

Accreditation Agency in Health and Social Sciences

Akkreditierungsagentur im Bereich Gesundheit und Soziales



# **Handbook for Program Accreditation**

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## **1. Introduction**

The Accreditation Agency in Health and Social Sciences (AHPGS) is an interdisciplinary, multi-professional organization, whose mission is to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in higher education in modern European and international contexts. Its work focuses on the fields of health and social sciences, as well as other related fields such as medical care or nursing. By implementing quality assurance procedures, it aims to share, disperse and promote values and good practices.

The AHPGS carries out the external evaluation and accreditation of Bachelor and Master study programs at German and foreign higher education institutions (HEI) and thus contributes to their continuous development in terms of quality assurance management. For that, the AHPGS implements the analyses of the existing internal quality review system, determines its advantages and deficiencies, verifies the applicability of its results, and, finally, proposes new methods of efficient quality control. We help study programs expand their international recognition and increase their competitive power in academic accomplishments, research activities and teaching performance. Furthermore, the AHPGS assists study programs with the social and medical relevance of their profile and employability potential of their graduates.

The AHPGS is a member of international associations and networks: the "European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education" (ENQA), the "European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education" (ECA), the "Network of Central and Eastern European Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education" (CEENQA) and the "International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education" (INQAAHE). Furthermore, the AHPGS is listed in the "European Quality Assurance Register" (EQAR).

As an organization, the AHPGS is an independent body.

## 2. Plan of the accreditation procedures

AHPGS carries out program accreditation in two forms: 1) the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS makes a final decision to accredit, accredit with conditions, or deny accreditation to the study program, and 2) the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS issues a *recommendation* for accreditation addressed to the applying HEI or respective National Ministry. The main focus of the first form is the compliance of the study program with general, internationally-acknowledged higher education standards in accordance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). In the second form, the national regulations of the respective country serve, in addition to the ESG, as the legitimizing basis of the procedure.

Accreditation procedure of study programs runs generally along three consecutive steps described below. Depending on the profile and specificity of the study program, they may alter or additional ones may be introduced.

- I. The HEI submits the **application** of the study program for accreditation (Self-Evaluation Report and accompanying documents/annexes) to the AHPGS, requesting initiation of the external quality assurance process. The application documents should clearly and explicitly formulate the objectives and learning outcomes of the study program. The HEI can also forward the AHPGS additional documentation in order to support the application.

The AHPGS reviews the sufficiency and relevance of the forwarded documents. If necessary, it can request additional information in the form of **open questions**, which are to be answered by the HEI. Based on the submitted application documents and the **answers to open questions**, the AHPGS produces a **Summary** of the study program.

At the same time, the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS **nominates an expert group** and informs the HEI about the members of the expert group. The experts are then provided with the application documents (the Self-Evaluation Report its annexes) and the Summary of the study program.

Upon the approval of the Summary by the HEI, the AHPGS makes it available to the members of the experts group.

- II. The expert group, accompanied by the representatives of the AHPGS, carries out an **on-site visit** of the HEI. In the course of the visit, the experts hold discussions with different members of the HEI including institution, faculty and department management, the study program management, teaching staff and students. The function of the expert group is to verify and evaluate the objectives and learning outcomes of the study program, its structure, teaching staff, material resources, course of studies and methods of assessment (selection of students, assessment of achievements, students' support, etc.) and the program management (program administration and external assurance of study quality).

Following the visit, the expert group issues an **Expert Report** based on the results of the visit and the documents submitted by the HEI. The Expert Report is then made available to the HEI. When necessary, the HEI might issue and forward its response opinion regarding the Expert Report to the AHPGS to be taken into consideration. The Expert Report, the response opinion of the HEI (if provided) and the application documents are then forwarded to the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS.

- III. The Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS examines the provided documentation, namely the application (the Self-Evaluation Report and its annexes), the Summary comprised by the AHPGS, the Expert Report and the response opinion of the HEI. These documents lay basis for the **decision of the Accreditation Commission** of the AHPGS regarding the accreditation of the study program or *recommendation* for accreditation.

The decision of the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS can be formulated in three following forms:

- The study program is accredited (without any conditions)
- The study program is accredited with conditions
- The study program is denied an accreditation

According to the regulations given in the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, section 2.6), the AHPGS publishes the final report about the accreditation of the study program on its website.

### **3. Criteria for the assessment and accreditation of study programs**

The following criteria of the AHPGS are implemented for the accreditation of study programs at foreign higher education institutions. These criteria are based on the “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area” (ESG) established by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

#### **3.1. Aims and Implementation**

The study program pursues specific qualification objectives. These objectives cover professional and extraprofessional/interdisciplinary aspects and particularly refer to the domain of academic competences, competences necessary for a qualified employment, skills of social commitment and personal development.

The learning outcomes of the program are defined. They correspond to the standards of qualifications attributed to the pursued academic degree (in accordance with the “Shared ‘Dublin’ Descriptors for Short Cycle, First Cycle, Second Cycle and Third Cycle Awards”).

The objectives of the study program have been developed in accordance with the overall strategy of the University.

The national legal requirements regulating the establishment of the study program have been observed.

The scope and the form of program-related national and international cooperation’s with various higher education institutions, companies and/or other organizations are described, and the significant agreements are recorded.

#### **3.2. Structure of the Study Program**

The study program aims at providing students with specialized and interdisciplinary knowledge as well as professional, methodological and general competences.

The study program has a modular structure that is closely linked to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)<sup>1</sup> and a module-related examination system. Descriptions of the modules contain all necessary information, as required in the ECTS User’s Guide (particularly with regard to the details about learning content and outcomes, methods of learning, prerequisites for the allocation of ECTS credits, workload).

The combination and the succession of the modules of the study program are consistent with the specified qualification objectives (described earlier).

It is a student-centered study program, which encourages students’ to take an active role in creating the education process. In the course of studies, students receive the support

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<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/publications/2015/ects-users-guide\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/publications/2015/ects-users-guide_en.pdf)

and guidance they need for the organization and accomplishment of assignments and the learning process in general.

The arrangement of internships in the study program allows acquisition of ECTS credits. Provided that the program offers exchange mobility gaps, they are integrated into students' curriculum.

Study programs with special profile requirements (for instance, dual, part-time, occupational or distance learning study programs) comply with particular aspects that are considered appropriate and proportionate. These particular aspects are continuously observed in the study program.

### **3.3. Admission and Feasibility**

The admission requirements and, if applied, student selection procedures are specified. They correspond to the standards of the study program.

Feasibility of the study program is guaranteed. The amount of student workload is appropriate.

Student support services, as well as specialized and general consultations, are provided by the University in a sufficient and appropriate manner.

The University guarantees that students with disabilities and/or chronic illnesses receive compensation with regard to the admission procedure, performance evaluation measures and the general requirements of the study process.

As a whole, the organization of the education process ensures the successful implementation of the study program.

### **3.4. Examination System and Transparency**

Examinations serve to determine whether the envisaged qualification objectives have been achieved. These examinations are focused on students' knowledge and competences. The requirements for students' performance in examinations are regulated and published. The frequency of examinations, as well as their organization, is appropriate.

The University has documented and published the regulations concerning the assessment, conversion and recognition of competences, credits and periods of study acquired and completed by students at other HEIs. Furthermore, the University applies a system of assessment, conversion and recognition of students' achievements acquired in a non-formal and self-study way.

The University guarantees that students with disabilities and/or chronic illnesses receive compensation with regard to scheduling and formal requirements of the final and course-related performance evaluations. The respective regulations and documented and

provided.

The University documents and publishes information regarding the study program (study plan, process of education, admission requirements, examination regulations, compensation measures for students with disabilities and other disadvantages) and its various activities in a clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and readily accessible way.

### **3.5. Teaching Staff and Material Equipment**

Professionalism and the sufficient number of human resources assure the successful implementation of the study program. Qualifications of the teaching personnel correspond to the requirements of the study program. Recruitment and appointment on teaching positions are implemented in a fair and transparent manner. Interdisciplinary links to other study programs are taken into consideration.

Measures for the professional and personal development of the teaching personnel are provided in a fair and transparent manner.

The HEI has appropriate funding to provide the necessary learning resources and material equipment required in the study program.

Qualitative and quantitative sufficiency of the equipment and space resources assures the successful implementation of the study program.

### **3.6. Quality Assurance**

The University has developed and documented a concept of quality assurance in the education process as well as teaching and research, which is publicly available and which serves as the basis for the quality-oriented development and implementation of the study program.

The University carries out internal and external quality assurance procedures on a cyclical basis.

Quality assurance is implemented by internal stakeholders, while involving also external stakeholders.

The University collects, analyses and applies the information regarding the key performance indicators, the profile of the student population, student progression, success and drop-out rates, student' satisfaction with the study program, learning resources and students support mechanisms, career paths of graduates as well as other relevant feedback from different stakeholders.

This information is used for the effective management, on-going monitoring and review of the study program, as well as for the continuous development of both the study program and the University in general.



Quality evaluation results and development plans are communicated to all stakeholders involved. Revised program specifications are published.

### **3.7. Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities**

The University's actions on the provision of gender equality and promotion of equal opportunities for students with particular living circumstances are implemented in a transparent manner.

## 4. Structure of the Self-Evaluation Report

The **Self-Evaluation Report** and its annexes are to be submitted in the electronic format (preferably as PDF files). The Self-Evaluation Report should not exceed 30 pages (not including its annexes). Furthermore, the following documents should be attached to the Self-Evaluation Report (each as a separate file):

- module guide/module descriptions (see Sample Module in Appendix 1),
- module overview (a graphical overview of the study program, showing courses arranged by semester on one DIN A4 page, insofar as possible),
- study plan (a table of all courses in the program, containing course names, numbers, types, and credits, on one DIN A4 page, insofar as possible),
- institutional regulations (study, exam and work placement regulations, etc.)
- national legal requirements and standards regulating the education process, examinations and awarding of academic degrees in the respective field,
- a brief CV for each lecturer (see sample in Appendix 2),
- a diploma supplement in English language,
- a formal declaration by the university administration guaranteeing the facilities, furnishings and equipment for the study program,
- an assessment report/expert opinion on the previous accreditation, if applicable.

### Re-Accreditation

The re-accreditation procedure is different from the initial accreditation procedure in that the study program to be accredited has already been realized over a certain period of time.

In addition to the above mentioned documents, the following issues are given special significance during the re-accreditation and are to be documented accordingly when filing the Self-Evaluation Report:

- evaluation of the success of the study program (e.g. using graduate surveys and follow-up studies),
- review of the student workload in the individual modules,
- assessment of the evaluation results,

- evaluation of statistical data regarding capacity utilization, drop-out rate, numbers of new enrolments,
- implementation of the requirements and recommendations from the previous accreditations as well as documentation of all of the changes and developments that have taken place regarding the study program (with specification of the reasons for them) since the previous accreditation.

# Self-Evaluation Report

Applying university	
Title of study program	
Date of initial accreditation, if applicable	
Contact	
Address	
Phone	
E-mail	

## 1. Study program concept

### 1.1. Structural data of the study program

- 1.1.1. Name of university, name of department/faculty
- 1.1.2. Name of other universities, companies and other institutions that are involved in the study program as well as an explanation of the cooperation (Please attach cooperation agreements, if applicable)
- 1.1.3. Title of the study program, title of previous study program (if applicable)
- 1.1.4. Degree level
- 1.1.5. Language of studies
- 1.1.6. Type/form of study program, explanation of the organizational structure (with specification of the days of the week and times of compact courses, insofar as possible) and explanation for the form of the study program full-time, part-time, distance learning,
  - extra-occupational, occupationally integrating, dual
  - online study as a special type of distance learning,
  - for master's programs: classification as continuing or consecutive education.

1.1.7. Workload and number of credits to be awarded in the study program. If the study program is offered by a HEI within European higher education system, please provide the amount of Credit Points (CP) according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). If the study program is offered by a HEI with a different rating system, please provide the amount of units/credits<sup>2</sup> assigned in the study program according to the local system.

- workload in hours for awarding one credit/unit (with specification of the corresponding paragraphs in the examination regulations of the HEI and if necessary of the faculty and/or department),
- workload in hours for the entire study program,
- attendance time or number of contact hours in the study program overall as well as the share of self-learning time (and work placement time during the study program) in hours,
- number of CP to be awarded for the final module (for the thesis project).

1.1.8. Number of semesters required to complete the study program

1.1.9. Initial enrolment in the study program

1.1.10. Number of places available in the program (and number of students already admitted for each respective semester, if applicable)

- If the study program is offered to different (separate) groups of students (e.g. full-time and part-time, those who study in the central and in the branch buildings/departments of the University, female and male, etc.) please provide the number of available places as well as the number of enrolled students in each group of the study program.

1.1.11. Tuition fees: specification of services that are covered by tuition fees

## **1.2. Modularization of the study program and exam system**

1.2.1. Modularization

- total number of modules in the study program,

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<sup>2</sup> The HEI should use its own denomination; the words "credit" and "unit" are merely provided as examples.

- number of (required/elective) modules to be completed by the students in the study program,
- number of credits/units to be awarded per semester (particularly for part-time study programs),
- information on periods of time during the study program for stays at other universities and/or in practice.

1.2.2. Number of program-specific modules as well as the number of modules that can be provided from other study programs at the university or studied together with students from other study programs (with specification of the respective scope in credits/units)

- information on ensuring the program-specific module objectives in the modules offered together with other study programs of the university,
- information on the organization of the modules used together with other study programs of the university (if applicable),
- in case of cooperation with other universities, companies and other institutions: which institution is responsible for which parts of the curriculum.

1.2.3. Skill-oriented design of the exam system (orientation toward the defined educational objectives being pursued in the specific department and across multiple departments) and organization of the module-related exams

- number and type of module exams (per semester and in the study program),
- timing of the exams during the study program,
- repeatability of exams and timing,
- information on the designation of the credits/units according to the regulations applied at the HEI
- demonstrate that the study program complies with the national and institutional regulations for examinations
- regulations on compensation measures for students with disabilities and chronic illnesses with regard to the scheduling and formal requirements in the study program, for graduating with certificates of achievement concluding or accompanying the course of study as

well as within the framework of aptitude assessment procedures and on their publication by the university.

- 1.2.4. Didactic concepts and methods of teaching (lectures, seminars, exercises, project work, study groups, work placement phases)
- 1.2.5. Integration of electronic/multimedia forms of teaching and learning (e.g. learning platform); integration of distance learning components/elements (with specification of their scope and contents)
- 1.2.6. Information on the integration of internships into the study program
  - information on the support/supervision of the internship by instructors of the university,
  - information on the correlation of the practical contents with the intended objectives of the study program,
  - information on quality assurance of the internship (e.g. qualification of the practical instructors, practical instructor meetings; submit work placement regulations, if applicable).
- 1.2.7. Integration of the research into the course of study
  - connection of the study program to the scientific research concentrations in the department/faculty or of the applying university (and of the co-operating universities, if applicable).
- 1.2.8. International aspects of the curriculum
  - internationality of the contents of the curriculum,
  - courses/modules instructed in foreign languages (portion of courses/modules instructed in foreign languages, if applicable).
- 1.2.9. Internationality of the study program
  - options for studying abroad,
  - options for mobility.

### **1.3. Objectives of the study program and their rationale**

- 1.3.1. General objectives of the study program (aspects for specific departments and across multiple departments)
- 1.3.2. Qualification objectives of the study program
  - with regard to scientific or artistic qualification,
  - qualification to engage in a qualified occupation,
  - qualification for social responsibility and
  - qualifications for personality development.
- 1.3.3. Output-oriented description of the departmental, methodical, learning and social skills/key skills as well as overarching skills (with specifications of the skill level, if applicable)
- 1.3.4. Presentation of the study program structure (e.g. which departmental or methodical foundations are laid in which modules and how these are built upon in which modules) and explanation for special forms of study (e.g. extra-occupational study)

### **1.4. Labor market situation and career opportunities**

- 1.4.1. Information on the intended and possible career fields as well as the career opportunities for the graduates of the study program (document experiences, if applicable)
- 1.4.2. Information on the current situation or situation to be expected on the labor market (with specification of sources)

### **1.5. Admission requirements and rules of recognition**

- 1.5.1. Explanation of the admission requirements for the study program (including selection procedures and criteria, with specification of the regulations)
  - If the initial enrolment to the HEI and the enrolment to the study program are two different or separate procedures, please describe them. Please provide the relevant admission regulations of the HEI as well as of the faculty/department, if such are applied.
- 1.5.2. Explanation of the regulations on compensation measures for students with disabilities and chronic illnesses with regard to the admission requirements (with specification of the regulations)Output-



oriented description of the departmental, methodical, learning and social skills/key skills as well as overarching skills (with specifications of the skill level, if applicable)

1.5.3. Explanation of the rules about the recognition, conversion and assessment of credits/units acquired by students at other HEIs within and outside of the country<sup>3</sup>

- Information on the regulations of the HEI regarding transfer of students from and to other HEIs within and outside of the country

1.5.4. Explanation for the admission qualification in relation to the educational objective being pursued (especially for master's programs)

## **1.6. Quality assurance**

1.6.1. Information on the quality assurance concept regarding teaching and research (attach overall concept, evaluation regulation, etc., if applicable); description of the organizational and decision-making structures with regard to quality assurance

1.6.2. Information on the quality assurance measures of the study program to be accredited; information on the extent to which the quality assurance measures of the study program to be accredited are integrated into the overarching quality assurance measures of the entire university

1.6.3. Information on measures for module evaluation; information on the implementation of the obtained evaluation results with regard to the improvement of the study program concept; integration of students into the internal quality assurance within the study program

1.6.4. Information on the evaluation of the practical relevance of the study program (e.g. through graduate surveys, follow-up studies)

1.6.5. Information on the evaluation of the student workload and its feasibility (specification of the estimated student workload based on experience in the case of initial accreditation)

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/090000168007f2c7>

- 1.6.6. Statistics on enrolment applications, admission procedures, numbers of students and numbers of graduates with regard to the study program to be accredited and, if applicable, also with regard to the preceding model (respectively divided according to semester and gender)
- 1.6.7. Information on the documentation and transparent publication of information on the study program as well as on the exam requirements including regulations on compensation measures for students with disabilities
- 1.6.8. Information on the support of the students: general academic counselling; department-specific academic counselling, office hours of the instructors; social support, communication options between instructors and students; support of the students through tutoring, mentor programs, etc.
- 1.6.9. Information on the concept for the promotion of gender equality as well as the promotion of equal opportunities for students in special living situations (e.g. parents, foreign exchange students, students with an immigrant background, people from educationally deprived backgrounds)
- 1.6.10. Information on the special support of students with disabilities and chronic illnesses as well as on the publication of the information

## **2. Human resources, equipment and furnishings**

### **2.1. Teaching staff**

- 2.1.1. Specification of the number and composition of teaching staff in the study program
- total staff number required for the study program at full-time enrolment<sup>4</sup> in week hours per semester,
  - number of all full-time lecturers as well as the scope (in week hours per semester) of professorial teaching in the study program,
  - number of adjunct professors,
  - percentage of the study program to be accredited that is taught by professors, lecturers and adjunct professors, practitioners, etc.,
  - faculty/student ratio in the study program with full enrolment capacity utilization (ratio of the number of full-time teaching loads of the full-time instructors to the total number of all students in the study program)
  - additionally, please fill in the teaching matrix in annex 3
- 2.1.2. System and criteria for the selection of the teaching staff
- Regulations of recruitment and appointment on teaching positions
- 2.1.3. Specification of measures for human resources development and qualification, opportunities for university didactic continuing education for teaching staff

### **2.2. Further human resources**

- 2.2.1. Further human resources in the study program: work placement coordination, study program coordination, etc.

### **2.3. Facilities for instruction and research**

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<sup>4</sup> With regard to all cohorts as well as to the utilization of the admission places available

- 2.3.1. Premises (lecture halls, seminar rooms, laboratories, student workstations etc.)
- 2.3.2. Library/libraries
  - inventory (total, program-related inventory of books and periodicals),
  - means for program-related new acquisitions (books and periodicals),
  - access options for the library (opening hours, access on the weekend),
  - access to databases
- 2.3.3. Computer equipment, media equipment etc.
- 2.3.4. Funds for supporting staff, equipment and investment funds, extra funding

### **3. Institutional environment and structural conditions**

#### **3.1. Description of the university**

- 3.1.1. Basic data of the university
  - founding year with brief information about the development of the university,
  - total number of students (current status),
  - number of departments/faculties and the offered study programs; planned study programs,
  - information on program-relevant university location, if applicable,
  - information on institutes and research facilities of the university,
  - current developments or special features of the university.

#### **3.2. Description of the department/faculty**

- 3.2.1. Basic data of the department/faculty
  - founding year,

- total number of students at the department/faculty (current status),
- number of study programs in the department/faculty,
- current developments and special features in the department/faculty.

## **Appendices — AHPGS templates** (<http://ahpgs.de/downloads/>)

**Appendix 1** module description template

**Appendix 2** template for brief CV of teachers

**Appendix 3** teaching matrix

## Appendix 1

### Module description

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<b>Module number:</b>	<b>Module title:</b>
<b>Level/semester:</b>	e.g. first level/semester
<b>Credit hours:</b>	<b>Thereof lecture hours:</b>
	<b>Thereof practical hours:</b>
	<b>Thereof self-study hours:</b>
<b>Language:</b>	
<b>Learning outcomes/ Goals / Skills of the module:</b>	
<b>Content of the module:</b>	
<b>Examination:</b>	<i>e.g. written examination, presentation</i>

## Appendix 2

### Curriculum Vitae for Instructors

<b>1. First name and surname</b>		
<b>2. Pedagogic (education) and scientific degrees</b>		
<b>Institution</b>	<b>Professional qualification, qualification degree, academic degree</b>	<b>Year</b>
<b>3. Places of employment</b>		
<b>Institution</b>	<b>Type of sector and occupation</b>	<b>Dates</b>
<b>4. Lectured subjects or courses</b>		



