



Criteria for the Accreditation of Degree Programmes - ASIIN Quality Seal

Engineering, Informatics, Natural Sciences,
Mathematics, Medicine and combinations with other
subject areas

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1. Purpose of this document

This document comprises the General Criteria as well as procedural requirements and processes in programme accreditation for the award of the

ASIIN-Label

and, if applicable, the European subject labels **EUR-ACE**[®] by ENAEE, **Euro-Inf**[®] by EQANIE, **Eurobachelor**[®]/**Euromaster**[®] by ECTNA and **EQAS-Food** by IFA.

In programme accreditation, ASIIN concentrates on the assessment of degree programmes in engineering, architecture, informatics, natural sciences, mathematics, medicine and economics as well as interdisciplinary combinations of one of these subjects with other areas.

This document was designed for all kinds of higher education institutions, which offer educational programmes on an academic level (6 or higher) with respect to the European Qualifications Framework.

2. Requirements for the award of the ASIIN quality seal for degree programmes (including EUR-ACE[®], Euro-Inf[®], Eurobachelor[®] and Euromaster[®], EQAS-Food)

The ASIIN quality seal for study programmes provides assurance that subject specific quality standards of the academic discipline and of the profession for which that programme prepares are met at high level. It confirms further that a suitable framework for good teaching and successful learning is provided. The award of the seal is based on learning outcome oriented standards of the involved disciplines and complies with the European Qualifications Framework and the “European Standards and Guidelines”.

2.1 General and Subject Specific Criteria

For the award of the ASIIN quality seal, including the above mentioned European subject-specific labels, the knowledge, skills, competences which the degree programme aims to impart are the central point of reference. It should be explained how the specific competences can be acquired through which aspects of the programme (content and form of the modules, teaching and learning methods, etc.).

Central part of the higher education institutions self assessment is therefore the description of the relation between

- the overall intended learning outcomes as (knowledge, skills and competences) and
- the contribution made by each individual module to achieve these outcomes.

This relation should also be part of the module descriptions

In addition to the **General Criteria** for the accreditation of degree programmes (programme accreditation), ASIIN’s Technical Committees have developed the **Subject-Specific Criteria (SSC)** for the individual disciplinary fields. They are published as separate documents and are used as subject-specific orientation guidelines in accreditation procedures for the award of the ASIIN quality seal and the European subject-specific labels.

ASIIN's subject-specific criteria (SSC) contain **lists of exemplary ideal learning outcomes for various subject areas**. These provide orientation for the possible objectives and results of a degree programme.

The competence profiles for graduates of Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes set out in the SSC are coordinated with a number of European reference frameworks - such as the Dublin descriptors and the general qualification profiles defined at European and national level - and represent a subject-specific update. The competence profiles developed in European cooperation for the various European subject labels have been incorporated.

2.2 Relation between the ASIIN quality seal and the European subject-specific labels

The European subject-specific labels **EUR-ACE**[®] by ENAEE, **Euro-Inf**[®] by EQANIE, **Eurobachelor**[®] / **Euromaster**[®] by ECTN and **EQAS-Food** by IFA are each independent quality labels coordinated across Europe and supported by non-profit organisations with members from the European Education Area. These have developed subject-related criteria and authorised agencies to award their quality label.

ASIIN is authorized to award the above mentioned European subject-specific labels as ASIIN's accreditation procedures and General Criteria as well as the Subject-Specific Criteria have been verified and accepted by the owners of each label. Thus higher education institutions can also acquire one of the above mentioned European subject-specific labels in the course of an ASIIN degree programme accreditation procedure.

3. Criteria

The following table shows which general requirements have to be fulfilled in order to obtain the ASIIN seal, irrespective of the subject orientation. Regardless of the country in which an accreditation procedure is carried out, the award of the ASIIN seal is always also based on the ESG. For this purpose, the table shows, among other things, how the requirements for awarding the ASIIN seal incorporate and implement or concretise those of the ESG.

For accreditation procedures in other countries/jurisdictions, national requirements are included in the ASIIN procedure on a case-by-case basis - as required and in consultation with the applicant higher education institution.

The ASIIN seal		
ASIIN Requirements		Corresponding “European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)”
1	THE DEGREE PROGRAMME: CONCEPT, CONTENT & IMPLEMENTATION	
1.1	<p>Objectives and learning outcomes of the degree programme (intended competence profile)</p> <p>The objectives and learning outcomes (the intended competence profile) of the degree programme as a whole are described briefly and concisely. They are transparently anchored and published and thus are available to students, lecturers and interested third parties.</p> <p>The objectives and learning outcomes reflect the targeted academic qualification level, are feasible and equivalent to the relevant exemplary learning outcomes specified in the applicable SSC (academic classification).</p> <p>With the intended competence profile, a professional activity corresponding to the level of qualification (according to the European Qualifications Framework¹) can be taken up (professional classification).</p> <p>The relevance of the objectives and learning outcomes for both the labour market and society is regularly reviewed in a process that involves the relevant stakeholders (in particular from higher education and professional practice) and, if necessary, the objectives are revised accordingly.</p>	<p>ESG 1.2²</p> <p>ESG 1.3</p> <p>ESG 1.7</p> <p>ESG 1.8</p> <p>ESG 1.9</p>
1.2	<p>Title of the degree programme</p> <p>The title of the degree programme reflects the intended objectives and learning outcomes as well as the teaching and learning content and, in principle also the teaching language of the programme.</p> <p>The designation (both in the original language and in English) is used consistently in all relevant documents.</p>	
1.3	<p>Curriculum</p> <p><u>Content</u></p> <p>The curriculum enables students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.</p>	<p>ESG 1.2</p> <p>ESG 1.3</p>

¹ [The European Qualifications Framework \(EQF\) | Europass](#)

² „ESG x.y“ refers to the relevant standards and the corresponding principles of the „European Standards and Guidelines“ (Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). (2015). Brussels, Belgium.).

	<p>Learning outcomes are defined for each module, which, in total, enable the achievement of the overarching programme objectives.</p> <p>If an internship is included in the programme, it is well-integrated into the curriculum. The higher education institution assumes responsibility for the quality of the internship in terms of its content and structure. To this end, the university coordinates with the participating companies and supervises the students during the internship.</p> <p><u>Structure of the programme</u></p> <p>Each module represents a well-matched unit of teaching and learning.</p> <p>It becomes clear which knowledge, skills and competences the students acquire in each module.</p> <p>The order of the modules ensures that the learning outcomes can be achieved and that the programme can be completed within the standard period of study.</p> <p>The programme is organised in a way that allows for individual focal points and courses of study.</p> <p><u>Student mobility</u></p> <p>The higher education institution promotes (international) student mobility through an appropriate framework (structural design of the degree programme, recognition of qualifications and support services).</p> <p><u>Periodic Review of the Curriculum</u></p> <p>The curriculum is periodically reviewed with regard to the implementation of the programme objectives; curricular changes are documented. This review also includes whether the order of modules enables students to graduate within the standard period of study.</p>	
1.4	<p>Admission requirements</p> <p>The admission requirements and procedures are binding and transparent. They ensure that students are in principle able to successfully graduate from the programme.</p> <p>In case of possible compensation for missing admission requirements, respective rules are defined. In such a case, appropriate courses to acquire the necessary competences should be offered. Compensation for missing prior knowledge must not decrease the qualification level of the degree programme.</p>	ESG 1.4

	<p>Rules for the recognition of qualifications achieved externally (e.g. at other higher education institutions or outside the higher education sector) are clearly defined. They facilitate the transition between higher education institutions and with non-university places of learning without jeopardising the achievement of learning outcomes at the desired level. They are based on the principles of the Lisbon Convention.</p> <p>It is regularly evaluated whether the regulations ensure sufficient (subject-related) prior knowledge of the students.</p>	
1.5	<p>Workload & Credits</p> <p>A credit system³ is based on the student workload is implemented. The workload includes contact hours and self-study time. All compulsory components of the study programme are included. Credits are awarded for every module based on the respective workload.</p> <p>Bachelor's degree programmes have a total student workload of at least 180 ECTS credits; master's degree programmes have a total student workload of at least 60 ECTS credits. As a rule, 300 ECTS credits are achieved by the time a master's degree is awarded.</p> <p>The estimated workload is realistic and well-founded, so that the study programme can be completed in the standard period of study. Structural peaks in the workload are avoided.</p> <p>It is regularly monitored whether the credits awarded for each module correspond to the actual student workload and whether the distribution of the workload across all semesters enables graduation within the standard period of study. Students are involved in these processes. If adjustments are made, they are well documented.</p>	ESG 1.4
1.6	<p>Didactics and Teaching Methodology</p> <p>A variety of teaching methods and didactic means are used to promote achieving the learning outcomes and support student-centred learning and teaching. It must be considered that digital and face-to-face teaching and working infrastructures are equally important and mutually enrich each other.</p> <p>The degree programme contains an adequate balance of contact hours and self-study time.</p> <p>Introducing students to independent scientific work is an integral part of the study programme.</p> <p>It is regularly reviewed whether the utilized learning and teaching methods support the achievement of the programme objectives.</p>	

³ In the European Higher Education Area, it is assumed that the ECTS Users' Guide is applied as the basis for the calculation of credit points; (ECTS Users' Guide 2015, ISBN 978-92-79-43562-1) available at: https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/ects/users-guide/docs/ects-users-guide_en.pdf (accessed: 11.10.2021)

2	EXAMS: SYSTEM, CONCEPT AND ORGANISATION	
	<p>Exams assess the extent to which the defined learning objectives have been achieved.</p> <p>Exams relate to specific modules. They provide students with feedback on the competencies that they have acquired.</p> <p>The study programme includes a final thesis or final project. It demonstrates that the students are able to work independently on a task at the intended level of the degree programme.</p> <p>Types of exams (with possible alternatives) are specified for each module. Students are informed about the conditions for completing the module (coursework, exams etc.) latest at the beginning of the module. There are transparent rules for make-up exams, non-attendance, cases of illness as well as compensation of disadvantages in the case of students with disabilities or special needs (e.g. pregnancy, childcare, caring for relatives) etc.</p> <p>The number and distribution of exams ensure an adequate workload as well as sufficient time for preparation.</p> <p>The organisation of the exams ensures a smooth study process.</p> <p>Examinations are marked according to transparent criteria. Students have the opportunity to consult their lecturers about the results of their exams.</p> <p>In the event that final theses or projects are carried out outside the higher education institution, the institution assumes responsibility for their content and for suitable conditions in the respective company or organisation.</p> <p>It is regularly reviewed whether the exams can adequately determine the achievement of the learning objectives, whether the requirements are appropriate to the level of the degree programme and whether students have sufficient time for preparing and conducting the exams.</p>	<p>ESG 1.2</p> <p>ESG 1.3</p> <p>ESG 1.4</p>
3	RESSOURCES	
3.1	<p>Staff and Staff Development</p> <p>The composition, professional orientation and qualification of the teaching staff are suitable for successfully delivering the degree programme.</p> <p>The research and development of the teaching staff contributes to the desired level of education.</p> <p>Lecturers have the opportunity to further develop their professional and didactic skills and are supported in using corresponding offers.</p> <p>It is regularly reviewed whether the subject-specific and didactic qualifications of the lecturers contribute adequately to the</p>	<p>ESG 1.5</p>

	delivery of the degree programme.	
3.2	<p>Student Support and Student Services</p> <p>Sufficient human resources and organisational structures are available for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - individual subject-specific and general counselling, supervision and support of students - administrative and technical tasks. <p>The allocated advice and guidance (both technical and general) on offer assist the students in achieving the learning outcomes and in completing the course within the scheduled time.</p>	
3.3	<p>Funds and equipment</p> <p>The financial resources and the available equipment constitute a sustainable basis for delivering the degree programme. This includes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - secure funding and reliable financial planning, - sufficient infrastructure in terms of both quantity and quality - binding regulation of internal and external cooperation 	ESG 1.6
4	TRANSPARENCY AND DOCUMENTATION	
4.1	<p>Module Descriptions</p> <p>The module descriptions are accessible to all students and teaching staff and contain the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - module title - person(s) responsible for each module - teaching method(s) - credits and work load - intended learning outcomes - module content - admission and examination requirements - form(s) of exams and details explaining how the module mark is calculated 	<p>ESG 1.7</p> <p>ESG 1.8</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - recommended literature - date of last amendment 	
4.2	<p>Diploma and Diploma Supplement</p> <p>Shortly after graduation, a diploma (degree certificate) is issued together with a diploma supplement. The latter must be provided in English.</p> <p>These documents provide information on the student's qualifications profile and individual performance as well as the classification of the degree programme with regard to the respective education system.</p> <p>The marks of individual modules are presented and the way in which the final mark is calculated is explained. In addition to the final mark, statistical data as set forth in the ECTS Users' Guide is included to allow readers to assess the individual mark.</p>	<p>ESG 1.4</p>
4.3	<p>Relevant Rules</p> <p>The rights and duties of both the higher education institution and students are clearly defined and binding (guidelines, statutes etc.). All relevant course-related information is available in the language of the degree programme and accessible to anyone involved.</p>	<p>ESG 1.4</p> <p>ESG 1.7</p>
5	QUALITY MANAGEMENT: QUALITY ASSESSMENT AND DEVELOPMENT	
	<p>The study programme is subject to periodical internal quality assurance which includes all stakeholders. The results of these processes are incorporated into the continuous development of the programme. Processes and responsibilities are defined for the further development of the programme.</p> <p>The results and any measures derived from the various quality assurance instruments used (various survey formats, student statistics, etc.) are communicated to the students.</p>	<p>ESG 1.1</p> <p>ESG 1.2</p> <p>ESG 1.9</p> <p>ESG 1.10</p>

3.1 Accreditation stages and interim changes

According to internationally established practice, the accreditation of a programme is always subject to a time limit. The seal granted is valid for a limited period.

We differentiate among three types of accreditation stages:

1. **Concept accreditation:** The concept for a programme is prepared and all the documents and authorisations needed to put it into practice are available. However, no students are studying the programme yet, so the evaluation as a part of the accreditation procedure is inevitably no more than a plausibility check. Compared to the other stages, concept accreditation is less meaningful with regard to quality assurance, because the data on which the procedure is based is less substantiated and harder to check.
2. **First accreditation:** Students are now studying in the programme, and this is the first time an accreditation procedure is carried out. This makes it possible to base the accreditation procedure assessment on a critical self-assessment by the institution as well as on the actual implementation of the programme.
3. **Renewed accreditation (reaccreditation):** An active programme has already been accredited at least once before. When the validity of the current seal expires, it is time to carry out another accreditation.

All three types of accreditation are subject to the same criteria inasmuch as the accreditation decisions are comparable. Typically, the seal granted for a first accreditation is valid for a shorter period than those subsequently granted.

Renewed accreditation (reaccreditation) is the typical situation. Assessment at this stage can increasingly be based on quantitative and qualitative data related to the results achieved over the course of the previous accreditation period. This means that for renewed accreditation, the focus lies on the achievement of the aims defined for the programme by the higher education institution, particularly for educational objectives and learning outcomes. Above all, it is the institution's quality assurance or quality management system that is expected to provide key evidence that the goals for its degree programmes have been met, and document any deviations.

ASIIN's understanding of accreditation aims to support higher education institutions in achieving **continuous improvements** in their teaching. Improvements within an accreditation period should never be put off until the next accreditation deadline. On the contrary, being able to demonstrate that continuous improvements have been made is essential for the renewal of the accreditation.

If an institution intends to make **major changes** to an accredited programme between accreditations, and these go beyond continuous improvement, this may affect the existing accreditation. ASIIN offers an interim auditing option in order to maintain the accreditation (see section 4.8).

4. Procedural Guidelines

4.1 Procedure models types

ASIIN offers different types of procedures for the accreditation of degree programmes:

Type of procedure	Characteristics
Individual procedure	The procedure is applied to a single Bachelor's or Master's degree programme or a consecutive Bachelor's and Master's programme.
Cluster procedure	The procedure is applied to a bundle of degree programmes (with related subjects). A group of peers assesses several programmes simultaneously.
Two-stage procedure	1st stage: Initial check of structural characteristics or models related to the faculty or higher education institution as a whole. 2nd stage: Cluster procedure for bundles of programmes (with related subjects) based on the evaluation from stage 1.
Second tier accreditation procedure/ complementary procedure in the sense of connective procedures	A complementary procedure makes use of existing results of prior external procedures (evaluation procedure or similar), <u>or</u> makes reference to an already existing and published accreditation/certification report, so that it may not be necessary to include an on-site visit in the accreditation procedure and to check criteria that have already been finally verified in the course of another recent accreditation/certification procedure. Such a complementary procedure for its own quality seal and possibly for the European subject-specific labels is also possible after the award of the seal of the Germany Accreditation Council. In such cases, an accreditation procedure where the Seal of the Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany has been awarded must have been completed and the relevant accreditation report must have been published within the database of the German Rectors` Conference (HRK).

Irrespective of the type of procedure being applied, **the decision on whether or not to accredit each programme is made separately for each seal and each label.** If the application is successful, each programme receives an accreditation seal in its own right.

Similarly, for combined programmes, the accreditation applies to the programme as a whole, and not a part of it.

Depending on the circumstances and needs of a particular institution, the accreditation procedure for individual degree programmes may be carried out separately or jointly for bundles of programmes (**cluster procedure**). In each case, ASIIN's responsible Technical Committees will decide if degree programmes may be bundled in this type of procedure as well as which programmes this applies to.

In a **two-stage accreditation procedure**, structures which apply to programmes throughout the institution, or a programme model, e.g. for combined programmes (teacher training or dual subject programmes), are initially checked by a group of specially appointed peers (stage 1). This may involve ASIIN cooperating with another accreditation agency to form a joint team in order to include subject

areas not covered by ASIIN in the overall procedure. The end product of the first step of the procedure is an evaluation report. The report forms the foundation of the subject audits – generally in the form of bundled clusters of programmes or subjects – carried out in the second step of the procedure (stage 2). The procedure for stage 2 then follows the steps described in section 4.2. After the second stage of the procedure has been completed, a decision is made on whether to grant accreditation for the individual degree programmes. A two-stage accreditation process is particularly suitable for cases where the degree programmes to be accredited have common structural characteristics and are offered by more than one subject area or faculty in a higher education institution.

A special type is the so called **complementary procedure**:

A **second tier accreditation procedure/complementary procedure** based on available, external results from evaluations (or similar) is possible if this preliminary evaluations cover all aspects relevant to the accreditation and were produced by an independent body. In such cases, the accreditation procedure can be slimmed down and it may not be necessary for peers to conduct an on-site visit. In each specific case, the responsible bodies within ASIIN will look into the circumstances and decide whether this variant may be used, depending on the rules for the seal which is being applied for.

The responsible ASIIN Accreditation Commission has decided on the basis of the synopsis of the General Criteria for the ASIIN quality seal with the criteria for the accreditation of degree programmes of the German Accreditation Council to conduct a complementary procedure for the award of the ASIIN quality seal by verifying a selection of specific criteria. This is only possible if the relevant accreditation report about the award of the Seal of the German Accreditation Council has been published in the database of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) and is accessible for third parties.

Second tier accreditation procedures/complementary procedures can also take place on the basis of procedures conducted by other EQAR registered accreditation agencies.

4.2 Sequence of the procedure

The sequence of an accreditation procedure can be subdivided as follows:

<p>1. Preparation</p> <p>➤ request</p>	<p>HEI</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A request is submitted to the ASIIN Office (accreditation request and a curricular overview which clearly states the content of the programme or programmes). - Form: electronic using the “Accreditation Request” form (www.asiin.de) - Required information: even in the case of an informal request, information such as the name(s) of the programme(s), type of degree, number of semesters, the seal(s) being applied for, any particularities, proposed responsibility of the ASIIN Technical Committees, proposed peer profiles, contact details is required.
<p>➤ Preparation of proposal</p>	<p>ASIIN</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The responsibility of ASIIN/its respective Technical Committees and the applicable procedure model and type are determined (see 4.1). - Where significant divergence from the applicable criteria is apparent, the Accreditation Commission for Degree Programmes must decide whether and on what terms a proposal can be issued; where necessary, the ASIIN office provides information on the criteria applied in this regard. - The number and profile of peers required as well as the overall length of visits are determined by the competent Technical Committee(s). - Calculation and forwarding of proposal, including a proposed timetable for the procedure, by the ASIIN office.
<p>➤ Acceptance of proposal/conclusion of contract</p>	<p>ASIIN and HEI</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contract concluded by means of acceptance of the proposal by the HEI and, if desired, by means of a separate contract.
<p>2. Assessment</p> <p>➤ Pre-assessment</p>	<p>HEI and ASIIN</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presentation of self-assessment report (or draft, if preferred) by the HEI.

3. Decision	ASIIN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Final assessment by the peers with a recommendation for the decision on accreditation. - Comments by relevant Technical Committee(s) with recommendation for the decision on accreditation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Recommendation of peers ➤ Recommendation of Technical Committees 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Decision of the Accreditation Commission 	ASIIN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Model I: Decision by the ASIIN Accreditation Commission for Degree Programmes on accreditation and, if relevant for each case, on the award of the seal(s) applied for. - Model II: Adoption of report and recommendation by the ASIIN Accreditation Commission for Degree Programmes for the decision to be submitted to the competent external national accreditation body, depending on the country in which the HEI is located. - Model III: Combination of models I and II (see above).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Notification and publication 	ASIIN and HEI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Notification of the decision to the HEI. - Transmission of the accreditation report (final version) to the HEI and, if positive, any certificates/authorisations for the use of a seal. - Transmission of the accreditation report (final version) to the owners of any additional seals applied for (e.g. to the German Accreditation Council). - Publication of a summary and of the accreditation report on the website in accordance with the requirements of the ESG.

4.3 Request submission: the HEI's self assessment report

The accreditation process is based on a so called self assessment report by the applying institution of higher education.

The preparation of the self assessment report offers the opportunity to use internal quality management systems and self examination processes in order to involve relevant stakeholder groups and to identify possible areas of improvement for the (further) development of a degree programme.

Ideally, the accreditation process will be utilized by the higher education institution as a quality development project and will not be seen as a formal inspection routine.

The self assessment report is created in two steps:

1. **Self assessment:** The higher education institution uses the self assessment report to analyze in an aggregated manner if and how the degree programme/s fulfil/s the accreditation criteria and which particularities have to be taken into account. Variations from the criteria can be explained.

There should be a special focus on evaluation and assessment rather than on mere description, including, for example strengths and weaknesses, challenges and envisaged solutions. The “guiding questions” below are designed to give some assistance in that respect.

The self assessment report is also a guide through the complementary attachments. Typically, a short and concise evaluation of each criterion together with a reference to the relevant attachment will be sufficient.

If the accreditation process includes a “cluster” of similar degree programmes, information that is relevant for all degree programmes should be summarized. At the same time, information that is important for specific degree programmes (e.g. intended learning outcomes, curriculum etc.) should be reported separately.

2. **Evidence:** It is of great importance, that the self assessment is reasonably documented and supported by suitable pieces of evidence. Therefore it is necessary to compile an annex with all pieces of evidence. This annex includes all internal regulations, documents, quantitative and qualitative data and information, etc., that the higher education institution already has in use, for example where they have been generated by internal quality management processes and must not be produced just for the accreditation process. A sample list of possible pieces of evidence is included in this guideline but can and should be altered where applicable.

ASIIN offers a template/guideline with key questions for the preparation of the self assessment report

This guideline can be used as a reference model. The structure corresponds with the accreditation criteria and differentiates between guiding questions for the analysis and suggestions for possibly useful pieces of evidence. Both are not mandatory but thought to be of assistance.

For the ASIIN quality seal and the possibly applied for European subject specific labels a guideline for the preparation of the self assessment report, based on the General Criteria and the Subject-Specific-Criteria, is available.

If a subject specific label is to be obtained in a second tier procedure after a national accreditation procedure, the ASIIN office provides an individual guideline about the necessary self assessment and documentation.

Self assessment and evidence can both be provided electronically, depending on the degree of digitalization within the institution's internal data and document management system, and can include links to specific web pages, data bases or similar.

Depending on the needs of the individual peer panels we may also ask for a printed version of the application documents in specific cases, whereas it is expected to use only electronic documents in the near future.

4.4 Principles for the selection of peers

ASIIN asks the higher education institution to state the ideal expertise profile for the group of peers. ASIIN's Accreditation Commission decides who will be nominated for a given procedure based on the recommendation of the responsible Technical Committee(s), and appoints the peers.

The group of peers

For a single accreditation, the group of peers is normally composed of:

- 2-3 full-time professors (university, university of applied sciences and, if applicable, university of cooperative education)
- 1 industry representative
- 1 student

For cluster accreditations, the group of peers is expanded in accordance with the needs of the subject matter.

In all cases, the group of peers should:

- Include members who are able to understand the subject matter of the programme or programmes under review;
- Include members who understand the needs of stakeholders in the particular programme concerned and incorporate them into their evaluation;
- If possible, include peers experienced in accreditation as well as auditors who are new to the field;
- If the degree programmes under consideration are offered by higher education institutions with a special form of organisation (e.g. universities of cooperative education or privately run institutions), include members who have experience at this type of institution.

In some cases, members of ASIIN committees involved in the accreditation procedure may serve as peers as part of the agency's internal quality assurance mechanisms.

Auditors with a background in higher education should:

- Have proven subject expertise;
- Be able to demonstrate their activities in the subject area;
- Ideally: have experience in accreditation or evaluation, teaching experience at a higher education institution, international experience, and experience in the administration of higher education institutions.

Auditors with a professional background should:

- Have proven subject expertise;
- Have experience with direct responsibility for employing graduates in a professional setting;
- Ideally: have experience in accreditation or evaluation, teaching experience at a higher education institution, international experience, and experience in the administration of higher education institutions.

Auditors from the student body should:

- Be actively studying a subject relevant to the accreditation procedure;
- Be able to reflect on the experience of studying, while not having significantly exceeded the normal time taken to complete a degree;
- Be familiar with Bachelor's and Master's level programmes.

For Germany, students nominated by the Student Accreditation Pool are considered during the selection process of the student representative.

Persons excluded from the nomination as peer:

- Persons who are in the process of applying to the institution under review.
- Academic colleagues whose publications or projects are principally produced in cooperation with teaching staff from the institution under review.
- People who work at the institution under review and/or have a dependent relationship to it.
- Generally, professors from the same federal state or region.

Preparation of peers

The agency offers regular seminars/workshops for auditors and committee members to prepare them for the task and to reflect on their understanding of their role and update their knowledge of the auditing process. The agency expects its peers to make use of these opportunities or similar offers provided by other agencies.

Confidentiality and impartiality

Before participating in an audit, every peer must sign a **confidentiality and impartiality declaration**. The applicants are informed of the composition of the auditing team. If bias is suspected, the higher education institution may request the substitution of peers. The relevant Technical Committee handles this type of requests.

4.5 Role and function of project managers

The peers and ASIIN's committees carry out their accreditation tasks on a pro bono basis. However, the overall coordination of a procedure is carried out by a full-time project manager at the ASIIN office.

ASIIN project managers coordinate and organise the accreditation procedure. They ensure that the relevant rules are followed in each procedure, are responsible for time management and the adherence to deadlines, and provide support to everyone involved in the procedure, answering

questions based on their experience and background knowledge. Project managers are present with the peers during the visit and at all committee meetings. They produce draft reports, proposals and documentation for the procedure. Throughout the procedure, they also support the higher education institution seeking accreditation as the contact person within ASIIN.

Thus, project managers manage the information between institution(s), peers and other committees involved.

To be considered relevant and to be taken into account for the procedure, procedure-related communication between institutions, auditors and committee has to pass through the ASIIN office.

4.6 Possible outcomes of the procedure and expiry

Accreditation is for a limited time period. A first accreditation with one of the aforementioned seals is valid for five years; subsequent renewal is valid for seven years.

Moreover, the calculation of validity periods is always based on the rules of the body granting the seal.

The time limits applicable in the individual case are notified to the higher education institution together with the letter of confirmation on the outcome of the accreditation procedure.

An accreditation procedure may have the following outcomes:

Final decision by the ASIIN Accreditation Commission for the ASIIN quality seal and the European subject-specific labels

- Unconditional accreditation for the full accreditation period.
- Accreditation with reservations, i.e. with requirements and thus for a shorter period of validity than the maximum permitted by the accreditation procedure. In this case, there are certain requirements that must be met by a due date. If the requirements are met on time, the accreditation is extended to cover the full period allowed. The fulfilment of the requirements is checked and evaluated by the review team and the responsible Technical Committee(s) and ascertained by the Accreditation Commission. The rules of the respective owner of a seal relating to the imposition of requirements are also applied. If necessary, the ASIIN office will provide detailed information on the conditions to be applied.
- The procedure is suspended (“procedure-loop”): the Accreditation Commission may suspend an accreditation procedure once if the procedure revealed that requirements remain unfulfilled but the applicant institution can, nonetheless, be expected to resolve the issues during the suspension period. When deciding to suspend the procedure, the Accreditation Commission also stipulates the conditions to be met for resumption. The decision to suspend the procedure may be taken at the request of the institution or on the initiative of ASIIN. If the resumption of a procedure

requires an additional visit, the applicant may have to meet extra costs. The rules of the respective owner of a seal relating to the suspension of a procedure are also applied. If necessary, the ASIIN office will provide detailed information on the conditions to be applied.

- Accreditation may be refused if the requirements for the award of a seal are not sufficiently met. In this case, the German Accreditation Council will be informed if its seal was applied for. The rules of the respective owner of a seal relating to the refusal of accreditation are also applied. If necessary, the ASIIN office will provide detailed information on the conditions to be applied.
 - ASIIN submits a recommendation for the decision on accreditation to the respective national decision-making body; this may involve requirements or suspension.
 - The responsible decision-making body may specify different/further outcomes for an accreditation procedure according to national requirements.
- national accreditation, e.g. Switzerland

Appeals and Complaints

The Appeals and Complaints Committee of ASIIN has the task of evaluating complaints submitted by higher education institutions in ongoing accreditation, certification or evaluation procedures as well as appeals against corresponding decisions and of determining the resulting consequences.

Complaints in ongoing procedures should first be addressed to the Managing Director (gf@asiin.de). If the Managing Director is unable to remedy the complaint, the matter shall be referred to the Appeals and Complaints Committee.

Appeals against decisions of the boards shall be addressed to the head office, which shall present the appeal to the competent commission at its next meeting. If the commission considers the appeal to be well-founded, it shall rectify its decision. The Appeals and Complaints Committee shall be informed annually of such appeals.

If the competent commission does not rectify its decision, the Appeals and Complaints Committee shall decide on the appeal. For this purpose, the head office shall call upon the committee.

Procedure for fulfilment of requirements

1. Proof that requirements are met HEI – Submission by HEI of evidence that requirements have been met within the time limit as notified by ASIIN.

2. Decision	ASIIN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Assessment by peers of whether requirements are met and, where appropriate, questions to HEI. – Recommendation by review team for decision on the extension of accreditation to the full period. – Comments by Technical Committee(s) in charge with recommendation for decision on the extension of accreditation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Recommendation by peers ➤ Recommendation of Technical Committees 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Decision by the Accreditation Commission 	ASIIN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Model I: Decision by the ASIIN Accreditation Commission for Degree Programmes on fulfilment of requirements and extension of accreditation and, where appropriate, on the award of the seal(s) applied for. – Model II: Adoption by the ASIIN Accreditation Commission for Degree Programmes of report on compliance with requirements and submission of recommendation for decision to the third-party body responsible for national accreditation according to the country in which the HEI is situated. – Model III: Combination of model I and II.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Notification and publication 	ASIIN and HEI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Notification of decision to the HEI. – In the case of a positive decision, the documents/authorisations containing the extension to use a seal are issued to the HEI. – Notification of the decision to the owners of any other seals applied for (e.g. the German Accreditation Council). – Publication of the results of compliance with the requirements and/or removal of requirements from the website in accordance with ESG requirements.

Procedure relating to suspension and resumption of a procedure

1. Resumption of the procedure	HEI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Submission by HEI of evidence that conditions transmitted with the suspension decision have been met by the HEI within the time limit as notified by ASIIN.
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2. Decision	ASIIN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Assessment by peers of whether conditions are met and, where appropriate, questions to HEI. – Recommendation of review team for decision on resumption of the procedure and accreditation and/or award of the seal(s) applied for. – Comments by Technical Committee(s) in charge with recommendation for decision on resumption of the procedure and accreditation and/or award of the seal(s) applied for.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Recommendation by peers ➤ Recommendation by Technical Committees 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Decision by the Accreditation Commission 	ASIIN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Model I: Decision by the ASIIN Accreditation Commission for Degree Programmes on resumption of the procedure and accreditation and/or award of the seal(s) sought. – Model II: Adoption by the ASIIN Accreditation Commission for Degree Programmes of report on resumption of the procedure and submission of recommendation to the external body responsible for national accreditation according to the country in which the HEI is situated. – Model III: Combination of model I and II.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Notification and publication 	ASIIN and HEI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Notification of decision to the HEI. – Handover of the accreditation report (final version) to the HEI and, if positive, any certificates/authorisations to use a seal. – Transmission of the accreditation report (final version) to the owners of any other seals applied for (e.g. the German Accreditation Council). – Publication of a summary and the accreditation report on the website in accordance with ESG requirements.

4.7 Extending an accreditation period

Extension where a reaccreditation is planned

If a request is made to reaccredit a programme up to six weeks before the previous accreditation expires, the Accreditation Commission may decide to extend the accreditation until renewal if the reaccreditation procedure is to be implemented by ASIIN. This prevents gaps in the validity of a programme's accreditation.

Extension for the run-down period when a programme is closed

If a higher education institution is not going to continue a programme which has previously received accreditation, and ASIIN has taken a final accreditation decision, the existing accreditation may be extended for the duration of the degrees of students who were matriculated when the validity of the accreditation expired, upon request of the institution. The relevant conditions are:

1. The programme was closed before the accreditation period expired.
2. The institution can substantiate that the programme will not differ significantly from the accredited programme.
3. The required staff and infrastructure will continue to be available.

4.8 Changes during the accreditation period

Changes to degree programmes during the accreditation period are in principle possible and are indeed essential if the quality of a programme improves or is further developed. However, significant changes may change the object of accreditation in such a way that the original accreditation decision and award of the seal no longer apply.

It is therefore important to ASIIN to offer a fast and low-cost procedure which, in the event of significant changes, allows for the accreditation decision or the award of a seal to be maintained or to be extended to these changes.

If an accreditation procedure has been completed by ASIIN, the higher education institution is contractually obliged to inform the agency of significant changes. If ASIIN learns of a significant change by other means, the higher education institution will be invited to comment within a specified time limit. The higher education institution is able in its comments to request that the accreditation is maintained in accordance with the procedure described below. It is generally up to the Accreditation Commission for Degree Programmes to decide whether the change decreases the quality of the programme and whether a new accreditation is necessary.

Definition

In the event of significant changes to the concept or profile of a programme, the agency will decide whether the changes decrease the quality and therefore a reaccreditation is necessary.⁴

This type of change has generally occurred if

1. The objectives of the programme are redefined in a form surpassing an update based on new knowledge from academic and professional sources;
2. Its characteristics as recorded in the accreditation certificate have changed (e.g. designation, programme classification (consecutive/continuing), type of degree);
3. The normal period of study has changed;
4. The enrolment cycle has changed;
5. The institution makes changes to the curriculum with the following consequences:

⁴ Extract from the model agreement between the German Accreditation Council and the agencies, and criterion, and criterion 3.6.3. of the Rules for the Accreditation of Study Programmes and for System Accreditation.

- a. Compulsory modules are removed and not replaced (including practical modules and the final thesis);
 - b. A complete change in the learning objectives of several compulsory modules (including practical modules and the final thesis);
 - c. Changes to the general study conditions, where the changes are not justified by improvements undertaken as a result of the quality assurance process;
6. A new main focus or specialisation option is introduced;
 7. A reduction in staff and/or infrastructure has been implemented;
 8. The change would lead to a breach of applicable legal regulations or other binding statutory requirements.

Principally, a significant change has not occurred if

1. Improvements arising from the institution's quality assurance or quality management system are implemented – unless the changes are in breach of applicable legal regulations or other binding statutory requirements.
2. Modules are brought up-to-date with the latest research within the scope of the objectives of the programme.
3. Additional modules are added to the range of elective or compulsory elective modules, and their learning objectives are in accordance with the goals of the programme as a whole.
4. In individual cases, the designation of modules is altered in keeping with the latest research.
5. The credit points awarded for modules are adjusted to reflect the actual workload, as long as the total number of credits for the programme is not thereby changed.
6. Modifications are made to the quality assurance system in the course of its ongoing development.
7. Staff is replaced.

These lists are not conclusive and may be expanded. If in doubt, higher education institutions are requested to report changes to the ASIIN office.

Procedure

The procedure in the case of a significant change is organised as follows:

- In the case of significant changes which are reported in the process of meeting a requirement, the change will be evaluated by the auditors, Technical Committees and the Accreditation Commission during the assessment of whether the requirement has been fulfilled.
- For all subsequent changes, the following procedure is used:
 - a. The higher education institution submits an informal request for the change to be assessed and for the accreditation to remain in force. This request includes a description of the change in question.
 - b. The documentation is assessed by the responsible Technical Committee(s). The Technical Committee chooses one of the following options on behalf of the Accreditation Commission and according to its instructions:
 - (1) The change is not significant.

- (2) Although the change is significant, there is no need to carry out a new accreditation procedure (i.e. the change does not compromise the existing accreditation).
 - (3) The change is significant and it cannot be covered by the existing accreditation since it might lead to a decrease of quality. If the change is to be implemented or retained, a new accreditation procedure will need to be initiated (i.e. the existing accreditation will lose its validity if the change has already been implemented and is not revoked).
- c. In case (1), the institution is informed of the Technical Committee's decision and the procedure is concluded.
 - d. In case (2), the Technical Committee may request a new assessment from all or some of the peers or, if required due to the nature of the change, new peers may be asked for their opinion. The Committee will then decide whether a new accreditation procedure is necessary. The Technical Committee forwards its recommendation, possibly including the opinion of the peers, to the Accreditation Commission, which then makes the final decision.
 - e. In case (3), a new accreditation procedure must be initiated.

The procedure for a significant change can also be carried out based on a higher education institution's plans and concepts in order to give the institution the opportunity to assess consequences for the existing accreditation before implementing a change.

Several proposed changes which affect the same programme of studies may be covered in a single procedure.

5 Contractual basis

The cooperation between ASIIN e. V. and a higher education institution is based on a **contract**. This comes into force upon acceptance of ASIIN's tender by the higher education institution or contracting party.

The detailed conditions which define the form of this contractual relationship are derived from the tender provided by ASIIN and the General Terms and Conditions (**GTC**).

An essential aspect of the contract between ASIIN e. V. and a higher education institution is that it covers the execution of an accreditation procedure, but not the result.

The accreditation procedure begins when the contract enters into force.

ASIIN informs the respective seal owner(s) whose seal is involved in the procedure.

6 Appendix

6.1 Guideline and structural template for the HEI's self assessment report

ASIIN offers a template with guiding questions for the preparation of the self assessment report.

It is recommended to use this guideline and its structure as a reference model for the self assessment report. The structure corresponds with the accreditation criteria and differentiates between guiding questions for the analysis and suggestions for possibly useful pieces of evidence. Both are not mandatory but thought to be of assistance.

This guideline is available through the ASIIN office.

6.2 Example sheet for module description

A **Module Handbook** or collection of module descriptions that is also available for students to consult should contain the following information about the individual modules:

Module name:	
Module level, if applicable	
Code, if applicable	
Subtitle, if applicable	
Courses, if applicable	
Semester(s) in which the module is taught	
Person responsible for the module	<i>Please indicate a specific person.</i>
Lecturer	
Language	
Relation to curriculum	<i>For all programmes, including those running out, in which the module is taught: programme, specialization if applicable, compulsory/elective, semester</i>
Type of teaching, contact hours	<i>Contact hours and class size separately for each teaching method: lecture, lesson, practical, project, seminar etc.</i>
Workload	<i>(Estimated) workload, divided into contact hours (lecture, exercise, laboratory session, etc.) and private study, including examination preparation, specified in hours,⁵ and in total.</i>
Credit points	
Requirements according to the examination regulations	
Recommended prerequisites	<i>E.g. existing competences in ...</i>

⁵ When calculating contact time, each contact hour is counted as a full hour because the organisation of the schedule, moving from room to room, and individual questions to lecturers after the class, all mean that about 60 minutes should be counted.

Module objectives/intended learning outcomes	<p><i>Key question: what learning outcomes should students attain in the module?</i></p> <p><i>E.g. in terms of:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Knowledge: familiarity with information, theory and/or subject knowledge</i> <p><i>Skills: cognitive and practical abilities for which knowledge is used</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Competences: integration of knowledge, skills and social and methodological capacities in working or learning situations⁶</i> <p><i>E.g.: "Students know that/know how to/are able to..."</i></p>
Content	<i>The description should clearly indicate the weighting of the content and the level.</i>
Study and examination requirements and forms of examination	
Media employed	
Reading list	

6.3 Example sheet staff handbook (approximately 1 page per person)

Name	<i>N.N.</i>		
Position	<i>Teaching area and designation</i>		
Academic career	<i>Initial academic appointment</i>	<i>Institution</i>	<i>Year</i>
	<i>Habilitation [German post-doctoral qualification] (subject)</i>	<i>Institution</i>	<i>Year</i>
	<i>Doctorate (subject)</i>	<i>Institution</i>	<i>Year</i>
	<i>Undergraduate degree (subject)</i>		
Employment	<i>Position</i>	<i>Employer</i>	<i>Period</i>
Research and development projects over the last 5 years	<i>Name of project or research focus</i> <i>Period and any other information</i> <i>Partners, if applicable</i> <i>Amount of financing</i>		

⁶ Cf. European Commission: Proposal for a Recommendation of the European Parliament and the European Council on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning, COM(2006) 479 final, 2006/0163 (COD), Brussels 05/09/2006.

<p>Industry collaborations over the last 5 years</p>	<p><i>Project title</i></p> <p><i>Partners</i></p>
<p>Patents and proprietary rights</p>	<p><i>Title</i> <i>Year</i></p>
<p>Important publications over the last 5 years</p>	<p><i>Selected recent publications from a total of approx. (give total number):</i></p> <p><i>Author(s)</i></p> <p><i>Title</i></p> <p><i>Any other information</i></p> <p><i>Publisher, place of publication, date of publication or name of periodical, volume, issue, page numbers</i></p>
<p>Activities in specialist bodies over the last 5 years</p>	<p><i>Organisation</i> <i>Role</i> <i>Period</i></p> <p><i>Membership without a specific role need not be mentioned</i></p>

6.4 Sample plan for an on-site visit

An exemplary description of the elements and rounds of discussions of a visit by an ASIIN review team can be found below. In the case of a **cluster procedure**, an individual timetable is established on the basis of the general timetable. Timetables might also be adapted to take account of different procedure types and the sites of HEIs if applicable. Additional discussions may be necessary (e.g. with professional representatives, graduates or representatives of supervisory authorities) depending on the characteristics of the given programmes or local conditions.

Components of a visit

Discussion with the HEI management

Focus: Resources, quality management, documentation, transparency, diversity and equal opportunities

Discussion(s) with those responsible for programmes

Focus: Integration within the curriculum; the programme: concept for content and implementation; the programme: structures, methods and implementation; examinations: organisation, concept and characteristics

Discussion with students at various stages in their studies, including representatives of the student union or organised student representation

Focus: The programme: concept for content and implementation; the programme: structures, methods and implementation; examinations: organisation, concept and characteristics; resources, quality management, documentation and transparency, diversity and equal opportunities

Examination of documentation, tests, projects and thesis and any other material which can only be inspected on-site

Focus: The programme: structures, methods and implementation; examinations: organisation, concept and characteristics (based on the quality and level of the available samples)

Discussion with the programme's teaching staff

Focus: The programme: concept for content and implementation; the programme: structures, methods and implementation; examinations: organisation, concept and characteristics

Tour of the institutions involved

Focus: Resources, the programme: structures, methods and implementation

Internal discussion by the review team

Concluding discussion with those responsible for the programmes and the HEI management

Focus: The peers summarise their impressions from the day