

Quality Assessment through Accreditation

Summary

Accreditation is a system for quality assessment consisting of three parts:

self-assessment/self-evaluation

assessment/evaluation by a committee of external experts

allocation or prolongation of the concession to offer officially recognized programmes for education, training and research, e.g. bachelor, master, PhD

Subjects of accreditation:

Aims/objectives/mission of the educational or research programme, always in relation with the curriculum/the programme itself and in combination with the available resources and facilities

The curriculum/the programme as a direct offspring from the aims/objectives/mission as mentioned under 1.

The curriculum should show sufficient substance (quantity/quality) in order to lead logically to learning outcomes and final qualifications that will serve an actual and professional career in the areas of creation, performance and education, and this all in an entrepreneurial sense. In other words: the program, the methods of teaching and learning, the systems of examination, the quality processes must connect with the aims, objectives and mission.

Potential to innovate , to be inquisitive

The curriculum should be organized in such a way that the student can learn, reflect and analyze in a mix of direct contact between professor and student, distant- and e-learning, and self-study

Communication to and noticeable support for the aims/objectives/mission and the curriculum among students, staff and professors

Comparability, both national and international, taking into account the context, i.e. the relation between the (inter)national and the local situation

Presence or absence (on purpose!) of interdisciplinarity

The system of quality assurance, internally (students, staff, professors) and externally (the profession, alumni); this should include regular and verifiable internal and external checks and balances; the results thereof, should be transferred in a development plan in continuity

High level artistic personnel and creative leadership, as well as procedures how to recruit and to keep them.

Some practical advices

Enter into the discussion on the relation between process and product; quality assessment should touch on both and not be limited to ‘the paperwork’; it is very important that the visiting panel listens to lessons, workshops, masterclasses, rehearsals, concerts and exams
Select your panels in such a way that the majority is international

Avoid that there is a discrepancy between the aims/objectives/mission and the reality; be aware of the fact that there is always a delicate field of possible tension between ‘the vision’ and ‘the fascination’ of the leadership, and the way this has been perceived, if not absorbed – and sometimes even notified and not to speak about tolerated, accepted or even encouraged – by staff and students

Take care of the utmost consistency in the texts you are going to provide; the same for the organisation between and within the texts; avoid not to explain differences between comparable departments in basic issues, such as length of curricula, type of assessments, nature of final and entrance exams, binding (or not) study-advice, why and how many theses (if any) have to be written, etc.

Explain incomprehensible, complicated situations, aspects and procedures, because they will always be perceived and touched upon by an outside peer group

Explain different speeds (if any) in the organisation in their context; why developments are faster in some areas and slower in some other

Do not provide material which is outdone by new developments; do not send out new written material after the visit of the expert group telling them ‘that the situation has changed’; only provide additional material and information.

Facts about the visit of the expert group

Professors always express irritation and grievance, which they carry with them (often not outspoken) for many years and which has nothing to do with the assessment and accreditation process

Students are always very critical (see above), often by lack of material to compare. On top they react open but innocently on direct questions, without any strategic hesitance. Just two morning sessions to prepare them for this is by far not enough

Good expert groups notify, analyse, see and hear more than one would think, despite the fact that visits are always too short (1 or 2 days)

Personal remarks

Don't blame the messenger

Do not react irritated on critical questions

Keep the timetable

Take care of good catering

Have the building clean

Check the technology