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Resolution on the application by the Swiss Agency of Accreditation and Quality Assurance (Schweizerische Agentur für Akkreditierung und Qualitätssicherung - AAQ) dated 22 May 2015 for accreditation and for assessment of compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

Resolution by the German Accreditation Council of 22 June 2016

I.

The Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany (Foundation) accredits the Swiss Agency of Accreditation and Quality Assurance (AAQ) pursuant to § 2 Para. 1 No. 1 of the German Law on the Establishment of a Foundation “Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany” in accordance with the following provisions and insofar thereby grants it the authority to accredit study programmes and the internal quality assurance systems of higher education institutions by awarding the seal of the Foundation.

II.

The decision pursuant to Point I. above comes into effect on 22 June 2016. However, it will become void if the agency does not sign an agreement by 30 September 2016 pursuant to § 3 of the German Law on the Establishment of a Foundation “Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany” in the version adopted by the German Accreditation Council on 22 June 2016.

III.

The accreditation and the authorisation pursuant to Article I. above is granted for a period of five years; the right of revocation pursuant to Article V. below remains reserved.

According to Section 3.2.1 in conjunction with Section 3.3.1 of the resolution “Rules for the Accreditation of Agencies” dated 8 December 2009 in the version adopted on 10 December 2010, the accreditation expires on 31 March 2021.

IV.

The German Accreditation Council notes that AAQ has not fulfilled a few quality requirements; these deficiencies are to be corrected within six months according to Section 3.1.3 of the resolution “Rules for the Accreditation of Agencies” dated 8 December 2009 in the version adopted on 10 December 2010. Accreditation is therefore granted under the following conditions:

Condition 1: The role of the Swiss Accreditation Council (SAR) as AAQ’s committee structure for procedures in Germany must be laid down in SAR’s organisational regulations or in another suitable way as indicated in the agency’s statement. The relationship between AAQ and SAR must be outlined in a suitable way in the documents relevant to procedures in Germany (above all the guidelines, strategy, quality paper and contracts with the German higher education institutions). (Criterion 2.2.1)

Condition 2: The current version of the quality paper acknowledged by SAR must be published. (Criterion 2.5)

The German Accreditation Council makes explicit reference to the recommendations contained in the report as well as to conditions two, three, five, six and eight contained therein, which have been reformulated as recommendations where their content is not covered by the conditions issued.

V.

If AAQ does not demonstrate that the conditions have been fulfilled within the respective term or if the conditions prove to be unfulfilled after the respective term has elapsed, the Foundation may revoke the accreditation according to Section 3.5.3 of the resolution “Rules for the Accreditation of Agencies” dated 8 December 2009 in the version adopted on 10 December 2010.

VI. Rationale

General:

Based on the report and taking into consideration the agency’s position paper, the German Accreditation Council (GAC) has concluded that the Swiss Agency of Accreditation and Quality Assurance (AAQ) substantially fulfils the criteria pursuant to Chapter 2 of the resolution “Rules

for the Accreditation of Agencies” dated 8 December 2009 in the version adopted on 10 December 2010.

Regarding I.:

The report suggested that the agency should only receive certification for system accreditation including the necessary random sampling. AAQ indicated in its statement that it would like to offer its partners all possible options for accreditation in Germany and has therefore also applied for certification for programme accreditation. As the report confirms AAQ’s competencies in this respect, the German Accreditation Council sees no reason not to grant AAQ’s application in full.

Regarding II.:

In addition, the report suggested that SAR should be included in the agreement between the (German) Accreditation Council and AAQ in a suitable way. AAQ’s statement describes the relationship between AAQ and SAR for procedures in Germany as constituting a single unit insofar as the AAQ’s committee structure is formed by SAR. Against this backdrop, involvement of SAR is guaranteed if the agreement is signed by AAQ only, particularly as it was stated that the AAQ/SAR relationship will be clarified in the organisational regulations (cf. Condition 1).

Regarding III.:

In its 77th meeting on 13 December 2013, the German Accreditation Council resolved to grant the former OAQ, including any successor organisations, an exceptional extension in Germany of 17 months up to 29 February 2016 (its accreditation would originally have expired on 30 September 2014). This decision was made against the backdrop of the fundamental reorganisation of external quality assurance in Switzerland.

On this basis, the Accreditation Council resolved in its 83rd meeting on 18 June 2015 to accredit AAQ on a provisional basis up to 30 September 2016 pursuant to Section 3.3.1 of the Rules for the Accreditation of Agencies.

The duration of this provisional accreditation must be included in the application term according to Section 3.2. This does not apply to the duration of the exceptional extension.

As accreditation terms always expire at the end of the quarter in accordance with Section 3.2.1, the resulting accreditation term extends to 31 March 2021.

Regarding Condition 1:

This integrates elements from conditions one, three and four as proposed in the report, which all concern the relationship between AAQ and SAR based on Criterion 2.2.1. AAQ’s statement

that AAQ's committee structure is formed by SAR for procedures in Germany helped to clarify the situation. The announcement that SAR will also specify this in its organisational regulations is highly appreciated. Its implementation, however, should be reviewed within the fulfilment of conditions. The AAQ/SAR relationship should also be made transparent in the agency's documents that are relevant to Germany.

Regarding Condition 2:

This relates to condition seven, as it was originally proposed. The German Criterion 2.5 requires that an agency's internal quality management system is publicly accessible.

Regarding conditions that have been reformulated as recommendations:

- Condition two, as it was originally proposed, envisaged stronger formalisation of the selection procedure and criteria for the composition of SAR and its committees. In the report, the necessary competencies were judged to be represented and the stakeholders were judged to be involved, the actual state was therefore described as appropriate. For this reason, it does not appear essential at present to issue a condition.
- Insofar as they have not already been included in condition 1, conditions 3 and 5, as originally proposed, related to revisions of the agency's internal documents (guidelines for system accreditation, manual for SAR members) to better present the specific characteristics of procedures in Germany (above all the obligation to state reasons, decision rules and the point at which contracts are concluded). As there are no concerns regarding the agency's correct implementation of procedures in Germany, the German Accreditation Council believes a recommendation is sufficient regarding this point.
- Condition six, as it was originally proposed, concerned the publication of the agency's internal documents for the sake of transparency. It is the German Accreditation Council's practice to express concerns of this kind as recommendations, since the criteria do not require conditions to be issued.
- Condition eight, as it was originally proposed, referred to the assessment concerning ESG Standard 2.7 (formalised complaints procedure regarding the outline of the procedures). The German Accreditation Council's corresponding Criterion 2.6 is, however, formulated in less detail and has been essentially fulfilled. There is, therefore, no reason to issue a condition covering this matter.

VII. Compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)

The German Accreditation Council notes that AAQ has substantially fulfilled the “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area” (ESG).

The following three standards are fulfilled: 2.1; 3.2; 3.7

The following eleven standards are substantially fulfilled: 2.2; 2.3; 2.4; 2.5; 2.6; 2.7; 3.1; 3.3; 3.4; 3.5; 3.6