contributions to international conferences, workshops and forums:**

Participation in E-TRAIN (ECA), Vienna and Madrid 2011-12  
Presentation at the E-TRAIN Dissemination Conference, Madrid 2012  
Participation in ENQA Internal quality assurance seminars in London 2010 and Valladolid, 2012  
Participation in EQAF, Lyon, 2012  
Participation in ENQA workshop on quality culture, Bruxelles 2013  
Participation in EQAF, Göteborg 2013  
Paper presentation at NVAO-ECA seminar, Haag 2014  
Participation in EQAF, Barcelona 2014  
Paper presentation at INQAAHE conference, Chicago 2015  
Paper presentation at EQAF, London 2015  
Participation in ENQA workshop on QA of E-learning, Barcelona 2015

**In addition to** annual participation in NOQA meetings, in ENQA General Assemblies, and in ENQA members meetings.

**International knowledge sharing activities:**

2012: AI 3-day visit to NVAO to gain inspiration to new institutional accreditation system in Denmark  
2013: 2-day visit to NOKUT and Norwegian HEI stakeholders to gain inspiration to new institutional accreditation system in Denmark  
2013 - : Participation in QAN, for example by contributing to the publication: "Quality Audit in the European Higher Education Area" (2014)  
2014: 2-day visit from NVAO  
2014: Brief visit from the French Ministry of Education  
2014: Visit from Ministry of Manpower, Singapore  
2015: Presentation to AQU internal seminar to share experiences with programme education  
2015: Visit from UKÄ (Sweden), sharing of knowledge gained from institutional accreditation in Denmark  
2015: 3-month mutual staff exchange with NOKUT (Norway) (1 employee from both AI and NOKUT)  
2015: Presentation to ANEQA conference, Madrid, 2015  
2015: Presentation to joint AQU & ANEQA training seminar, Santander, 2015  
Participation from UKÄ (Sweden) in a training session for institutional accreditation panel members  
2015: Visit from Tartu University, Estonia



Besides these activities, AI has taken an international perspective in some of the analysis projects, i.e. recently we have conducted an analysis on the integration between MOOCs and on-site programmes and the quality of MOOCs. The analysis is mainly based on international knowledge and cases and AI has interviewed several international stakeholders.

In addition to AI's participation in international activities, the participation of international members in the accreditation panels is another aspect of AI's international dimension. The principles for the recruitment of members for the accreditation panels ensure international representation in the panels. Due to the different types of higher education in Denmark, the appearance of international members in the panels might differ between PEM and UNIK.

Regarding institutional accreditation the panels are composed in similar ways in both PEM and UNIK, meaning that, besides the student and the member with experience with quality assurance from another sector than the higher education sector, the other members are mainly international.

Regarding programme accreditation there is a difference between PEM and UNIK. In UNIK the two experts within the subject area are international while the student and employer representative (in existing programme accreditation) are Danish. In PEM, international members are not common in all accreditation panels. Due to the specific national context of professional oriented programmes, all panel members need to have specific knowledge about Danish circumstances and labour market. In the composing of the panels, AI has a focus at using international members of the accreditation panels whenever it is meaningful or possible.

AI considers the international dimension to be a very important part of the agency's tasks. The participation in conferences and forums has clearly strengthened AI's international networks and offers an overview on the development of external quality assurance in Europe and beyond. AI experiences a growing interest in the Danish EQA system and the agency's procedures. This interest is reflected in the growing number of paper presentations and visits.

### **3. Feedback from stakeholders**

As presented in the SAR, AI engages in an ongoing dialogue with our key stakeholders on several levels. The following is a further description of specific actions that have been taken following this ongoing dialogue.

In 2014-15, AI revised our core values and strategies. As part of this process, an analysis of the stakeholder relations was carried out by an external agency ("LEAD"). LEAD interviewed a selection of external stakeholders from the institutions and the labour market. The analysis report concluded that:

- AI has a positive reputation, especially considered our role as an authority and control body
- AI is perceived as less bureaucratic than we sometimes perceive ourselves
- The institutions would like more focus on the developmental perspectives to QA

This feedback means that we have emphasized a stronger focus on the developmental aspects of EQA, when revising the Guides to Accreditation, and we will continue to develop new methods for EQA.



In December 2013, a qualitative evaluation was conducted as a follow-up on two stakeholder surveys from 2010 and 2011. At this time, institutional accreditation was not yet introduced, and the stakeholder survey focused only on programme accreditation. Only few real changes to programme accreditation was made as a result of the surveys and the qualitative evaluation, but the evaluations contributed to internal discussions, for example on how the site-visits can contain both a compliance check and a more developmental dialogue on quality.

In general, the introduction of institutional accreditation has significantly improved the stakeholder experience of AI. As mentioned in the SAR, great care was taken to ensure that the new system was not too prescriptive, and this has been very well received at the HEIs. When the first round of institutional accreditations was completed, and decisions were made by the Council in December 2014, an evaluation meeting was held at every institution. The institutions were given the opportunity to criticise the process and suggest areas for improvement. The accreditation panels were also asked to evaluate the process, and an internal evaluation at AI was also carried out. In general, the institutions were satisfied with the process and AI. Specific improvements to the process as a result of the evaluations are:

- A prolonged period for the institution to respond to the report
- A prolonged period for the institutions to collect and forward the documentation material requested in the audit trails

An evaluation of every institutional accreditation process is carried out in a systematic manner, collecting both the institutions' and the panels' views on the process and AI.

Also, the following memorandums were published as a result of specific questions raised by the institutions in connection to the first institutional accreditation round. The institutions found that the Guide to Accreditation in certain areas is very general, and they were asking for guidance in specific matters. Thus, the memorandums can be perceived as our reaction to feedback from the institutions:

- Memorandum on the evaluation of entire study programmes with the participation of an external expert
- Memorandum on assessment of tried and tested practice
- Memorandum on assessing QA systems at institutions

As mentioned, thematic analyses are carried out on a regular basis and the themes for the analyses are established after consultation with the institution. As an example, the Danish Universities suggested a thematic analysis of the future labour market, which resulted in the analysis report "Ways of gathering knowledge of the future needs on the labour market" (2015).

#### **4. The Self-Assessment Report**

The work with the writing of the SAR has primarily been an internal process including all departments of AI. It has been written by a team, composed of people from different departments, and all employees have at some point been included in the process. Other than the Accreditation Council, no extern stakeholders has been directly included in the writing of the SAR, but, as we have described in the SAR, AI is in close contact with our stakeholders, and we put much emphasis on upholding an on-going communication. Thus, the information derived from the continuous



contact with stakeholders has been drawn upon throughout the entire writing of the SAR.

Taking a look at the internal unfolding of the process, we can identify a number of steps:

1. A review and update of the procedure handbook
2. Appointment of the SAR team
3. An inclusive process at the yearly co-worker seminar
4. Feedback on the first draft report from the professional secretariats PEM and UNIK
5. Feedback on the second draft report from the Accreditation Counsel

Step one: Reviewing the procedure handbook. As a natural starting point of the accreditation process, AI decided to do a review of the existing procedure handbook. The aim of this process was to update the handbook, so that it to the highest degree possible would describe the actual actions of the AI employees. This should be viewed in context with the merger of a section of EVA into the Accreditation Institution, which took place in the summer 2013. Although accreditation of university programmes and accreditation of more professionally oriented higher education had been taking place under the same law since 2007, and revised in 2013, there were in practice some minor differences in the way activities were conducted in the two entities. Therefore this activity – undertaken by a staff member from each of the two entities, and under the supervision of management- helped to consolidate experiences gained through 2014-2015 and develop a common framework, which can work as a single set of guidelines for employees. The main activity in this process was to collect old documents describing methods, document templates, timetables etc. making sure they were up to date and finally putting it all together in one document that could be handed to all employees. Alongside this process, a workshop with the employees was held, in order to make sure that all the practices described in the procedure handbook were actually describing the reality of the everyday work at the institution.

Step two: An ENQA Review team was appointed. The team was appointed from all departments of the institution, in order to make sure that all relevant perspectives were covered in the process. The team members have been contributing to the process accordingly to their competences. All team members have been part of the discussion of the compliance of AI to the ESG, and have been contributing to how we best answer the questions of ENQA. Throughout the writing of the SAR, the SAR of the initial review process in 2010 and the procedure handbook has been used.

Step three: At the yearly co-worker seminar of 2015, the process of the SAR was presented, and a proposal for a new quality assurance policy was presented and discussed. Also the seminar, all employees of the institution participated in a workshop, presenting their view on how AI as a Quality Assurance Institution was in compliance with the ESG. The results and summary of the discussion was used in the further writing of the SAR.

Step four: The first draft was presented to the two professional secretariats PEM and UNIK for their view of the SAR and its ability to rightfully describe the external and internal quality assurance work at AI. The draft chapters was discussed in



groups and presented in plenum. A summary of each group presentation and the following discussion was later incorporated in the final SAR. Alongside this process, all employees have at different levels been included in the process, as they have been asked to answer specific questions within their fields of expertise. This has been done both to ensure that the information given in the report is as correct as possible, but also as a means to ensure an inclusive process in the writing of the SAR.

Step five: The second draft of the SAR was presented to the Accreditation Council, asking whether they had comments or suggestions to the SAR. The Council suggested a further emphasis on the Council's communication to the stakeholders, and on the fact that the Council also has an on-going dialogue with the institutions. This was incorporated into the SAR.

Please contact us again, if further clarification is needed.

The Danish Accreditation Institution/Steffen Westergård Andersen, 9<sup>th</sup> of February  
2016