

evalag – a “Learning Organisation”

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List of Abbreviations

CEENQA	Network of Central and Eastern European Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
IDW	Informationsdienst Wissenschaft (Scientific Information Service)
IMPALA	Impact Analysis of External Quality Assurance Processes of Higher Education Institutions
QM	Quality Management
StR	Stiftungsrat (Foundation Board)

Introduction

evalag (Evaluationsagentur Baden-Württemberg) was founded in 2000, driven by the increasing importance quality assurance had gained since the 1990ies in all areas of activity of higher education institutions. Quality assurance is a constitutional part of the growing autonomy of higher education institutions. The Bologna Process and the evolution of the European Higher Education Area had a profound influence on the development of **evalag**. This, however, did not apply so much to the initial phase from 2001 to 2006, because comparative evaluations of certain subjects across various types of higher education institutions performed by **evalag** during that period rather took place in the wake of or in competition with the recently introduced programme accreditation activities. With the agency's realignment in 2007, **evalag** committed itself to supporting the implementation of the Bologna Process. This became apparent both from the approval as an accreditation agency obtained in 2009, the completion of the ENQA review and the application for registration on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) in 2010.

Moreover, **evalag's** evaluation activities have been expanded to include the officially approved quality assurance procedures stipulated for programme and system accreditation, accompanied by the development of a highly varied range of service offerings to support the higher education institutions with their internal skill building. Thus, the results of the reflections on our own activities and our modified service offering presented below are attributable to the evolving Bologna Process and to the changing demands of the higher education institutions.

As a "learning organisation", we want to contribute to making the European Higher Education Area a reality. This objective goes beyond merely reacting to emerging developments – **evalag** has the ambition to give new impetus when and where this is appropriate. With this in mind,

- **evalag** decided in 2008 – in its capacity as a quality assurance agency – to both offer advisory services for higher education institutions and carry out accreditation and certification procedures on the national and international levels – of course by complying with stringent rules for a strict separation of the delivery of advisory services from accreditation / certification at the same higher education institution,
- a research project was applied for in 2012, aimed at introducing methods for the analysis of the procedural impact to quality assurance,
- **evalag** introduced quality assurance for (advanced) training programmes in 2014, in order to pro-actively meet the challenge resulting from a broadened definition of the concept of study programmes by the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) that was then showing on the horizon.

evalag's business activities are based on the "fitness for purpose" and "fitness of purpose" quality concepts – this also applies to the internal quality management.¹

evalag views itself as a "learning organisation" in this endeavour², and – abiding by the quality loop – attaches great importance to the critical self-reflection of its own action,

¹ Cf. "Das interne Qualitätsmanagementsystem von **evalag**", resolution by the Foundation Board on February 26, 2009 (only available in German).

² Cf. "Mission Statement", resolution by the Foundation Board on February 7, 2014 stating inter alia that "[...] **evalag** puts the values representative of transparency, reliability, methodological professionalism, and continuous development into internal and external action [...]."

the ensuing implementation of improvements in existing service areas as well as the strategic development of new fields of activity and scopes of action³.

In their daily work, the **evalag** staff make sure that fundamental documents, workflows, and results are adapted and optimised as necessary.

The Foundation Board is responsible for the overall monitoring that ensures a periodic survey and, if necessary, a review of the performance and the results of the internal and external activities and services, and – jointly with the Accreditation Commission – for (international) accreditation and certification. The resolutions or guidelines, remarks, and recommendations issued by these two committees are therefore especially relevant to the development of **evalag**.⁴

However, an increasingly important role in this context is played by the various external **evalag** stakeholders: experts, students, and ordering parties. **evalag** collects stakeholder feedback by means of targeted surveys or specific workshops and also uses it for optimising and further developing the agency's performance. These activities are carried out whenever they are necessary, but at least once in connection with each periodic review by the Accreditation Council, the ENQA, and the EQAR.

An attempt to create a summative documentation of the changes derived from reflection and monitoring revealed, however, that the committee minutes alone, being devised predominantly in view of resolutions, do not provide a sufficient base of information.⁵ This particularly applies to the identification of current topics and developments in the (European) higher education area.

This gap is closed by the annual business reports submitted by **evalag**. Not only do they reflect the continuous extension and differentiation of the agency's range of services, but they also furnish proof of the constantly changing support requirements on the part of the higher education institutions or with respect to the different types of higher education institutions.

Significant Developments and Trends from 2010 to 2015

The following section presents the results of a combined evaluation of committee minutes from 2013 to 2015 and the business reports created in the period from 2010 to 2015. The annex documents the results of an evaluation of the committee minutes alone.

evalag has experienced a dynamic development during recent years. In 2014, this led to the definition of five areas of distinction that are intended to cover the entire scope of quality assurance and quality enhancement:

- Evaluation / audit of quality management (Sec. 1)
- Organisational development (Sec. 1)
- Services for the promotion of science (Sec. 1)
- (International) accreditation / certification of further education (Sec. 2)

³ Here, **evalag** references Standard 3.4 of the ESG: Thematic Analysis: Agencies should regularly publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities.

⁴ The chronological order reflected by the minutes gives evidence of an efficient P-D-C-A cycle: Foundation Board assigns task to office – office prepares draft / proposal for resolution – discussion and resolution during subsequent Foundation Board meeting – implementation of the resolution by office – review and, if necessary, initiation of resulting follow-up actions by office and Foundation Board – new task assignment by Foundation Board, if necessary – etc.

⁵ The format of the minutes was adapted accordingly in order to fulfil the purpose of analysing the developments.

- Transfer of knowledge, advanced training, skill development

In summary, the following significant lines of development and trends can be identified in these five areas of distinction for 2010-2015:

Evaluation / Audit of Quality Management

From 2010 to 2012, **evalag** carried out its eponymous “core business”, i.e. evaluation, in the form of a classic informed peer review, usually of the summative type, (self-evaluation – panel of external experts – site visit – final report) only on a small scale. This was due to a moderate demand for these services. In that period, the evaluations of study programmes or disciplines as they had been performed in the previous decade (partly requiring high efforts) and institutional evaluations of faculties / university departments lost their significance for the higher education institutions. They rather prioritised the setup and extension of quality assurance in the fields of teaching and learning as well as the implementation of system accreditation. If there was any demand for external evaluations at all, it was aimed primarily at sorting out complex, sometimes conflict-laden subject matters. However, while the higher education institutions gradually established their internal and external evaluation procedures (in particular higher education institutions with an existing system accreditation), their demand for advanced training courses and consultancy in the field of evaluation increased from about 2013. **evalag** responded by providing corresponding support.

Only as of 2014, **evalag** saw an increased demand for external evaluation procedures again. These evaluations, however, now focus more on the (accompanying) assessment of organisational change processes and have primarily a formative character. This was particularly true for the (comparatively high number of) interim evaluations carried out by **evalag** on behalf of some higher education institutions. They were related to projects jointly funded by the federal government and the federal states within the scope of a programme aimed at improving study conditions and the quality of teaching. **evalag** responded to this demand by elaborating project-specific, methodological approaches (e.g. combination of surveys, workshops, expert advice). This trend has been going on: The requests made to **evalag** by the higher education institutions and other ordering parties are generally becoming more and more extensive as regards potential subject matters for evaluation and at the same time, they are more and more specific in the individual case – and methodologically more challenging and time-consuming as regards their conception and execution. After all, standard procedures have in fact become obsolete.

Since 2015, the focus has moved towards evaluations in the fields of research, strategic development, and efficiency analyses of programmes and funding schemes. All in all, the number of requests for external evaluations is increasing again. At the same time, the grant procedures for evaluations have changed significantly, as calls for tender are now issued for the majority of the evaluations. The corresponding processes, advertised via online tendering platforms, have meanwhile been professionalized – however, only in administrative terms and often lacking a clear task description defining the objectives and corresponding planning targets. More and more often, ordering parties are rather requesting comprehensive concepts based on ambiguous and insufficiently detailed descriptions of the subject matters for evaluation. The conceptual and bureaucratic workload for creating and submitting quotations as well as for the clarification of tasks and targets has grown considerably on the part of **evalag**.

A completely different development could be observed for the quality management audit conceived by **evalag**: Between 2009 and 2011, it was used by several universities of applied sciences and universities in Baden-Württemberg to analyse their situation

with respect to quality assurance and enhancement in the fields of studying and teaching and to prepare their subsequent, successful system accreditation. The interest in this procedure, which had a widespread reputation as being best practice, was correspondingly high. But from 2012 on, the demand of the higher education institutions changed: Instead of the comparatively high-effort auditing approach, they were seeking rather detailed and continuous advanced training and consultancy for a structured setup and extension of their quality management systems. It was not before 2014/2015, when another quality management audit was conducted.

evalag now assumes that the demand for quality management audits will stay moderate in Germany, as the majority of the higher education institutions meanwhile venture to go directly for system accreditation and forgo a previous, voluntary survey of their quality management. **evalag** estimates that in the years to come, a reversal of trend, similarly to the evaluation sector, could also set in for the audit sector, which would add new appeal to the development-oriented procedure; the trial clause, which is part of the system accreditation guidelines, could be a helpful incentive here.

Basic procedural documents for the audit, primarily the so-called key points of quality management, were subjected to a comprehensive revision in close coordination with stakeholders (experts, ordering parties, committee members) at the end of 2015.

Organisational Development

Organisational development has been a major activity of the office for years. The demand for support and consultancy on the part of the higher education institutions of all types and sizes remains high – **evalag** observed however that the central topics and objectives are changing constantly. This development is reflected, among other things, in the terminology chosen by **evalag** to denote this performance area: In 2010 and 2011, this field of activities was still known under “Institutional Quality Assurance”, a term whose focus was on studying and teaching, the support of process analyses, and initial projects for the development of strategies. In 2012, **evalag** subsumed the corresponding activities under “Quality Management”, a significantly broader term, as even the higher education institutions gradually started to perceive quality enhancement in a more comprehensive way. This was followed by a growing interest in the improvement and systematisation of the governance structures of the higher education institutions. Anticipating this development, **evalag** ventured, as early as in 2014, to identify “Organisational Development” as a programmatic focal point of the agency’s profile. Accordingly, the agency’s portfolio now also includes quality management offers or projects for science and administration / staff development as well as reporting / data analysis.

There is a continuously high demand, which even appears to be growing, for consultancy related to system accreditation. After the first pilot projects for system accreditation, onto which many a higher education institution had indeed cast a sceptical eye, were finally carried out successfully, and after some procedural shortcomings had been eliminated, system accreditation could be established, due to its added value for the organisational development of the respective higher education institution, as an alternative to programme accreditation. Therefore even those higher education institutions where systematic, structurally rooted quality assurance and enhancement in the fields of studying and teaching (and beyond that) had only played a marginal or casual role before, or where there was internal opposition, are now turning towards system accreditation. The consultancy efforts for these projects are accordingly high. Usually, continuous support of the persons responsible for QM (even on the management level) is required for the definite implementation (or at least the pilot phase) of central quality loops. This is in most cases supplemented by a close coordination process related to

the creation of the application documents and the documentation for system accreditation, and finally, intense briefings of members of the higher education institution in preparation of the expert panel site visits.

The existing track record of higher education institutions accompanied successfully by **evalag** on their way to a positive accreditation decision is impressive and confirms – besides the high demand that results almost exclusively from personal recommendations – that **evalag** is on the right track with its developmental and custom (instead of normative and model-oriented) consultancy approach.

Services for the Promotion of Science

Between 2007 and 2013, **evalag** was only active for the Carl-Zeiss Foundation in this field. At that time, it was not intended to carry out corresponding projects for other institutions. This changed in 2013: the expertise gained in cooperation with the Carl-Zeiss-Foundation now proved to be useful for assuming coordination responsibilities for the promotion of science on behalf of the Ministry of Science, Research, and the Arts of Baden-Württemberg. Starting at the end of 2013, **evalag** carried out a first project to this effect, others followed in rapid succession in 2014 and 2015. The range of services expected by the Ministry has become more complex, covering the assumption of coordination tasks as part of calls for tender or assessment and selection processes, and comprehensive, structured document analyses that are used by the Ministry as a basis of decision-making.

In 2015, some higher education institutions also requested **evalag** to deliver services related to the promotion of science (coordination of external assessments for internal funding programmes) or to the assumption of project lead responsibilities. **evalag** is convinced that this area of distinction has gained the potential to make a contribution to the strategic advancement of the entire agency.

(International) Accreditation / Certification of Further Education

After **evalag** was approved as an accreditation agency by the Accreditation Council in 2009 and after the agency was first listed on the EQAR in 2010, **evalag** had to cope with a difficult market entry phase that lasted until the end of 2011. The competition with the other agencies that had a long-standing, established market position and were well connected – some due to the structure of their association, others thanks to their specific profile – was a bigger challenge than anybody, even the Accreditation Council, had expected. And **evalag** was hardly able to control the shaping of its intended profile. At best, a first focus emerged with the accreditation of art and music study programmes. What is more, the only accreditation procedures **evalag** was able to attract initially related to programme accreditation. It was only in 2014 when **evalag** started to also carry out system accreditation procedures. **evalag** earned the reputation required for this in its new function as an accreditation agency for higher education institutions. Due to its unique selling proposition (comprehensive offering of consultancy and support for higher education institutions, particularly within the scope of system accreditation), **evalag** has indeed been (and still is) the sole agency that suffers from internal rivalry.

These very special starting conditions and constraints – in particular the advisory expertise with respect to the different types of higher education institutions and their specifics – have in the meantime turned into a competitive edge. The Accreditation section has seen a successful consolidation in terms of workload and staffing levels. On the national level, **evalag** is considered a pacesetter both for accreditation and quality assurance and enhancement. In conjunction with the re-accreditation achieved in 2014

and the associated renewal of the ENQA membership as well as the re-registration on the EQAR, **evalag** was therefore pleased to note that the strategic decision targeted at transforming the agency into an institution that covers the entire range of quality assurance and enhancement topics has proved to be a pioneering and sustainable move.

On the international level, **evalag** succeeded in quickly establishing a foothold in the accreditation sector. The first international accreditation procedures were carried out as early as in 2011. **evalag** has been active several times in countries such as Lithuania, Lebanon, Kyrgyzstan, Kosovo, Hungary, and Mexico.

In 2014, **evalag** was approved as an accreditation agency in Austria and succeeded in attracting and conducting numerous quality management certification audits according to the Austrian "Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education." Some of these are ongoing. The current market share of **evalag** in Austria is disproportionately high compared to other accreditation agencies, but the demand is likely to decrease in the future because almost all higher education institutions have already gone through the statutory procedure. Another rise in demand cannot be expected before the expiration of the accreditations in seven years when the regular re-audits will be due. **evalag** is indeed optimistic to take part in these procedures again. Against this background, **evalag** is planning to extend its operations to Switzerland: For 2016, the agency expects to be accredited for procedures at Swiss higher education institutions.

The strategic diversification of the Accreditation section is also facilitated by the setup and extension of advanced training certification. To meet the increasing demand in this education segment that has become apparent to **evalag**, the agency developed a suitable, programme-oriented certification procedure as early as in 2014. In 2015, a pilot procedure for the certification of a German-Chinese advanced training offering was carried out. Based on the experience gained from this activity and the feedback received from the higher education area, **evalag** now also offers institutional certifications of advanced training institutes. Especially the universities of applied sciences in Baden-Württemberg show great interest in this new approach so that **evalag** expects a significant demand.

Transfer of Knowledge, Advanced Training, Skill Development

In 2011, **evalag** started offering and conducting advanced training courses on evaluation and quality assurance / management topics for members of higher education institutions in Baden-Württemberg. The related workshop offering was extended step by step in 2012 and 2013 to include participants from outside Baden-Württemberg as well. Thanks to improved public relations activities (in particular, the addition of **evalag** to the online offering of IDW and the newly designed **evalag** website, online since the summer of 2015), the demand and number of participants have grown considerably since 2014. In the meantime, most of the individual courses are fully booked. To make planning easier for potential participants, **evalag** published an annual course programme at the close of 2015, including (almost) all definite dates and summarising all advanced training courses offered for 2016. The positive trend of registrations confirms that this was a good decision.

As another central project in this area of distinction, **evalag** has taken a leading role in the "Impact Analysis of External Quality Assurance Processes of Higher Education Institutions" (IMPALA) project launched in 2013. This project, still ongoing in 2016, is carried out in cooperation with ten European partners.

Annex

Results from the Evaluation of Committee Minutes⁶

1. Development of the Range of Activities Carried Out by evalag

- **Classification of quality management systems / emphasis on evalag's specific competence profile compared to other accreditation agencies**

The Foundation Board recommends pursuing the analysis aimed at identifying features for the classification of quality management systems at higher education institutions launched by **evalag** on the basis of projects / procedures carried out by the agency. This is intended not least to make the specific **evalag** skills (more) transparent.⁷

- **Increasing importance (and enhancement) of consultancy expertise in a changing overall system**

The Foundation Board does not consider the notorious situation with **evalag** applying for a system accreditation procedure and being awarded the consultancy and preparation of system accreditation jobs a negative development. Moreover, it predicts a further increase in importance of consultancy and a move of the system away from certification towards consultancy.⁸

The Foundation Board recommends extending consultancy to the quality management in the aftermath of a system accreditation, to offer the higher education institutions services including external project management, and to highlight the consultancy competences through intensified marketing.⁹

- **Project related to the trial clause in system accreditation**

The Foundation Board recommends that the office supports a corresponding project.¹⁰

- **Certification of (advanced) training programmes**

The Foundation Board decides to add certification to the range of services offered by **evalag**.¹¹

- **Extension of the advanced training offered for quality management**

⁶ The evaluation is based on the period from 2013 to mid-2015: Minutes of the 44th - 51st meetings of the Foundation Board (February 1, 2013 to May 22, 2015); minutes of the 9th - 16th meetings of the Accreditation Commission (January 31, 2013 - July 13, 2015) and their decisions on programme accreditation (conditions and recommendations).

⁷ Foundation Board, 51st meeting, May 22, 2015

⁸ Foundation Board, 49st meeting, October 10, 2014

⁹ Foundation Board, 47st meeting, February 07, 2014 In agenda item 4 of its 48th meeting on May 22, 2014, the Foundation Board confirms that the office complies with the standards defining the proportions between system accreditation and advisory services specified by the Accreditation Council, in their version of February 20, 2013.

¹⁰ Foundation Board, 48st meeting, May 22, 2014

¹¹ Foundation Board, 48st meeting, May 22, 2014, agenda item 8

The Foundation Board recommends extending the advanced training services and seeking the cooperation with a partner from the higher education area in the medium term.¹²

- **Internationalisation: accreditation in Austria and Switzerland**

After having established a strong market position as an accreditation agency in Austria, the Foundation Board asked the office to apply for approval as an accreditation agency in Switzerland.¹³

- **Internationalisation and cooperation: membership with CEENQA**

The Foundation Board recommends that the office applies for membership with the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies (CEENQA).¹⁴ Membership has been confirmed in the meantime.

2. Methodological Development, Due Consideration of the New ESG

- **Revision of the evalag quality management key points**

The Foundation Board asked the office to conduct a workshop with external stakeholders, student representatives, and members of the Foundation Board.¹⁵ The workshop was held on October 28, 2015 in the **evalag** office. It was decided that the revised key points would be adopted by the Foundation Board in February 2016.

- **Adaptation of criteria and procedural rules to the new ESG**

As early as in October 2014, the Foundation Board, anticipating the amendment of the ESG not yet finally adopted at that time, stipulated that the necessary adaptations of criteria and procedural rules for the quality management audit, for evaluations, and for procedures of programme accreditation as well as for the certification of (advanced) training services should be carried out by an internal **evalag** working group involving the participation of student representatives.¹⁶ The requested workshop, in which students participated, was held on January 29, 2016.

- **Criteria for the acknowledgement of achievements outside the academic curriculum**

The office has set up a working group to support the higher education institutions in the elaboration of criteria for the acknowledgement of knowledge and skills achieved outside the academic curriculum.¹⁷

¹² Foundation Board, 48st meeting, May 22, 2014

¹³ Foundation Board, 51st meeting, May 22, 2015

¹⁴ Foundation Board, 48st meeting, May 22, 2014

¹⁵ Foundation Board, 51st meeting, May 22, 2015, agenda item 8

¹⁶ Foundation Board, 49st meeting, October 10, 2014, agenda item 6 In 2014, when the revision and update of central documents for the regular re-accreditation and the ENQA review as well as the re-registration on the EQAR were pending, the Foundation Board had passed a resolution on the substantiation of the application and the amendments of central documents (mission statement and understanding of quality, principles of evaluation procedures, programme accreditation guidelines, system accreditation guidelines, concept for the briefing of experts) and had previously contributed its own recommendations for revision. Cf. Foundation Board, 47th meeting, February 07, 2014, agenda item 5; Foundation Board, 46th meeting, October 11, 2013, agenda item 5.

¹⁷ Foundation Board, 48st meeting, May 22, 2014, agenda item 4

- **Procedural rules for international accreditation**

The Foundation Board decides to successively refine the definitions of the procedural rules for international programme accreditation and institutional accreditation.¹⁸

- **Certification of (advanced) training services**

The Foundation Board passes a resolution on procedural rules for certification.^{19,20}

- **Revision of the catalogue of criteria related to significant modifications in a study programme**

The Accreditation Commission entrusts the office with the task to revise the catalogue.²¹

- **Revision of the criteria for expert impartiality**

The Accreditation Commission asks the office to devise a revised proposal for resolution.²²

- **Collection of empirical data on projects / procedures**

The Foundation Board decides that for this purpose, the experts are to be interviewed face to face at the end of each site visit and that the ordering parties are to be interviewed by phone after completion of each procedure. Moreover, the Foundation Board suggests holding themed workshops involving experts and representatives of the ordering parties. Prior to this, the Foundation Board had recommended that the office dropped the planned annual online survey of all experts involved in the procedures / projects due to the notoriously low response rates.²³

- **Carrying out projects**

The Foundation Board recommends that the office always conducts a project-related research to find studies and approaches that might already exist on the corresponding topic, and uses this information as input when carrying out the project.²⁴

- **Feedback on completed projects and final reports carried out by Sec. 1**

The Foundation Board looked through the reports completed between 2013 and mid-2015. Altogether, the reports were deemed as useful for the ordering parties and easily readable. No systematic shortcomings in terms of methodology were found. Sporadic comments rather relate to aspects specific to each procedure and often reflect recommendations with respect to the contents made by the expert panels involved or to inappropriate objectives specified by the ordering parties.²⁵

¹⁸ Foundation Board, 44th meeting, February 01, 2013, agenda item 8; Foundation Board, 49th meeting, October 10, 2014, agenda item 9. The revision and decision-making performed using a tacit acceptance procedure also involved the Accreditation Commission, cf. Accreditation Commission, 12th meeting, February 28, 2014, agenda item 11.

¹⁹ Foundation Board, 49st meeting, October 10, 2014, agenda item 9

²⁰ Foundation Board, 48st meeting, May 22, 2014, agenda item 6

²¹ Accreditation Commission, 16st meeting, July 13, 2015, agenda item 5

²² Accreditation Commission, 16st meeting, July 13, 2015, agenda item 7

²³ Foundation Board, 50th meeting, February 12, 2015, agenda item 5b; Foundation Board, 49th meeting, October 10, 2014, agenda item 5a.

²⁴ Foundation Board, 51st meeting, May 22, 2015, agenda item 4

²⁵ Cf. Foundation Board, 51th meeting, May 22, 2015, agenda items 4, 5a, 5b, 5c; Foundation Board, 50th meeting, February 12, 2015, agenda items 8a, 8c; Foundation Board, 49th meeting, October 10, 2014, agenda item 7a; Foundation Board, 47th meeting, February 07, 2014, agenda item 7; Foundation

- **Participation of Accreditation Commission members in assessment procedures**

The Accreditation Commission stipulates that, in well-founded exceptional cases, **evalag** committee members may take part as experts in assessment procedures carried out by **evalag**.²⁶

- **Length of the summary in final reports**

The Foundation Board recommends limiting the summary to two pages maximum.²⁷

3. Organisational Development

- **Accreditation Commission and Appeals Commission**

The Foundation Board decides on statute amendments related to the composition and tasks of the Appeals Commission and the student members of the Accreditation Commission (new term: active students in the Accreditation Commission).²⁸ Before, the Foundation Board had already assigned the responsibility for all decisions in conjunction with international QM measures to the Accreditation Commission.²⁹ The necessity to make a corresponding decision had previously been identified.³⁰

- **No technical committees**

It is intended to increasingly involve the respective technical experts among the members of the Accreditation Commission when searching for experts. The formation of technical committees is declined.³¹

4. Development on the Operational Level

- **Assistance from the Foundation Board for decisions on international projects**

The Foundation Board suggests that the office, before assuming an international project that seems to present uncertainties, involves the chairperson and the vice-chairperson of the Foundation Board in its decision-making and asks for their consent (same procedure as for the approval of expert panels in Sect. 1).³²

- **Outline template for expert reports in programme accreditation**

The Accreditation Commission approves a revised outline template.³³

Board, 46th meeting, October 11, 2013, agenda items 7a, 7b; Foundation Board, 44th meeting, February 01, 2013, agenda item 7.

²⁶ Accreditation Commission, 10th meeting, June 10, 2013, agenda item 10

²⁷ Foundation Board, 47st meeting, February 07, 2014, agenda item 7

²⁸ Foundation Board, 50th meeting, February 12, 2015 agenda item 6; the decision to request the statute amendments was made by the Foundation Board, 49th meeting, October 10, 2014, agenda items 10b and 10c.

²⁹ Foundation Board, 49th meeting, October 10, 2014, agenda item 5b; cf. also Accreditation Commission, 14th meeting, December 08, 2014, agenda item 4b.

³⁰ Foundation Board, 48st meeting, May 22, 2014, agenda item 9

³¹ Accreditation Commission, 9th meeting, January 31, 2013, agenda item 7.

³² Foundation Board, 49st meeting, October 10, 2014, agenda item 5b

³³ Accreditation Commission, 11th meeting, September 20, 2013, agenda item 10

- **Participation of experts in Accreditation Commission meetings**

The Accreditation Commission passes the resolution that in the future, the chairperson, after consultation with the office, will have the final say when it comes to decide if an expert should be connected via Skype or be invited to a meeting for a decision on accreditation.³⁴

5. Conditions and Recommendations in Programme Accreditation Procedures

Considering the decisions on programme accreditation procedures made in the meetings of the Accreditation Commission in the period between 2013 and mid-2015, it was not possible to identify a tendency for the development of a focus as regards the criteria for imposing **conditions** – neither with respect to study programme clusters nor with respect to individual study programmes.

Considering the decisions on programme accreditation procedures made in the meetings of the Accreditation Commission in the period between 2013 and mid-2015, a tendency for the development of a focus as regards the criteria for giving **recommendations** could be identified.

Thus, the recommendations often relate to criterion 3 (concept of the study programme), second comes criterion 7 (equipment), and third is criterion 4 (studyability). This applies to study programme clusters and individual study programmes alike.

For study programme clusters alone, the recommendations are frequently given with respect to criterion 8 (transparency and documentation), often aimed at improving the module manuals, and to criterion 9 (quality assurance and further development).

³⁴ Accreditation Commission, 11th meeting, September 20, 2013, agenda item 11