How to keep programme and institutional accreditation side-by-side

The German Accreditation System

QFORTE Workshop 11-15 June 2021

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ASIIN

QFORTE
Fortifying higher education quality in Moldova.
No boundaries for quality

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

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The German Accreditation System
Characteristics

Background
- German accreditation system in higher education is a product of the Bologna process
- Lots of elements have changed since 1999, but core principles have remained the same
  - Responsibility for quality mainly lies with HEI
  - Peer review
  - Involvement of important stakeholders

Characteristics
- Decentralised
- HEIs have lots of room for manoeuvre
- Focus on the quality at a programme level

The German Accreditation System
Regulations

Legal basis

International
- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)
- Communiqués of the EHEA ministerial conferences
- Lisbon convention

National
- Interstate Study Accreditation Treaty as of 2017
- Specimen Decree/State Decrees on the accreditation of study programmes as of 2017–2020

The German Accreditation System
Players

German Accreditation Council

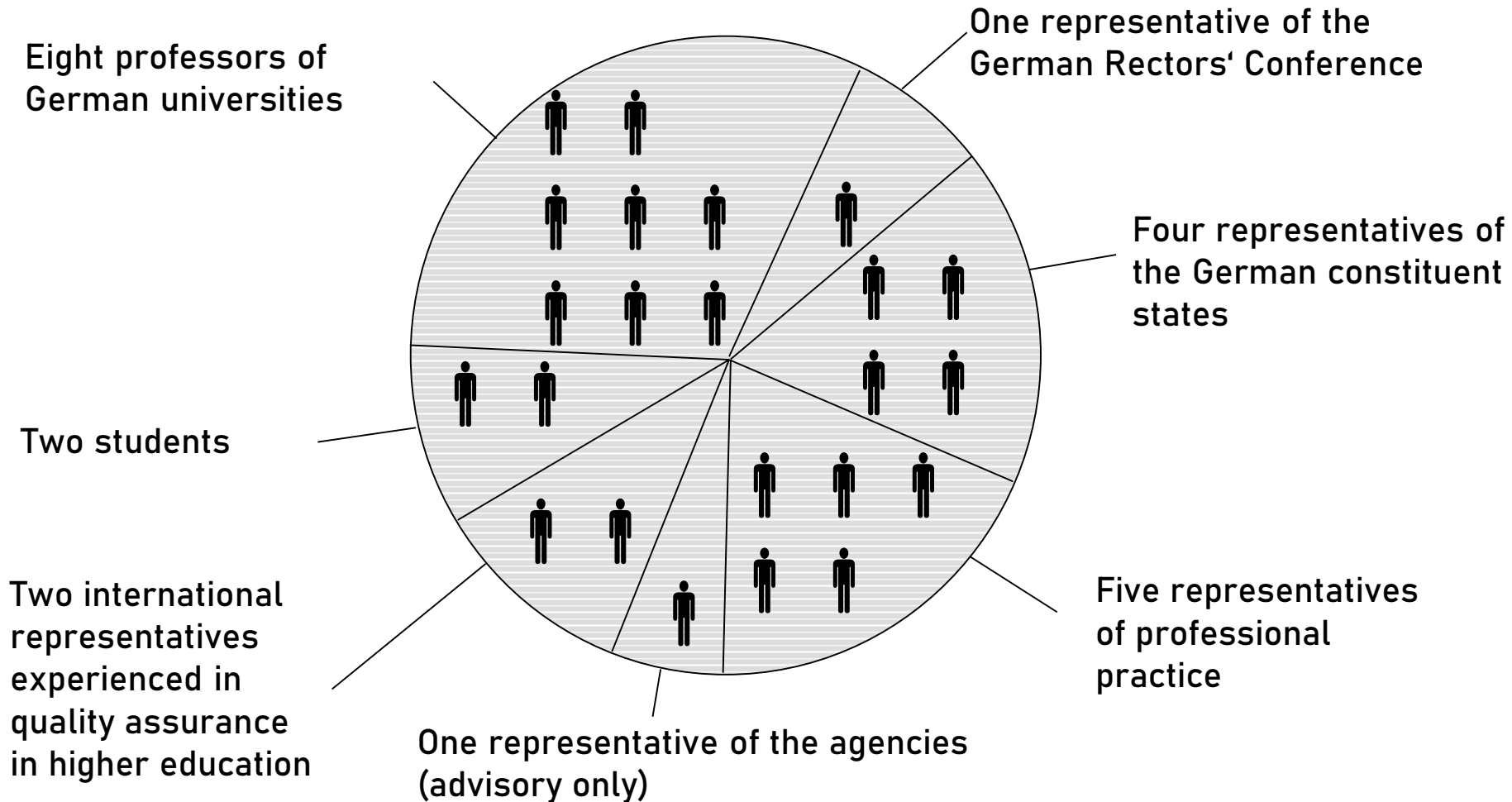Common institution of the German states

Central decision-making body on
- Programme accreditation
- Institutional accreditation
- Authorisation of agencies

Mission
- ensuring the consistency and coherence of accreditation decisions
- supporting the states in the further development of the German quality management system
- promoting international cooperation in the field of accreditation and quality assurance

The German Accreditation System
Players

Eight professors of German universities

One representative of the German Rectors' Conference

Four representatives of the German constituent states

Two students

Five representatives of professional practice

Two international representatives experienced in quality assurance in higher education

One representative of the agencies (advisory only)

The German Accreditation System
Players

The Quality Assurance Agencies

Policy of the Accreditation Council: Authorisation based on registration with EQAR

10 authorised agencies from Germany, Austria and Switzerland

Responsibilities
- Conduct evaluations of programmes/institutions based on national criteria/ESG
- Provide reports for the Accreditation Council

The German Accreditation System
Programme and institutional accreditation

Basics

- Both types of accreditation are equally valid
- HEIs freely choose one of the types
- Alternative procedures
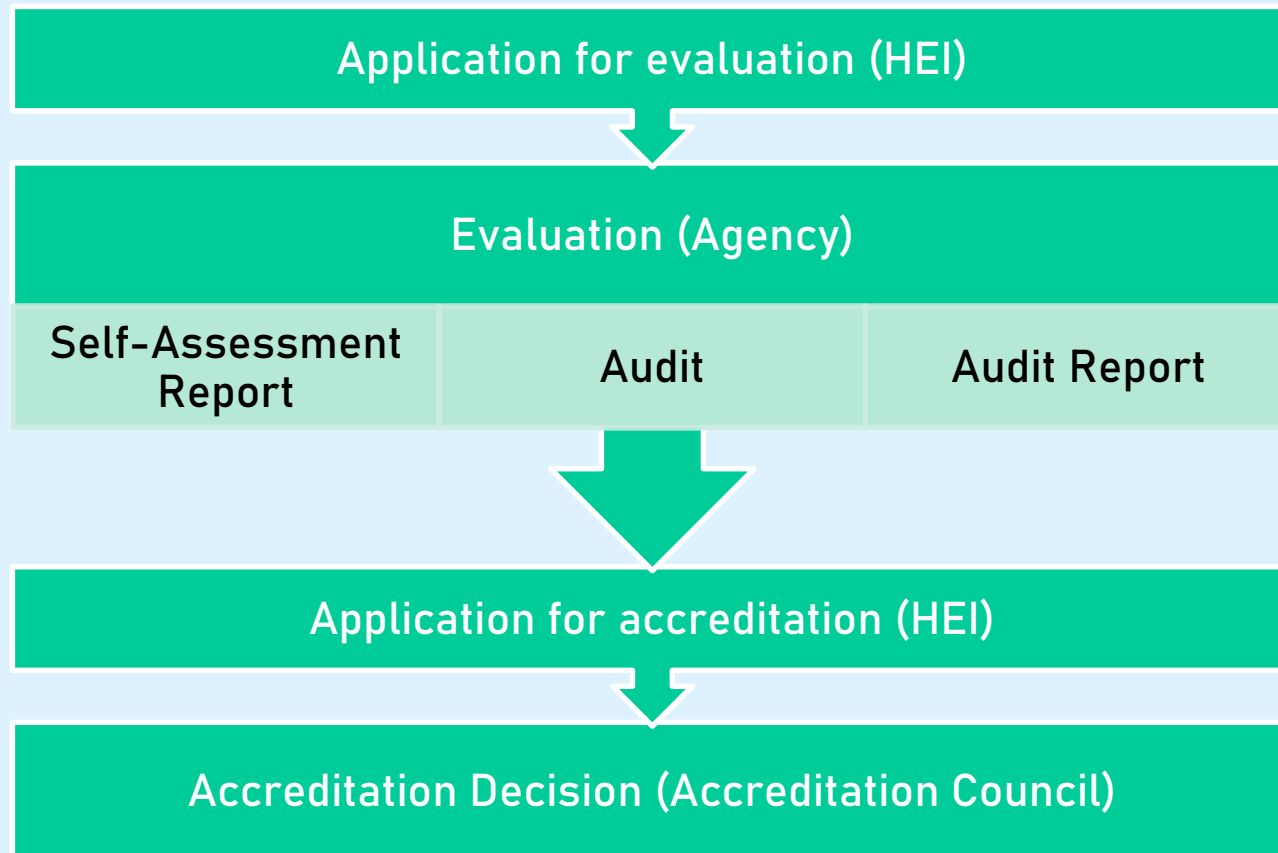
Relation between both types

External level	Programme accreditation	Institutional accreditation
Internal level	QA procedures	QA procedures + programme accreditation

The German Accreditation System
Programme and institutional accreditation

Procedure

Application for evaluation (HEI)

⬇

Evaluation (Agency)

Self-Assessment Report	Audit	Audit Report

⬇

Application for accreditation (HEI)

⬇

Accreditation Decision (Accreditation Council)

The German Accreditation System
Programme Accreditation

Criteria

The subject of programme accreditation are Bachelor's and Master's programmes offered by state or state-recognised HEIs in Germany.

Differentiation between formal and academic criteria

Agencies assess the formal criteria
- Structure and duration
- Admission requirements
- Adequate academic degree
- Modularisation
- Credit-Point System

Criteria

Expert panels assess the academic criteria
- Qualification objectives and learning outcomes
- Curriculum
- Academic Mobility
- Teaching Staff
- Resources
- Examinations
- Workload and organisation
- Adequacy and up-to-dateness of the programme
- Quality assurance measures
- Gender equality and compensation of disadvantages
- Special regulations for joint degree programmes and other forms of cooperation
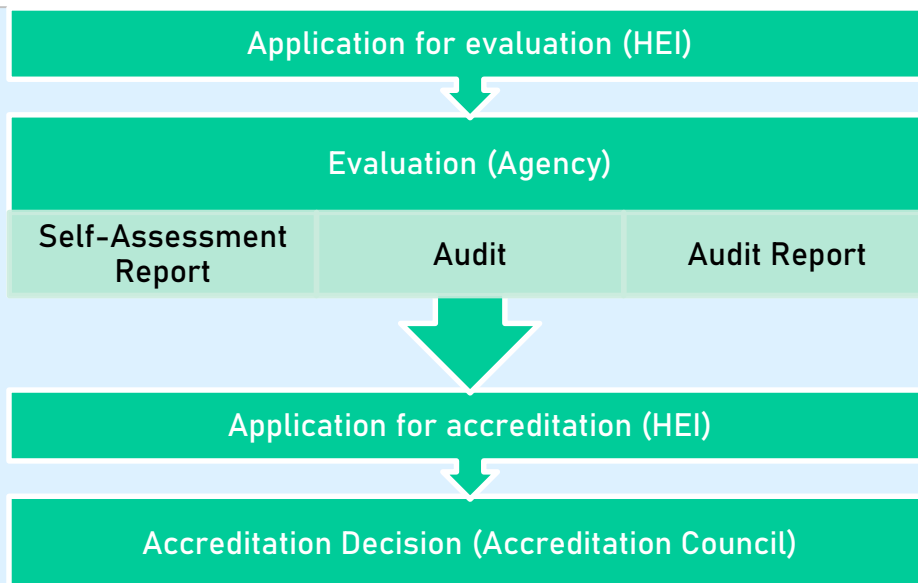
The German Accreditation System
Programme Accreditation

Procedures

The subject of accreditation is an invididual programme

But: cluster accreditation is common

Application for evaluation (HEI)		
Evaluation (Agency)		
Self-Assessment Report	Audit	Audit Report

Application for accreditation (HEI)

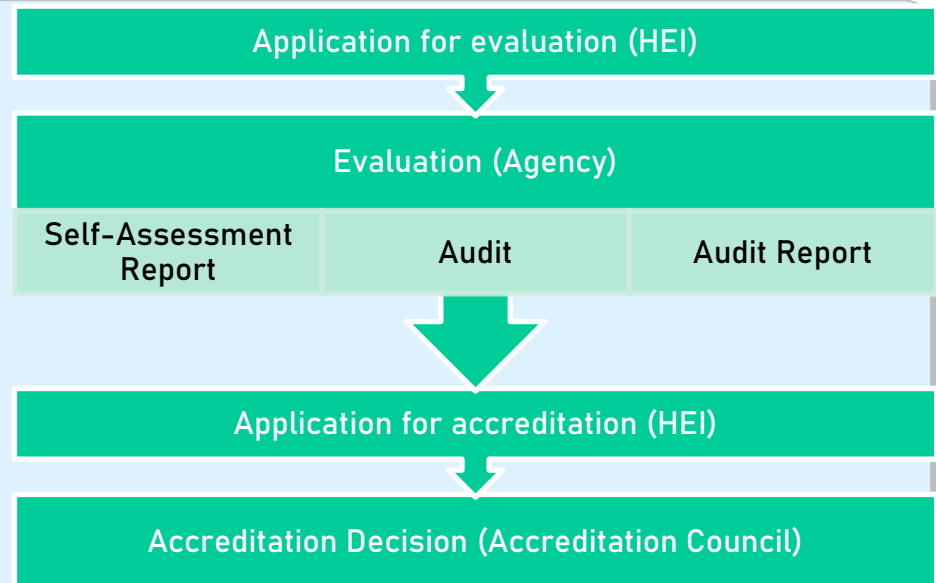| Accreditation Decision (Accreditation Council) |
|---|

Review:
- At least 4 experts (2 professors, 1 representative of professional practice, 1 student)
- Discussions with the rector's office, the programme coordinators, teaching staff, students (, industry/business representatives)
- Audit report contains a suggestion for decision
- Option to eliminate deficits before a final decision

The German Accreditation System
Programme Accreditation

Procedures

Decision:
- Based on SAR and audit report
- Options:
  - Accreditation without requirements
  - Accreditation with requirements
  - No accreditation
- Accreditation period: 8 years

Application for evaluation (HEI)
Evaluation (Agency)

Self-Assessment Report	Audit	Audit Report

Application for accreditation (HEI)
Accreditation Decision (Accreditation Council)

Criteria

The subject of institutional accreditation is an internal quality assurance system at an HEI.

Institutional accreditation means that this QA system is able to ensure the compliance of all degree programmes with the formal and academic criteria.
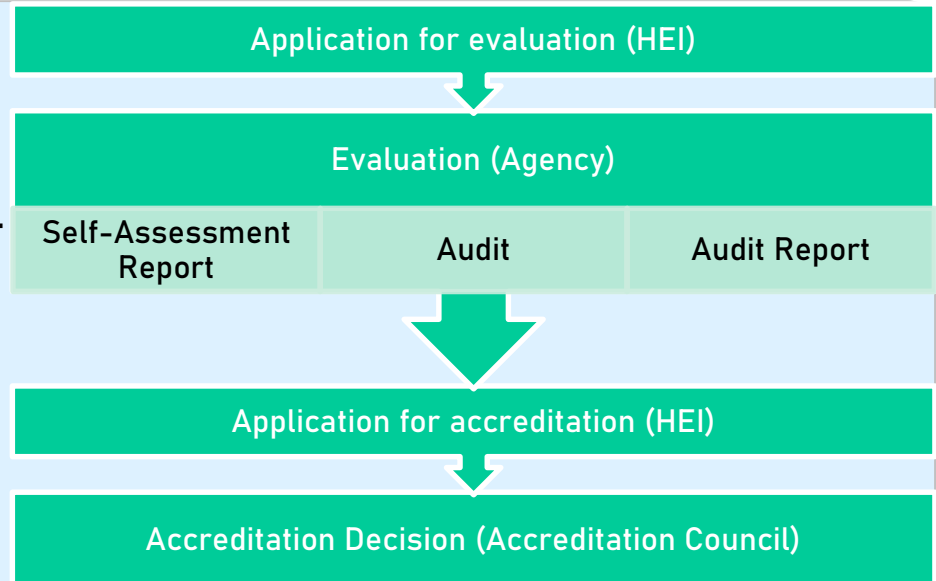
The German Accreditation System
Institutional Accreditation

Criteria

- Mission statement for teaching
- Systematic realisation of formal and academic criteria for degree programmes
- Defined responsibilities and processes for design, continuous development and internal accreditation of degree programmes
- Involvement of all internal and external stakeholders
- Independence of assessment, appeals
- Sufficient resources
- Continuous development and revision of QA system
- Assessment of all areas relevant for teaching and learning
- Collection and utilisation of adequate data
- Documentation and transparency

The German Accreditation System
Institutional Accreditation

Procedures

Review:
- At least 5 experts (3 professors, 1 representative of professional practice, 1 student)
- Discussions with the rector's office, the QA unit, teaching staff, students, administration, internal accreditation body, external stakeholders
- Two audits:
  - General discussion
  - Sample of programmes and aspects
- Decision: as in programme accreditation

Application for evaluation (HEI)		
Evaluation (Agency)		
Self-Assessment Report	Audit	Audit Report

Application for accreditation (HEI)

Accreditation Decision (Accreditation Council)

The German Accreditation System
Pros and Cons

Programme Accreditation	
+ strong external view	– Little systematic
+ specific feedback on ground level	– Little input on higher–level structures
+ low demands on internal structures	

Institutional Accreditation	
+ systematic institutional development	– High demands on internal structures
+ realising institutional autonomy	– Little input on ground level
+ ability to design innovative QA processes	

The German Accreditation System
Pros and Cons

Combination of programme and institutional accreditation

- Accomodate a great variety of institutions with differences in organisational capacities
- Implement the HEIs' central responsibility for the quality of their programmes by giving them choices
- Double structures and more resources are needed in external quality assurance

The German Accreditation System

Thank you for your attention!

Any questions and comments are welcome.

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