



swiss center of accreditation and
quality assurance in higher education

ENQA coordinated external review of the OAQ

OAQ's Self Evaluation Report

(Renewal of membership status)

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aims of external assessment

In December 2006, the Swiss Center of Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education (OAQ) was admitted to the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) as a full member of the Association. Membership is valid for a period of 5 years, after which time members must undergo an external review for the renewal of membership, against the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

As its membership elapses in December 2011, OAQ has agreed with ENQA to submit itself to an external review coordinated by the Association itself. The formal purpose of the review is therefore the renewal of the membership status of OAQ. There are, however, two further purposes:

- enhancement of internal quality;
- strengthening of external accountability.

OAQ has undergone two external evaluations in the past five years¹ and has each time used the lessons learnt to improve its own quality and professionalism. Indeed, continuous reflection of the ESG has deeply shaped the structure, organisation and the daily operations of OAQ.

In particular, following the 2006 ENQA review, the ENQA Board recommended that attention should be paid to the following areas:

- decision-making procedures;
- participation of students in the evaluation process;
- publication of reports; and
- internal quality assurance and feedback mechanisms of the Agency.

Important developments in these areas have occurred since 2006, as described elsewhere in this report.

National and international recognition of the internal and external quality assurance processes applied by the OAQ strengthen its credibility and therefore have a direct impact on its external accountability. OAQ therefore intends to use the results of the 2011 ENQA review to apply for listing on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), a body that has been supported by the Swiss government since the beginning of its operational activities.

The intense activity of external review of quality assurance agencies in Europe, in which the OAQ engages itself, follows the dynamics of the Bologna process and reflects the will of European Ministers to further develop the European dimension of quality assurance, by increasing transparency, accountability and recognition within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

¹ 2006: international external evaluation mandated nationally, by the Swiss University Conference.
2009: international external evaluation for accreditation by the German Accreditation Council.

1.2 The self-evaluation process

This document represents the final outcome of the self-assessment process conducted within the agency.

In line with the ENQA Guidelines for External Reviews, analysis of compliance with the ESG has been structured firstly by providing evidence of compliance with the ENQA membership criteria (corresponding to part 3 of the ESG) and subsequently with the standards for external quality assurance of higher education (part 2 of the ESG).

All staff members of the OAQ took part in the self-assessment phase. From November 2010 a monthly meeting took place in order to allocate responsibilities, exchange information, identify strengths, weaknesses and areas in which there is room for improvement, with subsequent action lines.

The Scientific Advisory Boards of the OAQ reviewed the draft report at the beginning of April 2011, allowing for the introduction of further refinements during the month of April. Finally, the self-evaluation report was approved by the Director of OAQ and by the Boards and forwarded to the Swiss University Conference (SUC) and to the State Secretariat for Education and Research (SER) for information.

The recommendations that will be formulated by the External Review Panel will serve to continue promoting improvement in the OAQ activities and operation and, together with the current self-evaluation report, will be published on the OAQ website.

2 THE SWISS HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

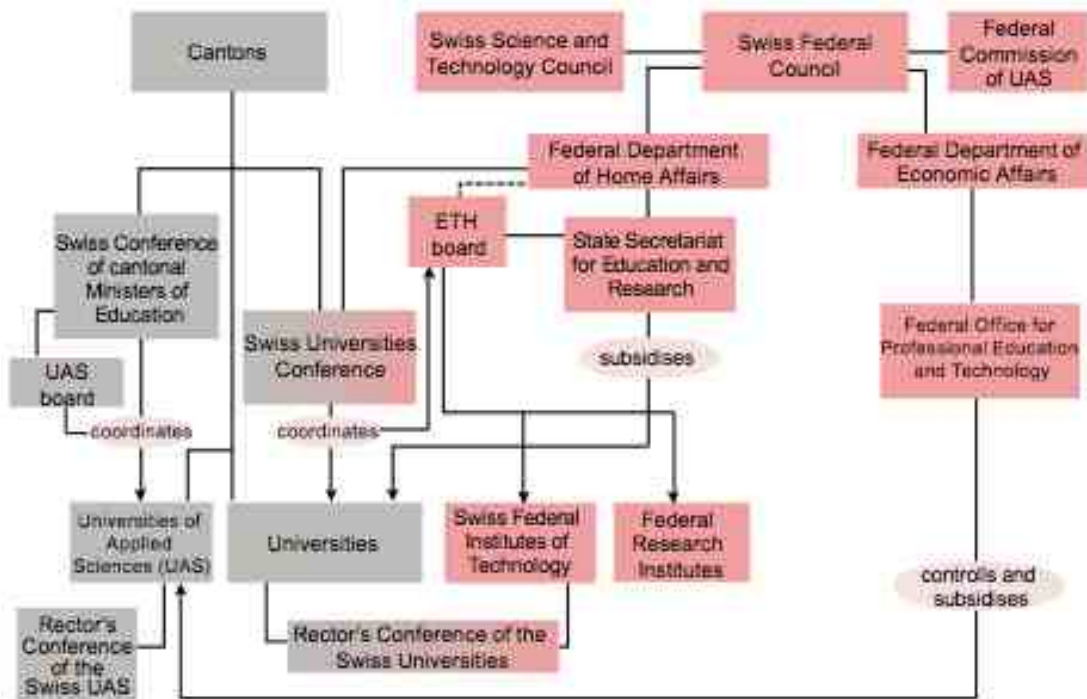
2.1 Overview

The Swiss system of higher education consists of 12 public universities (including the two technical universities - the Swiss Federal Institutes of Technology), and 9 Universities of Applied Sciences (seven public and two private) and approximately 70 private university institutions. The system is characterized by the historically defined distribution of competences between cantons and the Swiss Confederation (marked respectively as grey and red in Table 1.A). The distribution of competences has resulted in the development of highly complex structures of political decision-making, regulation and funding.

Implementing the article on education in the Swiss Constitution (which was adopted by the Swiss Sovereign in 2006) the Federal Law on Funding and Coordination within the Higher Education Sector (HFKG/LAHE) will provide a single legal frame of reference for all types of institutions of higher education. The draft of this law is currently under discussion in Parliament and is planned to enter into force in January 2013² (see Annexe 2.1.A).

² <http://www.admin.ch/ch/d/ff/2009/4697.pdf> (German version, HFKG);
<http://www.admin.ch/ch/f/ff/2009/4205.pdf> (French version, LAHE).

Table 1.A Sharing of competencies in the Swiss Higher Education System³



2.2 The Distribution of Competences in University Affairs between the Confederation and the Cantons

The Swiss Confederation finances the two Swiss Federal Institutes of Technology as well as four federal research institutes. It promotes scientific research and is responsible for the regulation of professional training and the Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS). It contributes financially to vocational training, the UAS and the cantonal universities.

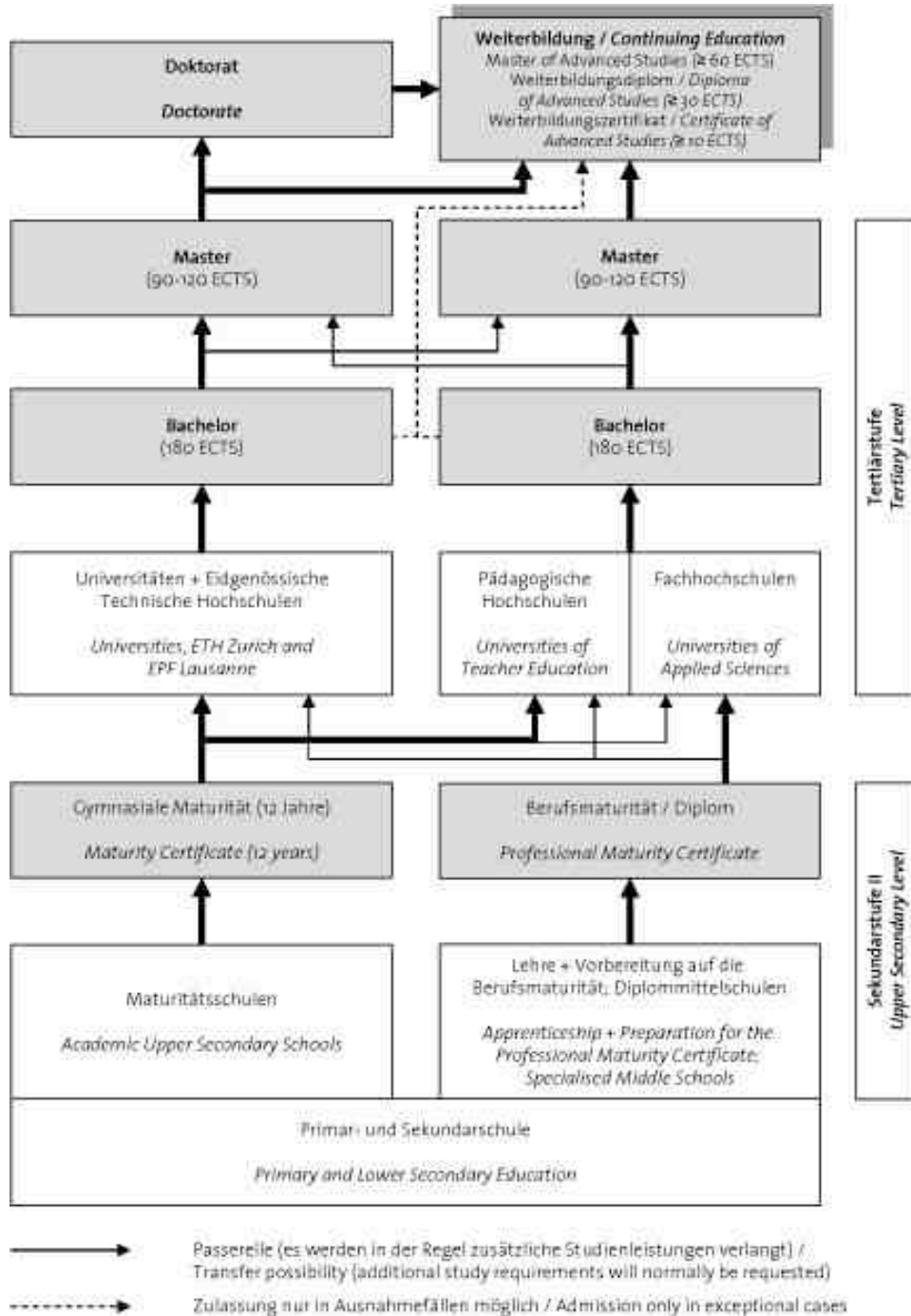
The cantons are responsible for the universities, the UAS and a large number of educational institutions of professional and vocational training. They contribute an important part of the financing for these institutions.

2.3 Distribution of Competences in Higher Education at the Federal Level

In the federal government, the higher education institutions are overseen by two ministries: the Federal Department of Home Affairs (FDHA) and the Federal Department of Economic Affairs (DFEA).

³ http://www.sbf.admin.ch/hm/dokumentation/publikationen/grundlagen/factsheets/FS01_Hochschulsystem_d_2008.pdf

Table 1.B The Swiss Higher Education System⁴



⁴ <http://www.zfw.ethz.ch/about/systematik>

The State Secretariat for Education and Research (SER) is part of the Federal Department of Home Affairs. It is the federal government's office for national and international matters concerning general university affairs, research and the aerospace domain (Table 1.B, left column).

The Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology (OPET) is part of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs. It is responsible for the implementation of the federal government's policy in the areas of vocational and advanced vocational training, UAS, as well as innovation and technology (Table 1.B, right column).

The Swiss Science and Technology Council is a consulting body of the Federal Council in all matters concerning education, research and technology policy. The Federal Commission of Universities of Applied Sciences advises the Federal Council and the Federal Department of Economic Affairs in matters relating to the UAS.

2.4 Coordination Bodies

The Swiss University Conference (SUC) is the joint federal and cantonal body for coordination and cooperation in university matters. The Swiss University Conference consists of representatives from the university cantons, the State Secretariat for Education and Research and the ETH Board. It has the power to enforce a number of decisions in defined areas, including decisions on accreditation.

The Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities represents all universities and is responsible for the coordination of the management of the universities.

The Rector's Conference of the Swiss Universities of Applied Sciences (KFH) is an association of the seven public and two private UAS. The KFH represents the interests of the UAS in matters relevant to the Confederation, the cantons and other institutions in charge of education and research policy as well as the public in general.

Annexes:

2.1.A Federal Law on Funding and Coordination of the Higher Education Sector (HFKG/LAHE): HFKG (German version) and LAHE (French version)

3 THE OAQ IN BRIEF

In 1999, the Federal Law on Financial Aid to Universities (UFG/LAU)⁵ was passed by Parliament. This law not only regulates how Swiss universities are subsidised, it also created a framework for cooperation between the Federation and the cantons. Furthermore, the new law introduced the concept of external quality assurance and created the OAQ.

The OAQ was founded specifically to foster the quality of teaching and research of the Swiss universities. To accomplish this task, a Secretariat and a Scientific Advisory Board were created. The law demands periodic assessments of the universities' quality management as a prerequisite for funding by the Federation, but does not require compulsory accreditation of programmes or institutions, in line with the concept of autonomy of the universities. Furthermore the OAQ accredits private institutions and their programmes on demand.

⁵ Federal Law on Financial Aid to Universities of 8 October 1999 (UFG/LAU), SR/RS 414.20.

The decision to recognise institutions as eligible for federal funding is taken by the Federal Council. The procedure is administered by the SER based on a report from the OAQ. Decisions of accreditation in the domain of public or private institutions of higher education are taken by the SUC based on a report and a proposition from the OAQ.

Since 2004, the OAQ has been involved in the accreditation of the federally regulated training of medical professions, namely physicists, dentists, chiropractors and pharmacists. These accreditations (according to the law regulating the medical professions) are organised by the Federal Office of Public Health and decided by the Federal Council. The OAQ is mandated by the Federal Office of Public Health to prepare the instruments (standards and guidelines) for and to undertake the external evaluations. Overall responsibility for the accreditation procedures and the preparation of the decisions lies with the Federal Office of Public Health.

Furthermore, in 2006 the OAQ was recognised to undertake the external evaluation of the UAS which are obliged to accredit all their study programmes. The responsibility for administering these procedures lies with the Federal Office of Professional Education and Technology which prepares the decision for the Federal Department of Economics. The UAS may choose an agency to undertake the external evaluation from among six agencies (OAQ and five recognised German agencies) which have full procedural autonomy.

Table 2 summarizes the legal frameworks of all assessment procedures carried out within Switzerland.

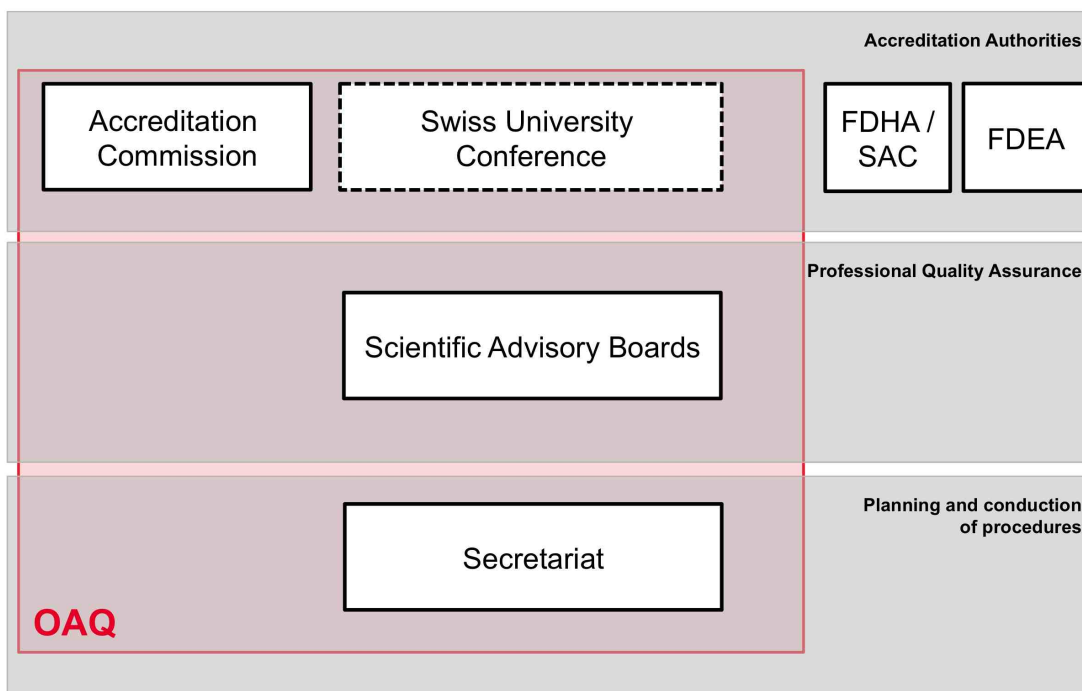
In 2009, the OAQ was recognised as an agency qualified to undertake accreditation procedures leading to programme accreditation or system accreditation in Germany. The OAQ assumes complete responsibility for all steps of these procedures. Decisions are taken based on the report and proposal from the OAQ by its own accreditation commission.

The structure of the OAQ is outlined in Table 1.C.

The planned Federal Law will have a considerable impact on accreditation in Switzerland: An Accreditation Council will be created which will be independent (organisationally and financially) from the politically-determined Council of Higher Education, which will replace the SUC as the coordinating body. The Accreditation Council will take all accreditation decisions including the accreditation of programmes leading to a regulated medical profession. Institutional accreditation will be mandatory for all institutions of higher education in order to use the denomination in the name and to safeguard their diplomas. In addition, institutional accreditation will be a prerequisite for federal funding. Programme accreditation will be voluntary.

The new Federal Law is scheduled to enter into force by January 2013.

Table 1.C Structure of the OAQ



Sharing of good practices and exposure to new developments are important for the continuous improvement of OAQ's processes. OAQ therefore dedicates considerable resources to participation in international networks and in international cooperation, mostly through its membership in the main QA networks such as ENQA, the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA) and the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) but also by cooperating in the framework of EUA (see Annexe 4.7.F).

Table 2. Legal framework for the OAQ activities – part 1

	Recognition of the right to financial aid		Accreditation	Accreditation
	Institutional Evaluation	Institutional Quality Audit		
Legal basis	Art. 11§3 let. a of the <i>Federal Law on Financial Aid to Universities</i> (UFG/LAU, 8 October 1999, SR/RS 414.20)	Art. 7 of the <i>UFG/LAU</i> , 8 October 1999 Art. 7 of the <i>Intercantonal Convention on Coordinating University Policy</i> (9 December 1999) <i>Guidelines of the Swiss University Conference for Academic Accreditation in Switzerland</i> (<i>Accreditation Guidelines</i>) SUC (28 June 2007, SR/RS 414.205.3)	-Universities- Art. 17 let. a of the <i>Federal Law on the Universities of Applied Sciences</i> (5 October 2005, SR/RS 414.71)	-Universities of Applied Sciences- (UAS)
Directives, issued by	<i>Directives for the recognition of the right to financial aid according to the UFG/LAU</i> FDHA (10 December 2002)		<i>FDEA Guidelines on Accreditation of Universities of Applied Sciences and Degree Programmes</i> (UAS Accreditation Guidelines) FDEA (4 May 2007)	
Quality Standards	Art. 9 of the <i>Accreditation Guidelines</i> , SUC (28 June 2007) Art. 3 of the <i>Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Swiss Universities</i> , SUC (7 December 2006, SR/RS 414.205.2)	Art. 9-10 of the <i>Accreditation Guidelines</i> , SUC (28 June 2007)	Point B.1 of the <i>Directives for the accreditation of the Universities of Applied Sciences and their degree programmes</i> , FDEA (4 May 2007)	
Definition of the procedural steps	OAQ	SUC/OAQ		OPET
Mandatory body	SER	/ (voluntary both at programme and institutional level)		FDEA (obligatory at programme level only)
Procedure undertaken by	OAQ, Expert Panel and Higher Education Institutions (HEI)	OAQ, Expert panel and HEI		OAQ, Expert panel and UAS (there are also 5 German agencies recognised by the OPET for conducting procedures)
Proposal for a decision	OAQ	OAQ		OAQ - OPET
Final decision-making body	Federal Council	SUC		FDEA
Publication of results	(SER), OAQ	SUC, OAQ		OPET, OAQ

FDHA: Federal Department of Home Affairs; FDEA: Federal Department of Economic Affairs; SUC: Swiss University Conference; OPET: Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology; SER: State Secretariat for Education and Research.

Table 2. Legal framework for the OAQ activities – part 2

	Accreditation of medical graduate programmes -Universities-		Accreditation of medical postgraduate programmes -FMH-
Legal basis	<p>Federal Law on Medical Professions (MedBG/LPMéd, SR/RS 811.11), 23 June 2006</p> <p>DFHA Ordinance on Accreditation of the programmes for the academic medical professions (20 August 2007, SR/RS 811.112.022)</p>	<p>Art. 7 of the Swiss Law on Financial Aid to Universities and Cooperation in matters relating to Universities (8 October 1999)</p> <p>Art. 7 of the Intercantonal Convention on Coordinating University Policy (9 December 1999)</p>	<p>Federal Law on Medical Professions (MedBG/LPMéd), 23 June 2006</p> <p>Ordinance on Medical Professions (MedBV/OPMéd), Swiss Federal Council (27 June 2007, SR/RS 811.112.0)</p>
Quality standards	Art. 24§1 MedBG/LPMéd, (23 June 2006)	Art. 10 of the Accreditation Guidelines, SUC (28 June 2007)	Accreditation of postgraduate medical education (January 2009), Accreditation of postgraduate dental education (March 2009), Accreditation of postgraduate chiropractic education (January 2009), FOPH + OAQ
Definition of the procedural steps	OAQ/FOPH		
Mandatory body	FOPH		
Procedure conducted by	OAQ, Expert panel (or other agency recognised by FOPH) and HEI		
Proposal for a decision	OAQ		
Final decision-making body	SAC		
Publication of results	OAQ, SAC		

FOPH: Federal Office of Public Health; FMH: Swiss Medical Association; FDHA: Federal Department of Home Affairs; SUC: Swiss University Conference
SAC: Swiss Accreditation Council.

Table 2. Legal framework for the OAQ activities – part 3

Accreditation in Germany	
	System Accreditation / Programme accreditation
Legal basis	Accreditation of the OAQ by the GAC in 2009 according to the <i>Rules for the Accreditation of Agencies</i> (GAC, 8 December 2009)
Quality standards	Chapters 2 and 5 of the <i>Rules for the Accreditation of Study Programmes and for System Accreditation</i> (GAC, 8 December 2009)
Definition of the procedural steps	Pre-defined by GAC in the <i>Rules for the Accreditation of Study Programmes and for System Accreditation</i> (GAC, 8 December 2009)
Mandatory body	German HEI
Procedure conducted by	OAQ (or other agency accredited by GAC), Expert panel and HEI
Proposal for a decision	OAQ
Final decision-making body	OAQ Accreditation Commission
Publication of results	OAQ

GAC: German Accreditation Council

4 FULFILMENT OF THE ENQA MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA

4.1 Criterion 1 – Activities (ESG 3.1, 3.3)

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities (at institutional or programme level) on a regular basis. The external quality assurance of agencies should take into account the presence and effectiveness of the external quality assurance processes described in Part 2 of the European Standards and Guidelines.

Guidelines: The external quality assurance activities may involve evaluation, review, audit, assessment, accreditation or other similar activities and should be part of the core functions of the member.

On behalf of the federal and cantonal authorities or mandated by third parties, the OAQ conducts various quality assessments with autonomous responsibility for its operations, in accordance with best international practices. These assessments include:

- Institutional evaluation, undertaken by a HEI applying for public funding for the first time, linked to the recognition of the right to financial aid (6 procedures conducted so far); based on the [Directives for the recognition of the right to financial aid according to the UFG/LAU](#), FDHA, 10 December 2002.
- Institutional Quality Audits, cyclical obligatory assessment of the internal quality assurance system at public universities, linked to the renewal of the right to financial aid (22 procedures conducted in 2 cycles: in 2003-4 and 2007-8); based on the [Directives for the recognition of the right to financial aid according to the UFG/LAU](#), FDHA, 10 December 2002, and the [Guidelines for Quality Assurance at Swiss Universities](#) (iQA Guidelines), 7 December 2006⁶.
- Accreditation (at institutional and programme level) in the domain of public and private university institutions, on a voluntary basis (since 2003, 43 procedures have been completed); based on the [Guidelines of the Swiss University Conference for Academic Accreditation in Switzerland](#) (Accreditation Guidelines), 28 June 2007⁷.

⁶ Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Swiss Universities, 7 December 2006, SR/RS 414.205.2.

⁷ Guidelines of the Swiss University Conference for Academic Accreditation in Switzerland (Accreditation Guidelines), 28 June 2007, SR/RS 414.205.3).

- Accreditation of medical programmes (graduate as well as postgraduate medical education), legally required by the Federal Office of Public Health; 2 full cycles for the postgraduate medical education have been completed: in 2005 (47 procedures completed) and 2010 (48 procedures conducted; ongoing decision-making phase); the first cycle of accreditation of graduate medical education (Bachelor + Master) is ongoing (15 procedures running); based on the [Federal Law on Medical Professions](#) (MedBG/LPMéd), 23 June 2006⁸, on the [DFHA Ordinance on Accreditation of the programmes for the academic medical professions](#), 20 August 2007⁹, on the [Ordinance on Medical Professions](#) (MedBV/OPMéd), 27 June 2007¹⁰, and on the Accreditation Guidelines of 28 June 2007.
- Accreditation (at institutional and programme level) in the frame of Universities of Applied Sciences, where programme accreditation is legally required and linked to the right to deliver a degree (since 2008, subsequent to the OAQ recognition by the Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology, 44 procedures have been completed); based on the [Guidelines on Accreditation of Universities of Applied Sciences and degree programmes](#) (UAS Accreditation Guidelines), FDEA, 4 May 2007.
- Evaluation of postgraduate continuing education (MAS, EMBA) in the domain of Universities of Applied Sciences, on a voluntary basis (since 2008, 22 programmes have been evaluated);
- Accreditation in Germany (System Accreditation and/or programme accreditation), in the domain of higher education institutions (since 2009, subsequent to the OAQ accreditation by the German Accreditation Council; two System Accreditations on-going, no procedures completed yet); based on the [Rules for the Accreditation of Study Programmes and for System Accreditation](#), GAC, 8 December 2009¹¹.
- Other assessments of HEI outside of Switzerland, based on specific mandates (1 institutional evaluation undertaken in Liechtenstein, so far).

Such external quality assurance activities represent the core function of the OAQ, as outlined in its annual reports (see Annexes 4.1.A-C). The list of procedures conducted since the last external evaluation of the OAQ and the list of on-going procedures provide additional evidence (Annexes 4.1.D-E). The legal framework for the OAQ activities listed above is outlined in Table 2. The results of the procedures undertaken by the OAQ are published on its website.

Chapter 5 of this report outlines how all external quality assurance activities undertaken by the OAQ take into account the presence and effectiveness of the external quality assurance processes described in Part 2 of the European Standards and Guidelines.

Annexes:

4.1.A Annual report 2008

⁸ Federal Law on Medical Professions (MedBG/LPMéd), 23 June 2006, SR/RS 811.11.

⁹ DFHA Ordinance on Accreditation of the programmes for the academic medical professions, 20 August 2007, SR/RS 811.112.022.

¹⁰ Ordinance on Medical Professions (MedBV/OPMéd), Swiss Federal Council, 27 June 2007, SR/RS 811.112.0.

¹¹ Rules for the Accreditation of Study Programmes and for System Accreditation, GAC, 8 December 2009 *i.d.F.v* 10 December 2010.

- 4.1.B Annual report 2009
- 4.1.C Annual report 2010
- 4.1.D List of procedures carried out since the last evaluation
- 4.1.E List of on-going procedures

4.2 Criterion 2 – Official status (ESG 3.2)

Agencies should be formally recognised by competent public authorities in the European Higher Education Area as agencies with responsibilities for external quality assurance and should have an established legal basis. They should comply with any requirements of the legislative jurisdictions within which they operate.

The legal basis for the OAQ is Art. 7 of the Federal Law on Financial Aid to Universities of 8 October 1999 (UFG/LAU)¹² and Art. 7 of the Intercantonal Convention on Coordinating University Policy of 9 December 1999. The organisation and the responsibilities of the OAQ are outlined in Art. 18-23 of the Cooperation Agreement between the Federal Government and University Cantons on matters relating to Universities of 14 December 2000¹³.

Links to the legal texts in the official national languages are available on the OAQ website at the following link: http://www.oaq.ch/pub/en/02_01_00_auftrag.php.

Since January 2008, the OAQ is officially recognised by the Federal Department of Economic Affairs (FDEA) as an accreditation Agency for the Universities of Applied Sciences and as such has the right to conduct accreditation procedures. The prerequisites for federal recognition of an accreditation agency are set out in the FDEA Ordinance of 4 May 2007 on Recognition of Accreditation Agencies for Universities of Applied Sciences and Degree Programmes (UAS Accreditation Agency Ordinance)¹⁴. These prerequisites are based on federal requirements, specific features of UAS as well as on European practices. Recognised accreditation agencies are listed on the website of the Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology (OPET)¹⁵.

Furthermore, since June 2009 the OAQ is formally accredited by the German Accreditation Council, which entitles the OAQ to conduct system accreditation and/or programme accreditation at HEIs in Germany. The accreditation of the OAQ was based on the “Rules for the Accreditation of Agencies”, revised by the GAC on 10 December 2010 and published at the following link: <http://www.akkreditierungsrat.de/index.php?id=7&L=1>. Fulfilment of the ESG was also taken into account as part of the accreditation process. Accredited agencies are listed on the website of the GAC at the following link: <http://www.akkreditierungsrat.de/index.php?id=5&L=1>.

The legal basis for the accreditation of graduate and postgraduate medical programmes is laid-out in Table 2. Based on the Federal Law on Medical Professions¹⁶, which entered into force in September 2007, the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH) has given the OAQ the mandate

¹² Federal Law on Financial Aid to Universities of 8 October 1999 (UFG/LAU), SR 414.20.

¹³ Cooperation Agreement between the Federal Government and University Cantons on matters relating to Universities of 14 December 2000, SR 414.205.

¹⁴ FDEA Ordinance on recognition of agencies responsible for reviewing and accrediting Universities of Applied Sciences and their degree programmes (UAS Accreditation Agency Ordinance), 4 May 2007, SR 414.711.43.

¹⁵ <http://www.bbt.admin.ch/themen/hochschulen/00176/00179/01176/01177/index.html?lang=en>.

¹⁶ Federal Law on Medical Professions (MedBG/LPMéd), 23 June 2006, SR/RS 811.11.

to conduct the legally required accreditation procedures, resulting in a formal agreement between the OAQ and the FOPH (see annexes 4.2.B-C).

Annexes:

4.2.A SUC Bylaws 2002

4.2.B Agreement OAQ-FOPH, accreditation of graduate medical programmes, 06.11.2006

4.2.C Agreement OAQ-FOPH, accreditation of post-graduate medical programmes, 26.10.2009

4.3 Criterion 3 – Resources (ESG 3.4)

Agencies should have adequate and proportional resources, both human and financial, to enable them to organise and run their external quality assurance process(es) in an effective and efficient manner, with appropriate provision for the development of their processes, procedures and staff.

4.3.1 Financial resources

Based on the Intercantonal Convention on Coordinating University Policy of 9 December 1999, the SUC serves as the board of control of the OAQ. The Director of the OAQ has to present a budget and the financial statement for adoption by the SUC.

The OAQ has two primary sources of funding: the funds provided by the SUC and funds earned through mandates by the OPET and the FOPH; a third source is represented by the fees levied on private higher education institutions undergoing an assessment procedure with the OAQ, as well as HEIs outside of Switzerland (such as the University of Liechtenstein, evaluated in 2010 or, potentially, HEIs in Germany, starting from 2011).

The 2010 financial statement shows that of an overall earning of 3 mio Swiss Francs, (which represents an excess of 300'000 over expenditure), 62% were funds provided by the SUC (50% from the Federation and 50% from the Cantons) and 38% were funds earned in procedures or mandates for third parties (largely from OPET and FOPH).

In term of budgeting, the two sources of funding are linked: as long as the OAQ budgets its procedures according to the "Fees Regulation" defined by the SUC, the financial contribution of the SUC in combination with all the money earned in contracts covers all expenses of the OAQ.

	2011	2012	absolut	in %
Ertrag	2'636'100	2'572'500	-63'600	-2.4%
Finanzierungsbeitrag SUC	2'008'100	1'933'500	-74'600	-3.7%
Gebühren aus Verfahren	489'000	634'000	145'000	29.7%
Gebühren aus Tagungen	0	0	0	
Überschuss Rechnung	134'000	0	-134'000	-100.0%
Finanzertrag	5'000	5'000	0	0.0%
Aufwand	2'636'100	2'572'500	-63'600	-2.4%
Personalaufwand	1'448'000	1'562'000	114'000	7.9%
Sach- und Betriebsaufwand	401'000	494'000	93'000	23.2%
Honorare und Spesen in Verfahren	787'100	516'500	-270'600	-34.4%

OAQ resources cover all external quality assurance processes (as well as the continuing development of the processes) and the staff costs. The financial independence and sustainability of OAQ is thus guaranteed.

Annexes:

- 4.3.1.A Annual financial statements 2009 (Jahresabschluss)
- 4.3.1.B Revisionsbericht 2009
- 4.3.1.C Annual financial statements 2010 (Jahresabschluss)
- 4.3.1.D Revisionsbericht 2010
- 4.3.1.E Budget 2011
- 4.3.1.F Budget 2012

4.3.2 Human resources

At present, the OAQ Secretariat consists of 13 people whose overall workload represents the equivalent of 9,1 full time employees. The staff consists of the director, 9 scientific collaborators, 2 secretaries and 1 student collaborator (profiles published on http://www.oaq.ch/pub/en/02_02_00_mitarbeiter.php). In the recruitment of staff, interdisciplinary and interregional aspects are taken into consideration. The number of staff is sufficient to fulfil the legal responsibilities. The flat hierarchy and the relatively small number of staff permits a flexible organisational structure which can deal quickly with developments and adapt to them. The salaries, as well as HR-regulations, are determined by federal laws (<http://www.epa.admin.ch/dokumentation/gesetz/00373/index.html?lang=de>). Employees have the same conditions as all employees of the Federal Administration.

In conducting its procedures, the OAQ Secretariat relies on external experts. Approximately 500 experts (covering all fields and disciplines and drawn globally) have already worked with the OAQ and are listed in our internal database. The OAQ seeks to ensure the participation of outstanding national and international experts in the quality assessments it conducts.

Members of the Scientific Advisory Board for Universities are appointed at the proposition of the Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities (CRUS) by the Swiss University Conference¹⁷. A term of office lasts 4 years and members may be re-elected once. The Board is composed of a president and 4 members, 2 of whom have to live and work abroad. All have to be experts in the field of quality assurance. The Board is responsible for the scientific quality of the OAQ's work in the university domain and offers its advice to the organisation.

Members of the Scientific Advisory Board for Universities of Applied Sciences are proposed by the Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities of Applied Sciences¹⁸ and appointed by the Scientific Board for Universities, who can legally create commissions. Indeed, the legal status of this Board is that of a commission. Their mandate lasts 4 years and members may be re-elected once. The Board is composed of a president and 3 members, 2 of whom live and work abroad and one person is also a member of the Scientific Board for Universities. The Board is responsible for the scientific quality of the OAQ's work in the domain of UAS and offers its advice to the organisation and has decision-making power with respect to the evaluation of postgraduate continuing education programmes.

¹⁷ http://www.oaq.ch/pub/en/02_03_00_beirat.php.

¹⁸ http://www.oaq.ch/pub/de/beirat_fh.php.

Members of the OAQ Accreditation Commission for procedures undertaken in Germany are identified and proposed by the OAQ Secretariat and appointed by the Scientific Board for Universities. A term of office lasts 4 years and members may be re-elected once. The Board is composed of a president and 9 members, all of whom must be independent from any German HEI. Members, largely coming from outside Germany, represent the academic as well as the professional world. All of them have to be experts in the field of accreditation and one must be a student. Two members are representatives of the Scientific Advisory Boards of the OAQ, in order to assure coherence between the various activities undertaken by the agency. The Commission offers its advice to the OAQ and has full decision-making powers for accreditation procedures in Germany.

Finally, some activities are subcontracted to third parties: these include external communications, database & IT issues, corporate design and translations. These subcontractors are highly recognised professionals in their fields. The quality of these activities is ensured by way of internal feedback mechanisms.

External quality assurance is very much dependent on the quality of the people working for the agency.

In autumn 2010, OAQ initiated a process (Strategy Workshop) to review its strategy. This process was moderated by an external consultant in order to make the organisation fit for upcoming changes (such as the new law). In this participative process, the OAQ has further specified the role of the staff as well as the issue of their training as an important subject.

The Strategy Workshop clearly identified the need for an overall human resources (HR) Strategy. The HR Strategy should define a frame of reference for the recruitment and continuing training of its staff. Training and continuing education should prepare the staff for the processes and procedures, ensure a shared philosophy and keep the staff fit for the labour market.

Annexes:

4.3.2.A OAQ Rules for Continuing Training of Staff (Weiterbildungsreglement)

4.3.3 Database

The OAQ monitors all its procedures using an internet-based database. This includes information such as the nature of, beginning and end points of the procedure, expert groups and final decisions. All important documents are also attached to the database. The collaborators have access to the database and are responsible for updating the information regularly.

The database also lists all addresses and contacts (experts, universities, partner organisations etc.). There is a direct link from the OAQ-website to the database. It shows all current and concluded procedures and is regularly updated.

The database has been in place and improved since 2008. It is process-oriented and gathers all information necessary to conduct an external quality assurance procedure. The database is structured following the phases of the procedures and has an option for "Crossroads"¹⁹. Crossroads is an EU co-financed database which gathers and publishes information about the

¹⁹ <http://www.grossroads.eu/home>.

HE-systems and accredited programmes and institutions of all members of the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA).

The external support of the database is guaranteed by a team of external informatics specialists. The data is protected from misuse through a safe connection (SSL) and user-password-authentication.

4.4 Criterion 4 – Mission statement (ESG 3.5)

Agencies should have clear and explicit goals and objectives for their work, contained in a publicly available statement.

Guidelines: This statement should describe the goals and objectives of the member's quality assurance processes, the division of labour with relevant stakeholders in higher education, especially the higher education institutions, and the cultural and historical context of its work. The statement should make clear that the external quality assurance process is a major activity of the member and that there exists a systematic approach to achieving its goals and objectives. There should also be documentation to demonstrate how the statement is translated into a clear policy and management plan.

The OAQ mission statement is publicly-available on the OAQ website at the following page: http://www.oaq.ch/pub/en/02_07_00_mission.php.

The way the OAQ translates its mission statement into a clear policy and management plan is well represented by the annual activity plan, whose outputs are outlined in the annual reports. Furthermore, since January 2011, the OAQ has adopted its internal strategic policy - the result of the Strategy Workshop (see Chapter 4.3.2).

Annexes:

- 4.4.A Mission Statement
- 4.4.B Chapter 4 of the Strategic Policy (Econcept)
- 4.4.C Annual plan 2012

4.5 Criterion 5 – Independence (ESG 3.6)

Agencies should be independent to the extent both that they have autonomous responsibility for their operations and that the conclusions and recommendations made in their reports cannot be influenced by third parties such as higher education institutions, ministries or other stakeholders.

Guidelines: An agency will need to demonstrate its independence through measures, such as:

- *its operational independence from higher education institutions and governments is guaranteed in official documentation (e.g. instruments of governance or legislative acts);*

- *the definition and operation of its procedures and methods, the nomination and appointment of external experts and the determination of the outcomes of its quality assurance processes are undertaken autonomously and independently from governments, higher education institutions, and organs of political influence;*
- *while relevant stakeholders in higher education, particularly students/learners, are consulted in the course of quality assurance processes, the final outcomes of the quality assurance processes remain the responsibility of the agency.*

4.5.1 Operational independence

- Q-audits and Accreditation in the field of universities:

The legal basis for the OAQ's operational independence is guaranteed through Art. 7§2 of the Federal Law on Financial Aid to Universities (UFG/LAU)²⁰, and in Art. 18§1 of the Cooperation Agreement between the Federal Government and University Cantons on matters relating to Universities²¹. Links to the legal texts are available on the OAQ website at the following link: http://www.oaq.ch/pub/en/02_01_00_auftrag.php.

The procedures of all quality assessments undertaken by the OAQ (Accreditation, Evaluation, Quality Audit) follow predefined directives, which have been compiled by the OAQ (Art. 7§2 let. b UFG/LAU) and legally adopted by the relevant authorities (see Table 2 under Chapter 3). The procedures must be conducted according to constitutional prerequisites (procedural guarantee of equal and fair treatment) and cannot be influenced by any other party.

- Accreditation in the field of medicine:

The same principles apply for the accreditation of undergraduate and graduate medical programmes (Bachelors, Masters). According to the MedBG/LPMéd²², the agencies fully responsible for the accreditation are the OAQ or another internationally recognized accreditation body (Art. 48 of the MedBG/ LPMéd).

For the accreditation of postgraduate medical programmes, the OAQ bases its operations on the published accreditation standards²³, which have to be fulfilled by the units undergoing accreditation (Art. 25§1 of the MedBG/LPMéd). The accreditation standards were developed by the OAQ, under a mandate of the FOPH in 2005/6, based on the WFME Basic Medical Education Global Standards for Quality Improvement 2003.

The OAQ operates with full independence. The competent professional medical society, as well as the Federal Commission of Medical professions (MEBEKO) are informed on the procedure and consulted on the reports deriving from it.

The OAQ has full independence in the identification of expert panels, their training, the definition of a formal template for the experts' report, the results of the assessment, the formulation of recommendations for the accreditation decision and the definition of internal time-tables.

²⁰ Federal Law on Financial Aid to Universities of 8 October 1999 (UFG/LAU), SR/RS 414.20.

²¹ Cooperation Agreement between the Federal Government and University Cantons on matters relating to Universities of 14 December 2000, SR 414.205.

²² Federal Law on Medical Professions (MedBG/LPMéd), 23 June 2006, SR/RS 811.11.

²³ <http://www.bag.admin.ch/themen/berufe/00415/00579/index.html?lang=fr>.

- Accreditation in the field of UAS:

All agencies that are allowed to conduct accreditations in the field of UAS must be approved by the OPET. One of the criteria to be fulfilled in order to be recognised is the independence of the agency: “Agencies should be independent to the extent both that they have autonomous responsibility for their operations and that the conclusions and recommendations made in their reports cannot be influenced by third parties such as higher education institutions, ministries or other stakeholders (UAS Accreditation Agency Ordinance²⁴, Art. 2 let. e).

- Accreditation in Germany:

In order to be recognised by the German Accreditation Council, an agency has to have full operational independence. The agency has to ensure its independence from organs of influence in individual cases and the independence and impartiality of the persons working for it (Criteria 2.3 – GAC Rules for the Accreditation of Agencies).

4.5.2 Principles of independence applying to all OAQ procedures

The OAQ can provide evidences of its independence during its operational activities and within the outcomes of its quality assurance processes by:

- its autonomy in recruiting human resources (permanent staff);
- its establishment of concepts and instruments for all forms of quality assessments;
- its responsibility in the selection of external experts for quality assessments;
- its autonomy in conducting assessments;
- the existence of internal consulting mechanisms when important decisions are at stake, through the OAQ’s international Scientific Advisory Boards (systematic checks of all strategic decisions and guarantee of their international compatibility);
- full responsibility in writing final reports, including recommendations for quality improvement and proposals for accreditation/recognition/evaluation decisions with no influence from third parties;

Expert Panels are chosen by the OAQ according to the strict selection criteria stated in Art. 20 of the Accreditation Guidelines²⁵: “The experts must be independent and must be able to make an impartial assessment”. For accreditation in the field of UAS, selection criteria are stated in Point B.2§2 of the UAS Accreditation Guidelines²⁶. Finally, for accreditation procedures undertaken in Germany, experts panels must be chosen according to the GAC’s published criteria whereby independence once again plays an important role²⁷. Moreover, selected experts – checked by the OAQ for their independence towards the institution/programme undergoing an external assessment – sign a written statement that assures their independence.

²⁴ FDEA Ordinance on recognition of agencies responsible for reviewing and accrediting Universities of Applied Sciences and their degree programmes (UAS Accreditation Agency Ordinance), 4 May 2007, SR 414.711.43.

²⁵ Guidelines of the Swiss University Conference for Academic Accreditation in Switzerland (Accreditation Guidelines), 28 June 2007, SR/RS 414.205.3).

²⁶ FDEA Guidelines on Accreditation of Universities of Applied Sciences and Degree Programmes, FDEA, 4 May 2007.

²⁷ Rules of the German Accreditation Council for Study Programmes and Systemaccreditation, Point 1.1.3 / 4.5.

The independence of experts is also underlined in the “Principles for the selection of experts” developed by the European Consortium for Accreditation and subscribed to by all its members, including OAQ (see annexe 4.5.G).

Due to the small size of the country and, in some cases, the attendant difficulty in identifying completely independent experts, the majority of the panel members in all OAQ assessment procedures must come from abroad. Knowledge of the Swiss academic system must be possessed by one member in the panel. Since the systematic introduction of students in the expert panels, this knowledge may often be assured exclusively by the student-member, if coming from a Swiss HEI. As the independence of the assessments and the subsequent international recognition of the assessment results are a clear priority of both the OAQ and the assessed units, language issues should not be an obstacle and procedures can be conducted in English.

4.5.3 Decision-making independence

The OAQ has full decision-making independence for the accreditation procedures carried out in Germany. The decision-making body is the Accreditation Commission created by the OAQ once it received positive accreditation by the GAC. Its 9 members were appointed in January 2010²⁸. The independence of each member of the Accreditation Commission from any German HEI was one of the criteria for their selection. OAQ has identified and proposed the Accreditation Commission’s members in full independence.

The OAQ also has full decision-making powers for the voluntary evaluation of postgraduate continuing education programmes in the domain of UAS (mainly EMBA, MAS). The decision-making body in this case is the Scientific Advisory Board of the OAQ for UAS²⁹. Decisions are taken according to the accreditation standards applying for undergraduate and graduate programmes. As these procedures are not regulated by Federal law, decisions do not carry legal consequences. Therefore, they consist of an evaluation resulting in an overall positive or negative judgement, including recommendations for quality enhancement. In this case, the predominance of the improvement-oriented approach of the procedures is particularly evident.

As far as all other procedures conducted by OAQ, the agency is fully independent in the process of reaching its conclusions, which are transmitted to the formal decision-making bodies (external to the agency) in the form of a proposal for a decision. The conclusions of OAQ, based on the self-evaluation report of the assessed unit, the on-site visit by a group of independent experts and on the experts’ report, cannot be influenced by third parties.

In the case of assessment cycles of the same kind or bundled procedures (such as Q-audits, accreditation of graduate medical programmes or accreditation of joint-programmes within Switzerland), the separate conclusions reached by different experts panels may be slightly calibrated by the OAQ and its Scientific Advisory Board in order to maintain the consistency of the decision making process. This calibration is driven essentially by the principle of equality of treatment among institutions. OAQ has not often resorted to this measure as comparable and equal judgments are already assured by the experts, carefully briefed prior to the assessment procedure and always accompanied by an OAQ scientific collaborator who oversees the quality of the procedure. Calibration might well involve the formulation of the same recommendation/condition valid for all partners involved in a cluster programme (with separate

²⁸ Composition of the OAQ Accreditation Commission: <http://www.oaq.ch/pub/de/akkreditierungskommission.php>.

²⁹ Composition of the Scientific Advisory Board of the OAQ for UAS: http://www.oaq.ch/pub/de/beirat_fh.php.

accreditation decisions for each one of the partners) if a problem is encountered only in one of the partners but should be solved by the central management.

So far, decision-making bodies have generally followed the OAQ's proposal for accreditation. However, in the domain of UAS, the OPET sometimes needs to calibrate the work performed by the recognised agencies, aiming at assuring equality of treatment in all procedures. This can result in turning recommendations into conditions and vice-versa.

The concept of an independent accreditation council has been introduced into the new draft legislation on higher education (HFKG/LAHE). With the enactment of the Federal Law the SUC as well as the FDEA will be replaced as the decision-making bodies for the accreditation of universities and UAS and their programmes respectively by a broadly-composed independent accreditation council.

Annexes:

- 4.5.A Instruments of governance or legislative acts (see Directives annexed under chapter 5.1)
- 4.5.B Scheme of formal procedural steps - Universities
- 4.5.C Scheme of formal procedural steps - UAS
- 4.5.D Scheme of formal procedural steps - Medicine (Graduate programmes)
- 4.5.E Scheme of formal procedural steps - Medicine (Postgraduate programmes)
- 4.5.F Scheme of formal procedural steps - Germany
- 4.5.G ECA Principles for the selections of experts
- 4.5.H Example of OAQ contract with external experts

4.6 Criterion 6 – External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the members (ESG 3.7)

- i. The processes, criteria and procedures used by agencies should be pre-defined and publicly available.
- ii. These processes will normally be expected to include:
 - a self-assessment or equivalent procedure by the subject of the quality assurance process;
 - an external assessment by a group of experts, including, as appropriate, (a) student member(s), and site visits as decided by the agency;
 - publication of a report, including any decisions, recommendations or other formal outcomes;
 - a follow-up procedure to review actions taken by the subject of the quality assurance process in the light of any recommendations contained in the report.

Guidelines: Agencies may develop and use other processes and procedures for particular purposes. Agencies should pay careful attention to their declared principles at all times, and ensure both that their requirements and processes are managed professionally and that their conclusions and decisions are reached in a consistent manner, even though the decisions are formed by groups of different people. Agencies that make formal quality assurance decisions, or conclusions which have formal consequences should have an appeals procedure. The nature and form of the appeals procedure should be determined in the light of the constitution of each agency.

All processes, criteria and procedures used by the OAQ are pre-defined and publicly available on the agency's website under the respective domain (Universities, UAS, Germany, Q-audits). These are also explained and referred to in the different guides compiled by the OAQ in order to

assist the self-evaluation and the external-evaluation phases. An inventory of all OAQ instruments (as well as selected samples) is provided in the annexed documentation.

Normally quality assessment procedures of the OAQ last between 9 and 12 months and are held in three stages: a self-evaluation undertaken by the higher education institution (phase I); an external evaluation organised by the OAQ including an on-site visit by the selected panel of independent experts (phase II); decision making by the decision-making authority, based on the OAQ final report and its proposal for a decision (phase III).

In the case of accreditation of a private HEI, the above-mentioned phases are preceded by a preliminary examination, whereby the institution must collect a number of documents and evidence in a dossier to be submitted to the OAQ, following published criteria and procedures. OAQ scientific collaborators examine the documentation provided and make a positive or negative evaluation (in some delicate cases supported by an expert of the field). In the case of a positive evaluation, the institution under assessment can officially start a regular accreditation procedure. In the case of a negative result, an OAQ report is given to the SUC and, in case of negative decision by the SUC, an accreditation procedure cannot be initiated. This preliminary examination procedure has proved to be very useful for both the OAQ and the institutions: institutions undergoing such an evaluation realise sometimes that they are not yet ready for an accreditation procedure and withdraw their demand, sparing a considerable amount of resources, and thus raising consciousness of the developments and measures needed to fulfil quality standards. This is also resource-saving for the OAQ and, its experts in such instances.

The OAQ has also established processes for formal follow-up procedures, in cases of conditional accreditation. These processes again include the three phases mentioned above, with the difference being that an additional on-site visit is not always necessary to verify the fulfilment of the conditions set for accreditation. In most cases, an assessment “sur dossier” is adequate for accomplishing the given mandate. Another important difference in this case is the composition of the assessment panel, which might consist of one or two members of the assessment panel of the accreditation procedure or one or two scientific collaborators of the OAQ, according to the type of condition to be fulfilled and the competencies required for the assessment. This is decided on a case-by-case basis.

All institutions undergoing an assessment procedure by the OAQ are provided with a guide to self-evaluation, containing instructions useful for the production of the self-evaluation report. Moreover, two to three preparatory meetings preceding the on-site visit are organised by the OAQ scientific collaborators and take place at the unit under assessment. Examples of protocols of these meetings can be found in Annex 4.6.E.

The group of experts conducting the external assessment is provided with a guide to external evaluation highlighting, inter alia, the principles for the site visit. Each selected expert also receives a briefing pack which forms the basis for the oral briefing session that precedes the on-site visit. During the site-visits, experts have the opportunity to meet representatives of all the main interest groups involved in the unit under assessment. This complements the information and evidence provided in the self-evaluation report. These meetings are structured in interview-sessions lasting on average one hour. The site-visit for the accreditation of a single study programme lasts on average two to three days. Examples of site-visit programmes are provided in Annex 4.6.F.

The group of experts is selected according to predefined criteria. The expert group must include a student. In collaboration with the Swiss students' union, the OAQ has established an

“accreditation pool” of student experts (see chapter 5.4). Members of this pool receive bespoke training. Only students who have attended this training are eligible to serve as experts.

All positive decisions can be published, according to Art. 33§3 of the Accreditation Guidelines. In agreement with the evaluated institution, the final report of the OAQ and the Experts’ Report are published. Within the accreditation of basic medical education programmes, all reports are published, as required by law. In the case of accreditation in the domain of UAS, only positive accreditation results can legally be published by the OAQ, as the reports, once handed over to the decision-making body, are no longer the property of the agency. The planned Federal Law, which would regulate the entire Swiss higher education sector, would in principle allow for any OAQ procedural outcome to be published. The HFKG/LAHE is under discussion and is expected to enter into force in 2013.

Reports and accreditation results are publicly available on the OAQ website at the following pages:

- University institutions: http://www.oaq.ch/pub/en/03_04_02_abgeschlossen.php ;
- UAS: http://www.oaq.ch/pub/en/abgeschlossen_fh.php and http://www.oaq.ch/pub/de/abgeschlossen_weiterbildung_fh.php ;
- Q-audits (universities): http://www.oaq.ch/pub/en/05_03_00_audit_concluded.php ;
- Medicine: http://www.oaq.ch/pub/en/03_05_01_laufend.php and http://www.oaq.ch/pub/en/03_05_02_abgeschlossen.php (synthesis report).

According to the legal requirements, accreditation can be granted with conditions. In such cases, a follow-up procedure is mandatory. In all other cases, the OAQ as well as the expert panels, make recommendations and the OAQ proposes a follow-up visit to see how these recommendations have been implemented.

An internal Handbook summarizing the procedural steps for all quality assessment procedures of the OAQ has been created on the basis of the formal Guidelines (see Annex 4.7.C). It documents all of the processes that the OAQ employs. For more details on the internal Handbook, see chapter 4.7. Additionally, schematic tables illustrating the different steps and bodies involved in all OAQ procedures are provided as annexes for chapter 4.5.

For the appeal procedures, please refer to chapter 4.8.

Annexes:

- 4.6.A Example(s) of Guide to self-evaluation
- 4.6.B Example(s) of Guide to external evaluation
- 4.6.C Inventory of all the existing Guides (UAS, Germany, Medicine...)
- 4.6.D List of upcoming formal follow-up procedures
- 4.6.E Examples of protocols of meetings between the OAQ and the institution prior the site-visit
- 4.6.F Examples of site-visit programme

4.7 Criterion 7 – Accountability procedures (ESG 3.8)

Agencies should have in place procedures for their own accountability.

Guidelines: These procedures are expected to include the following:

i. a published policy for the assurance of the quality of the agency itself, made available on its website;

The quality principles and measures of the OAQ are outlined in a paper published in December 2005 and recently revised (http://www.oaq.ch/pub/en/02_08_00_qualitaet.php). This paper demonstrates how the agency perceives its quality as an organisation as well as the quality of its processes. Quality requirements and goals are listed.

The paper is intended to encompass all activities of the agency and acts as the basis of all work instruments. In order to put the agency's quality principles into practice, OAQ handbooks provide detailed descriptions of all internal procedures.

The quality paper was updated in January 2011 by the OAQ working group for internal quality assurance (see Annex 4.7.A). The document has been circulated among all staff members and has been amended with the comments and suggestions received.

The management handbook, issued in 2009, builds the framework of all rules governing everyday work at the agency (Annex 4.7.B). The management handbook contains a detailed list of all documents governing the procedures executed by the agency, giving information about the validity of every document.

Whereas the management handbook is internal to the agency, the documents governing the procedures (the OAQ instruments, see Annexes 4.6) are published on the following webpage http://www.oaq.ch/pub/en/03_01_00_akkredit_hochschul.php.

The system of internal quality assurance (iQA) is completed by an internal handbook that gives step-by-step advice on how to run any procedure of the agency (Annex 4.7.C).

ii. documentation which demonstrates that:

- the agency's processes and results reflect its mission and goals of quality assurance;*

The OAQ paper on quality principles and measures highlights that quality and its improvement form the basis of every process undertaken by the OAQ. This is demonstrated by the outputs of the OAQ, fully in line with its mission statement and strategic plan and outlined in the activity reports (Annex 4.1-A-C).

- the agency has in place, and enforces, a no-conflict-of-interest mechanism in the work of its external experts, Committee/Council/Board and staff members;*

As set out in the OAQ bylaws, experts must be independent and must be able to make an impartial assessment. All the experts selected by the OAQ must sign a statement assuring their independence (Annex 4.7.B). Additionally, each expert is checked by the OAQ for his/her independence towards the institution/programme undergoing accreditation. The institution applying for accreditation has the right to object to the choice of the experts proposed by the OAQ, for example, when the institution believes that an expert deals with activities in competition with its own. In addition, the OAQ has developed, together with the other ECA member organizations, commonly agreed principles for the selection of experts, including no-conflict-of-interest mechanisms (see Annex 4.5.G).

The Scientific Boards and the Accreditation Commission for Germany make the definitive selection of the expert teams for procedures in their respective domains. Furthermore, they

examine and adopt the OAQ's final report on the procedure. Members of the Boards who have a perceived conflict of interest with the object to be accredited take no part in such discussions and systematically abstain from voting.

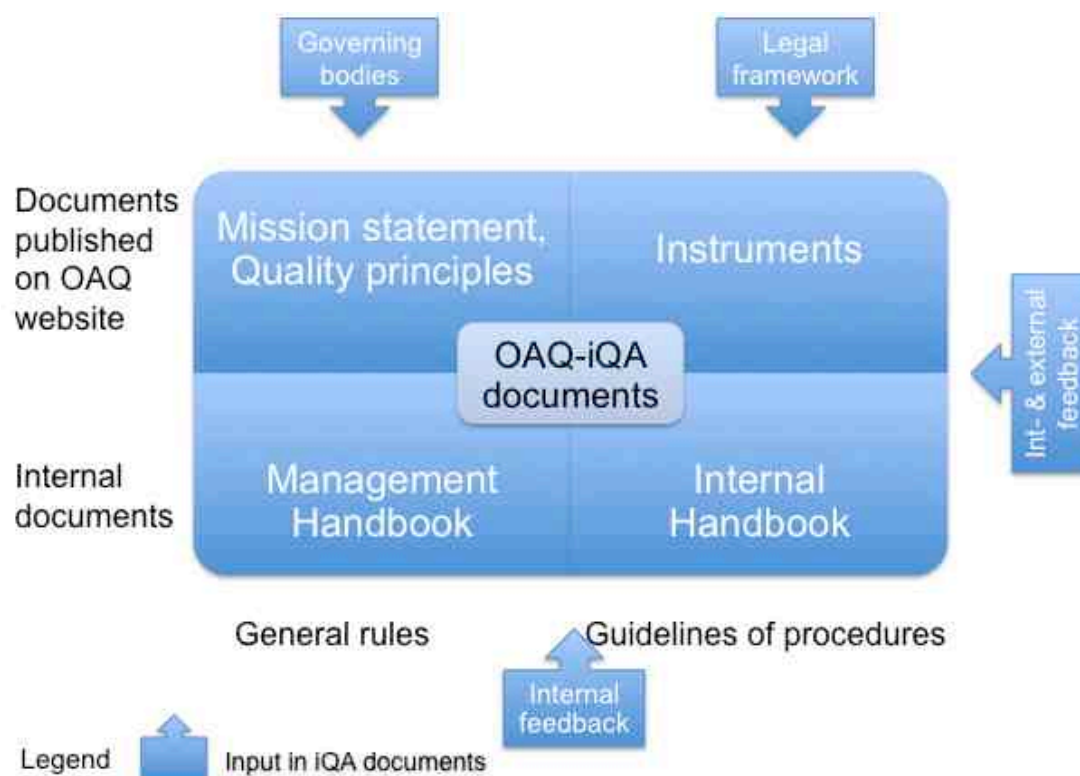
- *the agency has reliable mechanisms that ensure the quality of any activities and material produced by subcontractors, if some or all of the elements in its quality assurance procedure are subcontracted to other parties;*

The OAQ subcontracts different activities to third parties: external communication (website), database & IT issues, corporate design and translations. Only translations of reports or templates for reports are in some cases directly linked to external quality assurance procedures. The quality of the activities and the material produced by the respective subcontractors is ensured by way of internal feedback mechanisms of the OAQ staff. At least two persons check the material produced by subcontractors and evaluate their activities. Moreover, all issues are always discussed within the team, enabling for additional feedback from other OAQ employees.

- *the agency has in place internal quality assurance procedures which include an internal feedback mechanism (i.e. a means to collect feedback from its own staff and council/board); an internal reflection mechanism (i.e. means to react to internal and external recommendations for improvement); and an external feedback mechanism (i.e. means to collect feedback from experts and reviewed institutions for future development) in order to inform and underpin its own development and improvement.*

The framework of internal Quality Assurance of OAQ (OAQ-iQA), as it has been introduced in chapter 4.7.i, is represented in Table 3.

Table 3 – OAQ-iQA system



As presented, staff can directly comment on all points of the procedures, on working tools (guides, guidelines, standards) and on general rules governing everyday work (internal feedback). In regular meetings with the whole team (Teamsitzung), which take place on a weekly basis, the different development points are discussed. Minutes of these meetings provide a written record of discussions and formal decisions.

External feedback is collected from the experts that have taken part in our procedures as well as from institutions that have undergone an assessment review, in order to test their satisfaction with the whole procedure (organisational aspects, conceptual aspects, etc.). Special questionnaires for the different types of procedures are used for this type of external feedback. The questionnaires include comments on the procedure, its organisation by the OAQ, the composition of the expert panels, the instruments, the site visits, etc.

The performance of the OAQ at process level is also ensured by the collection and monitoring of all OAQ procedures through a database accessible to all, including information such as the nature of, the beginning and end points of the procedure, the composition of the expert panels and the final decision taken. The database is linked with the European Crossroads database and therefore provides a widely accessible transparency tool.

Similarly, a coordination tool for all international activities in which the OAQ is involved is accessible to all staff, regularly updated and brought to formal staff meetings on a regular basis

in order to assign responsibilities, monitor developments and decide on pending requests (see annexe 4.7.F).

Feedback from the different Scientific Advisory Boards is gathered on all matters governing the quality of the procedures in their respective field of competence. The Board members give their feedback by mail or during Board meetings.

As shown on table 3, internal documents (annexes to the management handbook, checklists in the procedure handbook) can be adapted based on internal and external feedback and made available to the staff rapidly. When conclusions from internal or external feedback concern quality development of our guidelines, standards, or other formal instrument depending directly or indirectly from the legal framework, quality improvement will include the governing bodies of OAQ. The competent Scientific Advisory Board is always included in these processes.

A relevant example can be provided in respect of the overall analysis of the quality audits 2007/08. Detailed internal and external feedback was collected and the procedure analysed in the light of the new legal framework under discussion in Switzerland. The final report of this analysis (see Annex 5.8.A) was submitted to the SUC. In the future, this document may provide a solid basis for the OAQ when accommodating the new legal framework governing institutional and programme assessment of quality in the Swiss higher education landscape.

iii. a mandatory cyclical external review of the agency's activities at least once every five years which includes a report on its conformity with the membership criteria of ENQA.

After the external review of OAQ undertaken in 2006 as part of the application for ENQA membership, the agency underwent an external evaluation in 2009 when applying for accreditation by the German Accreditation Council (GAC) to become eligible for undertaking system and/or programme accreditation in Germany. As a result of that positive accreditation, the OAQ has, since June 2009, been formally recognised as an agency that can conduct accreditation procedures in Germany. After submitting a self-evaluation report, an independent group of experts came to the conclusion that OAQ fulfilled the criteria set by the GAC but set three conditions³⁰. OAQ has fulfilled these conditions within the given deadlines³¹.

Annexes:

- 4.7.A Quality principles and measures of the OAQ
- 4.7.B Management Handbook
- 4.7.C Internal Handbook
- 4.7.D External review report of OAQ accreditation by the GAC in 2010
- 4.7.E Agenda of weekly team meetings
- 4.7.F Coordination of OAQ international activities

³⁰ http://www.oaq.ch/pub/de/documents/Gutachten_000.pdf.

³¹ http://www.oaq.ch/pub/de/documents/2010_2_Auflagenerfuellung_OAQ-1.pdf.

4.8 Criterion 8 – Miscellaneous

- i. The agency pays careful attention to its declared principles at all times, and ensures both that its requirements and processes are managed professionally and that its judgements and decisions are reached in a consistent manner, even if the judgments are formed by different groups.
- ii. If the agency makes formal quality assurance decisions, or conclusions which have formal consequences, it should have an appeals procedure. The nature and form of the appeals procedure should be determined in the light of the constitution of the agency.
- iii. The agency is willing to contribute actively to the aims of ENQA.

i. The principles of OAQ are clearly set out in its mission statement (see Annex 4.4.A). The OAQ operates in a transparent manner and consults regularly with its stakeholders, both formally and informally. The OAQ procedures are defined in the relevant legal regulations as well as the different procedural guides and templates (see Annex 4.6.C). The OAQ adheres to these documents in all of its processes. Thus they are the benchmark for the management of the procedures as well as the judgments and decisions made and serve as a reference point both internally and externally.

ii. The OAQ makes legally binding accreditation decisions only in the procedures it conducts within the framework of the German Accreditation Council. For these procedures the OAQ has appointed an appeals commission consisting of two permanent people. Additionally, a third person is appointed on a case-by-case basis. The appeals procedure is defined and published³². The procedure has been designed by OAQ to work effectively and efficiently within its given framework.

For all other kinds of procedures conducted by the OAQ, different authorities make the formal decisions. All include an appeals procedure that is legally defined and published³³.

iii. From the outset the OAQ has had a strong international outlook and has recognised the importance of international cooperation. As a relatively small national agency that conducts a wide variety of procedures, it is very important for the OAQ to discuss relevant issues of quality assurance within an international network and to strengthen its international collaboration. The annual reports of the past years (all publicly available in the OAQ website) witness a high international engagement of the agency and its openness to sharing good practices. Also with its wide experience in the field of institutional assessments and the focus on the IQA system, the OAQ has some valuable experiences to share. The OAQ welcomes the opportunity to continue to contribute to ENQA as a full member and to actively share good practices in quality assurance that can contribute to the improvement of its own procedures and to strengthening the European dimension of quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

³² http://www.oaq.ch/pub/de/documents/Beschwerdeweg_Kurzversion_web_neu.pdf

³³ Art. 35 Accreditation Guidelines, C4 Accreditation Guidelines for the Universities of Applied Sciences, Art. 57 MedBG.

4.9 SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths	The strong expertise of its staff and experts.
	Complete operational autonomy and flexibility to adapt to the different mandates received.
	Very high degree of accountability.
	High quality, transparent, improvement-oriented assessment procedures.
	IQA policy and measures.
Weaknesses	<p>Although independent in its conclusions and proposals, final formal decisions are taken by political bodies (FDHA, FDEA, CUS) with the exception of the procedures in Germany and evaluation procedures of UAS' postgraduate programmes.</p> <p>The Accreditation Council foreseen by the new law will guarantee decision-making independence. However, the time-table for the introduction of the new law is still uncertain.</p>
Opportunities	The development from quality audit to institutional accreditation is a great opportunity for the OAQ to revise its external quality assurance processes so as to better suit the needs of HEIs.
	The expansion of external quality assurance by OAQ into Germany and potentially Austria is a huge opportunity to increase its know-how and to test new concepts for the processes carried out in Switzerland. A listing in EQAR is an opportunity to strengthen the international reputation of OAQ.
	Strengthening the independence of the agency by the establishment of an Accreditation Council that would be independent from the politically determined Council of Higher Education that would replace the SUC. The new Accreditation Council will have full decision-making powers.
Threats	Uncertainty about the timing of the entry into force of the upcoming new law on HE and its implementation might cause a degree of stagnation of current practices, partially limiting potential developments.

5 FULFILMENT OF THE ESG FOR EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HE

5.1 Standard 2.1. Use of internal quality assurance procedures

External quality assurance procedures should take into account the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines.

Guidelines: The standards for internal quality assurance contained in Part 1 provide a valuable basis for the external quality assessment process. It is important that the institutions' own internal policies and procedures are carefully evaluated in the course of external procedures, to determine the extent to which the standards are being met. If higher education institutions are to be able to demonstrate the effectiveness of their own internal quality assurance processes, and if those processes properly assure quality and standards, then external processes might be less intensive than otherwise.

The focus on the internal quality assurance system and the effectiveness of its mechanisms is a milestone of all OAQ assessments, which is stressed even more in institutional assessments. Within institutional assessments, Quality Audits exclusively evaluate the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes at Swiss public HEIs and are aligned with Part 1 of the ESG. The following grids indicate the correspondence between the standards of Part 1 of the ESG and the equivalent standards applied by the OAQ within its various procedures:

- SUC accreditation standards for university Institutions (Art. 9-10 of the Accreditation Guidelines³⁴);
- FDEA accreditation standards for UAS (Point B.1 of the UAS Accreditation Guidelines³⁵);
- GAC accreditation criteria for procedures in Germany (Chapters 2 and 5 of the Rules for the Accreditation of Study Programmes and for System Accreditation, GAC, 8 December 2009);
- SUC standards for iQA in universities (Art. 3 of the iQA Guidelines³⁶).

Correspondence grid 1 – Institutional assessments

IQA standards (ESG1)	Standards used by the OAQ for <u>institutional</u> assessments	
Standard 1.1	Universities	Art. 9.1.05
Policy and procedures for quality assurance	UAS	Standard 1.1.6
	HEI in Germany	Criterion 5.4.3
	Q-audits	Art. 3.1, 3.3, 3.6

³⁴ Guidelines of the Swiss University Conference for Academic Accreditation in Switzerland (Accreditation Guidelines), 28 June 2007, SR/RS 414.205.3).

³⁵ FDEA Guidelines on Accreditation of Universities of Applied Sciences and Degree Programmes, FDEA, 4 May 2007.

³⁶ Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Swiss Universities, 7 December 2006, SR/RS 414.205.2.

Standard 1.2 Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards	Universities	Art. 9.1.02, 9.2.01, 9.6.03-05
	UAS	Standards 1.2.1-7
	HEI in Germany	Criterion 5.4.2
	Q-audits	Art. 3.2, 3.4
Standard 1.3 Assessment of students	Universities	Art. 9.2.03
	UAS	Standard 1.8.3
	HEI in Germany	Criterion 5.4.3
	Q-audits	Art. 3.4
Standard 1.4 Quality assurance of teaching staff	Universities	Art. 9.4.01-04
	UAS	Standards 1.6.1-4
	HEI in Germany	Criterion 5.4.3
	Q-audits	Art. 3.4, 3.5
Standard 1.5 Learning resources and student support	Universities	Art. 9.6.04, 9.6.05, 9.7.01
	UAS	Standards 1.8.4, 1.9.1
	HEI in Germany	Criterion 5.4.3
	Q-audits	Art. 3.4
Standard 1.6 Information systems	Universities	Art. 9.2.04, 9.6.03
	UAS	Standard 1.2.6
	HEI in Germany	Criterion 5.4.4
	Q-audits	Art. 3.6
Standard 1.7 Public information	Universities	(Art. 9.1.01)
	UAS	(Standard 1.1.1)
	HEI in Germany	Criterion 5.4.6
	Q-audits	Art. 3.7

Correspondence grid 2 – Programme assessments

IQA standards (ESG1)	Standards used by the OAQ for <u>programme</u> assessments	
Standard 1.1 Policy and procedures for quality assurance	Universities	Art. 10.2.03
	UAS	Standard 2.2.3
	HEI in Germany	Criterion 2.9
Standard 1.2 Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards	Universities	Art. 10.1.02, 10.3.01-03
	UAS	Standards 2.1.1 to 3, 2.3.1-6
	HEI in Germany	Criterion 2.9
Standard 1.3 Assessment of students	Universities	Art. 10.3.03
	UAS	Standards 2.3.4, 2.3.5
	HEI in Germany	Criterion 2.5
Standard 1.4 Quality assurance of teaching staff	Universities	Art. 10.4.01
	UAS	Standard 2.4.1
	HEI in Germany	Criterion 2.9
Standard 1.5 Learning resources and student support	Universities	Art. 10.5.04, 10.6.01
	UAS	Standards 2.5.4, 2.6
	HEI in Germany	Criterion 2.7
Standard 1.6 Information systems	Universities	Art. 10.2.03
	UAS	Standard 2.2.3
	HEI in Germany	Criterion 2.8
Standard 1.7 Public information	Universities	Art. 10.3.03, 10.5.01
	UAS	Standards 2.3.4, 2.5.1
	HEI in Germany	Criterion 2.8

Annexes:

- 5.1.A SUC accreditation standards (Accreditation Guidelines, 28 June 2007)
- 5.1.B FDEA accreditation standards for UAS (UAS Accreditation Guidelines, 4 May 2007)
- 5.1.C GAC accreditation criteria for procedures in Germany (Rules for the Accreditation of Study Programmes and for System Accreditation, 8 December 2009 in the version of 10 December 2010)
- 5.1.D SUC standards for IQA in universities (iQA Guidelines, 7 December 2006)

5.2 Standard 2.2. Development of external quality assurance processes

The aims and objectives of quality assurance processes should be determined before the processes themselves are developed, by all those responsible (including higher education institutions) and should be published with a description of the procedures to be used.

Guidelines: In order to ensure clarity of purpose and transparency of procedures, external quality assurance methods should be designed and developed through a process involving key stakeholders, including higher education institutions. The procedures that are finally agreed should be published and should contain explicit statements of the aims and objectives of the processes as well as a description of the procedures to be used. As external quality assurance makes demands on the institutions involved, a preliminary impact assessment should be undertaken to ensure that the procedures to be adopted are appropriate and do not interfere more than necessary with the normal work of higher education institutions.

The quality assurance processes in which the OAQ is directly involved have been determined by law, detailing aims and objectives. On this basis the OAQ has established and issued the necessary accompanying instruments (Guides for HEI and Experts). These Guides describe aims, objectives and processes and are published on the OAQ website (see chapter 4.6). The accompanying instruments, processes and procedures have been developed in broad consultation with all partners involved (Governmental bodies, HEIs) and are based on current international good practices, which is assured by the active participation of OAQ in the main international QA networks and relative projects (see Annexe 4.7.F).

In order to ensure clarity of purpose and transparency of procedures, all external quality assurance instruments for Quality Audits were designed and developed through a process involving key stakeholders, including higher education institutions. For this purpose, the Swiss Q-Network (created in 2003) is composed of persons responsible for IQA at Swiss public HEI and representatives of the CRUS and OAQ. The result of this close cooperation was the draft Guidelines for Quality Assurance at Swiss Universities that were formally adopted by the CUS on 7 December 2006. The degree of acceptance of binding directives developed under such circumstances is very high and this has facilitated the effectiveness of external quality assurance processes. On the basis of written and oral feedback and based on the discussions undertaken within the Swiss Q-Network, the results of an impact assessment are outlined in the OAQ Quality Audits Report 2010 (annexe 5.8.A).

5.3 Standard 2.3. Criteria for decisions

Any formal decisions made as a result of an external quality assurance activity should be based on explicit published criteria that are applied consistently.

Guidelines: Formal decisions made by quality assurance agencies have a significant impact on the institutions and programmes that are judged. In the interests of equity and reliability, decisions should be based on published criteria and interpreted in a consistent manner. Conclusions should be based on recorded evidence and agencies should have in place ways of moderating conclusions, if necessary.

All procedures conducted by the OAQ have a legal basis. The procedures as well as the criteria for decision are published in the respective laws and regulations as well as in the different OAQ

guidelines. Essential in guaranteeing a coherent and consistent interpretation of the standards are the guides for external evaluation and the briefing of experts (see chapter 5.4).

In all the assessments conducted by the OAQ the experts' report, based on a template provided by the OAQ, has to be analytical and examines the quality of the assessed unit against the formal requirements to be fulfilled. Strengths, weaknesses and special characteristics of the unit are outlined. In addition, the experts formulate recommendations on quality improvement. The report ends with a recommendation on accreditation or evaluation decision.

Conclusions are based on recorded evidence. If the report does not meet the requirements in terms of form and content, the OAQ reserves the right to ask for improvements.

5.3.1 Q-audits

The iQA Guidelines³⁷ are the basis for the Quality Audit procedure. Therein seven standards define the requirements for an internal quality assurance system. Substantial compliance with these standards is the prerequisite for a positive decision, which has consequences for the renewal of the recognition of the right for financial aid. In the OAQ guide for universities³⁸ each standard is accompanied by a commentary. The commentary was developed to guarantee a shared and consistent understanding of the standards (see annexe 4.6.A).

5.3.2 Accreditation in the field of universities

The Accreditation Guidelines³⁹ are the basis of the accreditation procedures in the university domain. There are two standard sets in the Guidelines. One is for the institutional accreditation procedures (Art. 9) and the other for programme accreditation procedures (Art. 10). Universities and degree programmes are accredited if they fulfill the quality standards. To guarantee consistent application and interpretation of the standards, OAQ has developed explanatory reference points for each standard (see annexes 5.3.2.A-B), made available on the OAQ website⁴⁰.

The final expert report must contain a recommendation on the accreditation decision (accreditation yes / yes with conditions / no). The OAQ evaluates the self-evaluation, the expert report and the opinion (if any) submitted by the unit. On this basis, the OAQ writes a draft of its final report which is passed to the Scientific Advisory Board for approval. The final report of the OAQ contains recommendations on accreditation for the attention of SUC. Together with the self-evaluation report, the expert report and the unit's opinion, the finalised report of the OAQ is submitted to the SUC for decision on accreditation.

If the accreditation ends with a positive assessment, then the assessed unit receives unconditional accreditation that is valid for 7 years. Conditions will be applied to accreditation if gaps are found in content or structure. In such cases, the assessed unit must prove that it is able to rectify the shortcomings by the end of the given deadline, according to Art. 27§2 of the Accreditation Guidelines. The OAQ verifies the implementation within the set deadline. Accreditation is granted if the deficiencies have been rectified. If the accreditation ends with a

³⁷ Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Swiss Universities, 7 December 2006, SR/RS 414.205.2.

³⁸ http://www.oaq.ch/pub/en/documents/Leitfaden_E_2007-09-20.pdf.

³⁹ Guidelines of the Swiss University Conference for Academic Accreditation in Switzerland (Accreditation Guidelines), 28 June 2007, SR/RS 414.205.3).

⁴⁰ http://www.oaq.ch/pub/downloads/I_Standards_e.pdf; http://www.oaq.ch/pub/downloads/SR_Standards_e.pdf.

negative assessment, then accreditation will not be granted or will be withdrawn if conditions are not met.

Annexes:

5.3.2.A Quality Standards for academic institutions. Points of Reference

5.3.2.B Quality Standards for academic programmes. Points of Reference

5.3.3 Accreditation in the field of medicine

5.3.3.1 Graduate medical programmes

The accreditation of study programmes (Bachelor + Master) in medical education that lead to a federal diploma is mandatory according to the UFG/LAU and MedBG/LPMéd (Art. 23§1 MedBG/LPMéd). The ongoing accreditation cycle started in 2010 and has to be concluded by 31 August 2012 (Art. 63 MedBG/ LPMéd). A programme will be accredited if, in addition to the accreditation according to UFG/LAU⁴¹, it fulfils the criteria according to Art. 24§1 let. a-b MedBG/LPMéd⁴². This refers to courses in human medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine, as well as pharmaceuticals and chiropractics.

Both authorities, the SUC and the SAC (Swiss Accreditation Council) need to take a decision on the accreditation of graduate programmes in medical education (Art. 26 Accreditation Guidelines and Art. 28 MedBG/LPMéd).

The accompanying instruments for the accreditation of the study programmes in all five federal medical professions were compiled by the OAQ on behalf of the FOPH and approved by the SUC and the SAC. The instruments for Veterinary Medicine, Pharmacy and Chiropractic Medicine were adapted to the respective professional fields.

The quality standards comply with international demands according to the *Global Standards for Quality Improvement in Medical Education, European specifications*, of the World Federation of Medical Education as well as with national requirements defined by the MedBG/LPMéd and the UFG/LAU. These instruments are published on the websites of the FOPH and the OAQ.

The final expert report must contain a recommendation on the accreditation decision (yes / yes with conditions / no). The OAQ evaluates the self-evaluation, the expert report and the opinion (if any) submitted by the unit. On this basis, the OAQ writes a draft of its final report which is passed to the Scientific Advisory Board and to the Federal Commission of Medical Professions (MEBEKO), for consultation. The final report of the OAQ contains separate recommendations on accreditation for the attention of SUC and SAC, respectively. Together with the self-evaluation report, the expert report and the unit's opinion, the finalised report of the OAQ is submitted to the Swiss Accreditation Council and the SUC for decision on accreditation.

If the accreditation ends with a positive assessment, then the assessed programme receives unconditional accreditation that is valid for 7 years. Conditions will be applied to accreditation if gaps are found in content or structure. In such cases, accreditation is granted but the deficiencies must be rectified by the specified timeframe. If the accreditation ends with a

⁴¹ <http://www.admin.ch/ch/d/sr/4/414.20.de.pdf>.

⁴² <http://www.admin.ch/ch/d/sr/8/811.11.de.pdf>.

negative assessment, then accreditation will not be granted or will be withdrawn if conditions are not met.

5.3.3.2 Postgraduate medical programmes

The accreditation of professional postgraduate medical programmes that lead to a FMH speciality title is mandatory according to MedBG/LPMéd (Art. 23§2).

The criteria for accreditation of postgraduate medical education programmes are outlined in Art. 25 MedBG/LPMéd. The decision-making authority is the FDHA.

The accompanying instruments were compiled by the OAQ on behalf of the FOPH and approved by the FOPH.

For each of the programmes, the OAQ selected a panel of 2 international experts who wrote an experts' report on the basis of the self-evaluation report of the respective medical association. This external evaluation was the common basis for all programmes.

As a control sample, the experts also conducted on-site-visits for selected programmes to see how the concept of a specific postgraduate medical programme is implemented in practice.

The final expert report must contain a recommendation on the accreditation decision (accreditation yes / yes with conditions / no). The OAQ evaluates the self-evaluation, the expert report and the opinion (if any) submitted by the medical association responsible for the programme. On this basis, the OAQ independently writes a final report with a recommendation on accreditation which is passed to FDHA for a decision on accreditation.

If the accreditation ends with a positive assessment, then the assessed programme receives unconditional accreditation valid for 7 years. Conditions will be applied to accreditation if gaps are found in content or structure. In such cases, accreditation is granted but the deficiencies must be rectified by the specified timeframe. If the accreditation ends with a negative assessment, then accreditation will not be granted or will be withdrawn if conditions are not met.

5.3.4 Accreditation in the field of UAS

Swiss Universities of Applied Sciences and their corresponding degree programmes are accredited at federal level. The Federal Department of Economic Affairs (FDEA) is the responsible body for accrediting all Swiss UAS and their corresponding degree programmes. The FDEA may delegate review of accreditation requests to recognized accreditation agencies, which then determine whether the required qualitative standards and legal targets have been met ([list of recognized accreditation agencies](#)).

UAS and their degree programmes are accredited if they fulfill the criteria according to the UAS Accreditation Guidelines⁴³ (Point. B.1§1).

Points of reference and matching questions for all quality standards have been defined to make the quality expectations clear.

⁴³ FDEA Guidelines on Accreditation of Universities of Applied Sciences and Degree Programmes, FDEA, 4 May 2007.

The final expert report must contain a recommendation on the accreditation decision (yes / yes with conditions / no). The OAQ evaluates the self-evaluation, the experts' report and the opinion (if any) submitted by the unit. On this basis, the OAQ independently elaborates the final accreditation recommendation which is passed to the Scientific Advisory Board for UAS for approval. The finalized documents (self-evaluation report, expert report and the unit's opinion) along with the agency's accreditation recommendation are submitted to the Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology (OPET), that prepares the accreditation decision for the FDEA. When preparing the accreditation decision, the OPET always consults the Federal Commission for Universities of Applied Sciences (EFKH) that acts as an advisory body to the OPET.

The FDEA reaches its decision – which, for comparability reasons, might be subject to minor calibrations and therefore slightly different from the accreditation recommendation submitted by the agency - on the basis of the report drafted by the group of experts and the accreditation recommendation of the corresponding agency.

If the accreditation request receives a positive assessment, then the degree programme in question will receive unconditional accreditation and therefore provides the right to the institution to deliver the degree. Conditions will be applied to accreditation if gaps are found in content or structure. In such cases, accreditation is granted but the deficiencies must be rectified by the specified timeframe. If the accreditation request receives a negative assessment, then accreditation will not be granted or will be withdrawn if conditions are not met. The FDEA accreditation is valid for 7 years.

5.3.5 Accreditation in Germany

The German Accreditation Council has developed rules for the decisions on institutional and programme accreditations. All agencies working within the German framework have to adhere to these publicly available rules⁴⁴.

5.4 Standard 2.4. Processes fit for purpose

All external quality assurance processes should be designed specifically to ensure their fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for them.

Guidelines: Quality assurance agencies within the EHEA undertake different external processes for different purposes and in different ways. It is of the first importance that agencies should operate procedures which are fit for their own defined and published purposes. Experience has shown, however, that there are some widely-used elements of external review processes which not only help to ensure their validity, reliability and usefulness, but also provide a basis for the European dimension to quality assurance.

Amongst these elements the following are particularly noteworthy:

- insistence that the experts undertaking the external quality assurance activity have appropriate skills and are competent to perform their task;*
- the exercise of care in the selection of experts;*
- the provision of appropriate briefing or training for experts;*
- the use of international experts;*

⁴⁴http://www.akkreditierungsrat.de/fileadmin/Seiteninhalte/Beschluesse_AR/Beschluss_Regeln_Studiengaenge_System_akkreditierung_10122010.pdf.

- *participation of students;*
- *ensuring that the review procedures used are sufficient to provide adequate evidence to support the findings and conclusions reached;*
- *the use of the self-evaluation/site visit/draft report/published report/follow-up model of review;*
- *recognition of the importance of institutional improvement and enhancement policies as a fundamental element in the assurance of quality.*

All external quality assurance processes of the OAQ are designed specifically to ensure their fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for them. The experts engaged for a procedure are carefully selected bearing in mind the set purposes, and are confirmed by the Scientific Boards of the OAQ following consultation with the institution/study programme. The OAQ has defined selection criteria for each type of procedure and there are also guidelines from SUC and OPET. All criteria mentioned are in line with the ESG-standards (see chapter 3.7) and with the ECA Principle on the Selection of Experts (see annex 4.5.G).

An expert panel for programme accreditation is composed as follows: the Peer-leader is an international experienced QA-specialist and is an academic in the specific discipline or/and has experience in HEI management; two experts come from the specific discipline and represent the professional as well as the academic world. A qualified student expert within the specific discipline having a wide knowledge of the Swiss academic system completes the panel. Examples of selected panels are provided in Annex 5.4.C.

The independence of the experts is one of the main selection criteria and absolutely necessary to be fulfilled. No expert in a panel is permitted to have a perceived conflict of interest. Their independence is verified by the OAQ Boards and is stated when signing the expert contract.

The OAQ engages many of its experts from abroad, due to the requirements of the different accreditation guidelines, mainly in respect of the independence criterion. International experts also increase accountability and promote internationally recognized assessment procedures. The OAQ has built up a pool of national and international experts in all disciplines (around 500 experts) and maintains this information on its internal database (see chapter 4.3.3). To find excellently qualified experts, national and international networking is very important.

The experts – once chosen and confirmed for a procedure – are briefed prior to the on-site-visit. Usually the briefing takes place on the eve of the visit. The briefing follows a standardised information set, extended specifically to the object of the procedure. There is always sufficient time to discuss and ask questions. Examples of briefing material are provided in the annex 5.4.B).

Since 2007, the OAQ also regularly engages student experts for its panels. The students undertake through a special training programme before they are engaged. The OAQ, together with the national student association (VSS) has built up the so called “studentischer Akkreditierungspool”⁴⁵. The student experts are collected in this “pool” and invited to follow a training programme consisting of a one-day workshop. A student may only be engaged as an expert if he/she has attended this training session. The workshop sessions are led by VSS and a scientific collaborator of OAQ. A detailed description of these workshops, including the learning outcomes to be achieved, is provided in Annex 5.4.A.

⁴⁵ <http://www.vss-unes.ch/typo3/index.php?id=22&L=0>

The student expertise is very important for the external quality assurance procedures and is clearly an advantage for the expert panel, as has been signalled by the feed-back forms completed by panel members since the introduction of students as members of the panel.

The OAQ has specific and standardised procedures designed for its specific aims. The procedures always follow three phases (self-evaluation, external evaluation, decision-making) and always provide enough evidence to support the findings and conclusions (see chapter 4.6).

The group of experts receive the self-evaluation report one month prior to the on-site-visit. The on-site-visit is very important to gather any piece of evidence missing in the self-evaluation report. All important stakeholders are met and interviewed and the infrastructure is visited. The on-site-visit ends with a debriefing-session where the main outcomes of the procedure are presented by the peer-leader. One month after the visit, the expert report is given to the institution/study programme. After the statement of the institution/study programme, there is the final expert report (which is published except in the case of the UAS) followed by the decision). If there are conditions, the OAQ has pre-defined follow-up procedures in place (see chapter 4.6).

The expert panels are chosen according to the specific type of procedure being employed. The procedures are adapted to its aim. For the OAQ it is very important that the experts know that the main goal is quality enhancement and the improvement of the internal quality assurance procedures. An emphasis on this aspect is given in the Guide for the external evaluation, in the briefing and during the on-site visit, where an OAQ collaborator is present to ensure that quality enhancement is always taken into account. The template for the experts' report is designed in such a way so as to stimulate the quality improvement approach (profile of strengths and weaknesses, list of suggestions for improvement, analytical writing).

Annexes:

5.4.A Outline of workshop for student experts

5.4.B Example(s) of Briefing-slides

5.4.C Examples of selected expert panels

5.5 Standard 2.5. Reporting

Reports should be published and should be written in a style which is clear and readily accessible to its intended readership. Any decisions, commendations or recommendations contained in reports should be easy for a reader to find.

Guidelines: In order to ensure maximum benefit from external quality assurance processes, it is important that reports should meet the identified needs of the intended readership. Reports are sometimes intended for different readership groups and this will require careful attention to structure, content, style and tone.

In general, reports should be structured to cover description, analysis (including relevant evidence), conclusions, commendations, and recommendations. There should be sufficient preliminary explanation to enable a lay reader to understand the purposes of the review, its form, and the criteria used in making decisions. Key findings, conclusions and recommendations should be easily locatable by readers. Reports should be published in a readily accessible form and there should be opportunities for readers and users of the reports (both within the relevant institution and outside it) to comment on their usefulness.

The declared aim of the OAQ is to publish all reports and decisions. However the wide variation of accreditation and evaluation procedures with their different legal frameworks, decision-making bodies and authorities entails that different regulations regarding the publication of decision and reports exist.

- University sector (excluding Medical Education):

In the case of accreditation and recognition procedures with a positive decision, the OAQ publishes the decision and (if the evaluated institution agrees) the report of the experts as well as the final report of the OAQ. The SUC publishes a list with all accredited institutions and programmes. At present, there is no legal basis for the publication of negative decisions. The Federal Law on Data Protection⁴⁶ prohibits the publication of any negative accreditation decision or report.

- Universities of Applied Sciences:

The OAQ as well as the OPET publish a list with all accredited programmes. The OAQ can also publish a short executive summary of the experts report as well as a summary of the procedure (information on the programme in general and the accreditation procedure). As is the case for the university sector, the Federal Law on Data Protection prohibits the publication of any negative accreditation decision.

- Medical Education

In the case of the accreditation of medical education – be it graduate or postgraduate education – the MedBG/LPMéd and its bylaws (see Chapter 4.1) includes the possibility to publish all accreditation decisions, the experts reports as well as the OAQ reports. Reports regarding the accreditation of the programmes of graduate medical education are published by the Swiss Accreditation Council. In the case of accreditation of programmes of postgraduate education, the Federal Department of Home Affairs is responsible for publishing reports. After the formal decision of the competent authorities all reports and decisions are also published on the OAQ website.

⁴⁶ SR/RS 235.1.

– Accreditation procedures in Germany

According to the regulations of the German Accreditation Council (see Chapter 4.1) in case of programme accreditations only positive accreditation decisions (as well as the experts report and the names of the experts) can be published. The German Accreditation Council is informed about any negative decision but neither the decision nor the report(s) can be published.

In the case of institutional accreditations (Systemakkreditierungen) positive and negative decisions together with a summary of the experts' report and the names of the experts are published on the OAQ Website.

OAQ has developed for all its procedures templates for the reports of the experts as well as the OAQ report. The predefined form and structure of reports guarantee that they are comparable. The reports usually conclude with the strengths and weaknesses as well as recommendations and a proposition for a decision with the corresponding conditions. This enables the reader to easily find the important conclusions of the report.

5.6 Standard 2.6. Follow-up procedures

Quality assurance processes which contain recommendations for action or which require a subsequent action plan, should have a predetermined follow-up procedure which is implemented consistently.

Guidelines: Quality assurance is not principally about individual external scrutiny events: It should be about continuously trying to do a better job. External quality assurance does not end with the publication of the report and should include a structured follow-up procedure to ensure that recommendations are dealt with appropriately and any required action plans drawn up and implemented. This may involve further meetings with institutional or programme representatives. The objective is to ensure that areas identified for improvement are dealt with speedily and that further enhancement is encouraged.

According to the legal requirements, accreditation can be granted with conditions. In these cases, a follow-up procedure is mandatory (the list of upcoming formal follow-up procedures is outlined in annex 4.6.D). In all other cases, the OAQ as well as the experts panel make recommendations and the OAQ proposes a follow-up visit to see how these recommendations have been implemented.

The OAQ has established processes for formal follow-up procedures, in case of conditional accreditation. These processes are held in three stages: a self-evaluation carried out by the higher education institution (phase I); an external evaluation organised by the OAQ which might include an on-site visit by the selected panel of independent experts (phase II); decision making by the appropriate authority, based on the OAQ final report and its proposition for a decision (phase III).

In most cases, an assessment "sur dossier" is adequate for accomplishing the given mandate. The assessment panel is usually composed of one or two members of the assessment panel who participated in the original accreditation procedure that ended with conditions to be fulfilled. However the assessment can be made by one or two scientific collaborators of the OAQ,

according to the type of condition to be fulfilled and the competencies required for the assessment. This is decided by the OAQ Director on a case-by-case basis.

Formal follow-up procedures, usually lasting between 3 and 4 months, are initiated at the expiration time given for the fulfilment of the conditions.

In case of an unconditional accreditation, which is granted for 7 years in Switzerland, a reaccreditation takes place under the requested of the institution. Expert panels always take into account the results of previous internal and external assessments and evaluate consistently the extent to which action plans have been implemented (see Annexe 5.6.A).

For the accreditation procedures carried out in Germany, after expiry of half of the accreditation term, the Higher Education Institution mandates an agency (licensed by the German Accreditation Council) to carry out an in-depth examination of the study programmes (half-time random sample). The accreditation agency submits a report that provides information on the results of the half-time random sample and that, where appropriate, gives recommendations regarding the remedy of deficiencies. Afterwards the agency publishes the report and makes it available to the HEI.

Finally, in order to ensure that areas identified for improvement are dealt with speedily and that further enhancement is encouraged, the OAQ has established feed-back mechanisms by means of questionnaires to be completed by all assessed units and all panel members. The evaluation of results and improvement measures taken are described in Chapter 5.8.

Annexes:

5.6.A OAQ example of re-accreditation

5.7 Standard 2.7. Periodic reviews

External quality assurance of institutions and/or programmes should be undertaken on a cyclical basis. The length of the cycle and the review procedures to be used should be clearly defined and published in advance.

Guidelines: Quality assurance is not a static but a dynamic process. It should be continuous and not "once in a lifetime". It does not end with the first review or with the completion of the formal follow-up procedure. It has to be periodically renewed. Subsequent external reviews should take into account progress that has been made since the previous event. The process to be used in all external reviews should be clearly defined by the external quality assurance agency and its demands on institutions should not be greater than are necessary for the achievement of its objectives.

5.7.1 Q-audits

The length of the Audit cycle is defined by law and published. According to the UFG/LAU and its bylaws universities have to undergo a Quality Audit every four years. The OAQ undertakes the Quality Audits on behalf of the SER. Due to the proximity of the forthcoming Federal Law the SER has no plans to mandate a new cycle of Audits in 2011/12.

5.7.2 Accreditation in the university domain

An accreditation in the university domain is valid for seven years. As the accreditation is voluntary a renewal of the accreditation once it has expired is not mandatory. The length of the validity of the accreditation is defined and published in the Accreditation Guidelines⁴⁷.

5.7.3 Accreditation in the field of medicine

MedBG/LPMéd defines the general framework for length of cycles and review procedures for the accreditation of the programmes in both basic and postgraduate medical education. The framework is published in the website of the FOPH. The responsible authority for executing the follow-up and review-procedures is the FOPH.

Accreditation of programmes in basic medical education is granted for seven years (Art. 29 MedBG/LPMéd and Art. 30 of the Accreditation Guidelines).

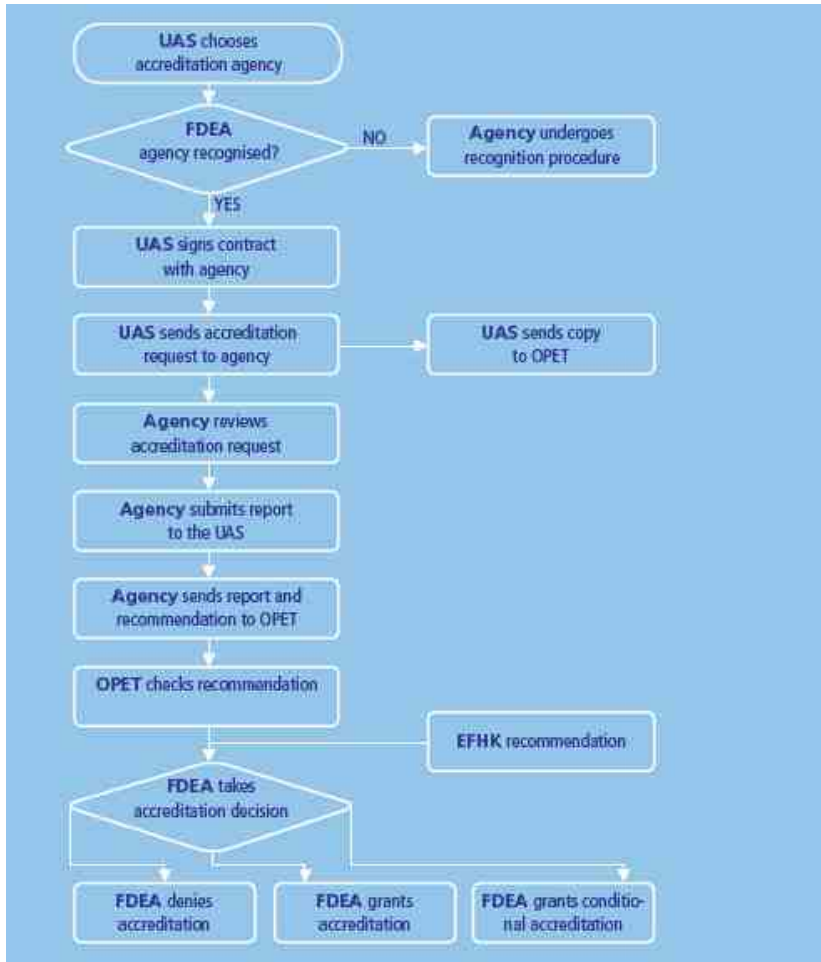
Accreditation of programmes in postgraduate medical education is granted for seven years (Art. 29 MedBG/LPMéd).

5.7.4 Accreditation in the domain of UAS

UAS that have been authorised by the FDEA (before the introduction of the current accreditation system) are considered to have been accredited. Degree programmes that had previously been subject to an external quality audit (federal peer review or cantonal qualification recognition procedure) remain accredited until 2014. All newly introduced degree programmes (Bachelor and Master), however, must be accredited before the first qualifications for these programmes are issued. Given the shorter duration of Master's degree programmes, the deadline for accreditation has been lengthened to one year after the first Master's degrees are issued. FDEA accreditation (programme and institution) is valid for seven years (Point B.5§2 of the UAS Accreditation Guidelines).

⁴⁷ Guidelines of the Swiss University Conference for Academic Accreditation in Switzerland, 28 June 2007 (SR/RS 414.205.3).

Table 4: Accreditation process for UAS



The first re-accreditations of programmes as well as institutions are foreseen for the year 2014. At this time, it is not yet clear if re-accreditations will be undertaken, as the draft for a new Federal Law (HFKG/LAHE) that will define the new framework for the future accreditation system in Switzerland, is still under discussion.

Nevertheless, should the OAQ conduct re-accreditations of programmes and institutions according to the current law, then the results of previous reviews and subsequent progress made will be taken into account. In order to assure continuous quality assurance for the UAS, the OAQ will, if such re-accreditations are conducted, mandate one or two experts who were involved in the first event and therefore well acquainted with the UAS as well as their programmes.

The process used in all external reviews is clearly defined in Table 4.

5.8 Standard 2.8. System-wide analyses

Quality assurance agencies should produce from time to time summary reports describing and analysing the general findings of their reviews, evaluations, assessments etc.

Guidelines: All external quality assurance agencies collect a wealth of information about individual programmes and/or institutions and this provides material for structured analyses across whole higher education systems. Such analyses can provide very useful information about developments, trends, emerging good practice and areas of persistent difficulty or weakness and can become useful tools for policy development and quality enhancement. Agencies should consider including a research and development function within their activities, to help them extract maximum benefit from their work.

Each project coordinator at the OAQ analyses the general findings of the reviews, evaluations, assessments in their field of competence and produces from time to time summary reports, taking into account the results of feed-back questionnaires. That is done at the conclusion of each assessment cycle conducted by the OAQ and reports are published on the agency's website.

As mentioned in chapter 4.7, a good example of analytical work within the Quality Audits procedures – including their impact, strengths and weaknesses – is represented by the Synthesis Quality Audit Report (Annexe 5.8.A). It provides useful information about developments, trends, good practice and areas of persistent difficulty or weakness and will represent a useful tool for policy development and quality enhancement in view of the upcoming new law on higher education (HFKG/LAHE) and the implementation of obligatory institutional accreditation in the public tertiary education sector in Switzerland.

All OAQ scientific collaborators hold an academic degree and their working duties foresee analytical work, alongside the procedural activities. This is an essential part of the iQA policy of the agency, involving continuous development, adaptation and improvement of the agency's processes and procedures and with the purpose of disseminating the outcomes of system-wide analyses. For the same purpose, the active participation of OAQ staff in selected international events assures continuous reflection on and dissemination of the most recent international developments and good practices.

A good example is provided in annexe 5.8.B, representing a critical article on the accreditation of higher education music programmes in Switzerland, undertaken in close cooperation with the European Association of Conservatoires. The article was selected to be presented at the European Quality Assurance Forum in November 2010.

A traditional area of strength of the OAQ is represented by institutional assessments. A critical paper including strengths, weaknesses and lessons learnt was published in the EUA Bologna Handbook in 2009 (see annexe 5.8.C).

Finally, the OAQ is also actively involved in exploring new approaches to external quality, particularly within the ECA and the research or project-based activity of its working groups. Currently the OAQ is participating in the research work aiming at defining principles and recommendations regarding learning outcomes in accreditation procedures. Additionally, it is represented in the Steering Group of the EC-funded JOQAR project, coordinated by ECA, exploring principles and criteria for the accreditation of joint programmes in Europe, including pilot procedures.

The experience gained can fruitfully be put at the disposal of the international HE community, as is currently the case with the direct involvement of the OAQ in a distance-education programme organised by UNESCO for supporting North-African countries in developing their own systems of external QA.

Annexes:

5.8.A Synthesis Q-audit report

5.8.B Article on OAQ-EAC Cooperation

5.8.C Paper focussing on institutional assessments: Beccari L.; Heusser R.; Schenker-Wicki A. (2009): The Swiss External QA System: lessons learned over the past five years. In: EUA (ed.): Bologna Handbook, Raabe Verlag. Berlin, p. B 4.6-3: 1-16

5.9 SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths	Strong focus on the IQA system and mechanisms at HEIs, maximizing the coherence between internal and external QA processes.
	Capability and flexibility in offering to conduct accreditation procedures jointly coordinated by the OAQ and a discipline-specific international assessment body, highly valued by the assessed units.
	Focus on quality enhancement in all assessment procedures.
	Well-functioning external quality assurance processes.
	International networking and cooperation.
	Best practice approach to the daily work, openness to new developments, integration of research activities into the practical work, dissemination of knowledge.
Weaknesses	Current impermissibility to publish expert reports for accreditation procedures in the domain of the Universities of Applied Sciences, limiting the transparency of the outcomes of external QA processes.
	Results of feed-back questionnaires within assessments conducted outside of defined cycles are insufficiently exploited.
Opportunities	Continue to contributing to ENQA as a full member and actively sharing good practices in quality assurance that can contribute to the improvement of its own procedures and to strengthen the European dimension of quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area.
	The proposed new law on HE would remove the barriers to the publication of reports that still exists following some assessment procedures.
	Thanks to the representation of the OAQ in the ECA-JOQAR Steering Group, OAQ activities abroad might also be focused on the accreditation of joint degrees, increasingly popular in Europe.
	Better conform to ESG 1.7 in the development of the institutional (and programme) accreditation implied by the new law on HE.

Threats	The experience reached by the OAQ in a decade of activities and the quality enhancement approach to all its procedures risks being underestimated by policy makers, would the OAQ not sufficiently be involved in the definition of the external quality assurance system and criteria under the new law.
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6 DEVELOPMENT: 2006-2011

6.1 Recommendations of the ENQA Board

In 2006, the ENQA Board recommended that, in conjunction with the next external review of OAQ, attention should be paid to progress made in four areas:

- decision-making procedures;
- participation of students in the evaluation process;
- publication of reports; and
- internal quality assurance and feedback mechanisms of the Agency.

Decision making procedures

Since 2006, the scope of activities of OAQ has broadened and new decision making bodies have been established. Where the legal framework allows, the OAQ has made sure that the competency to take decisions lies within independent boards and commissions. Such is the case for the accreditation of German universities and programmes and the evaluation of programmes of continuing education of the UAS. In these procedures the Accreditation Commission and the Scientific Board for Universities of Applied Sciences are responsible respectively for all decisions.

In the case of the accreditation of basic medical education, an independent Swiss Accreditation Council is responsible for the decisions according to the MedBG/LPMéd. This procedure has been established by the Swiss authorities. The concept of an independent accreditation council has also been proposed in the new draft legislation on higher education (HFKG/LAHE). With the enactment of the new Federal Law the SUC as well as the FDEA will be replaced as the decision-making bodies for the accreditation of universities and UAS and their programmes respectively by an independent accreditation council.

Participation of students in the evaluation process

A student expert takes part in every accreditation or evaluation procedure of the OAQ. To recruit qualified student experts the OAQ has established, in cooperation with the Swiss students union (VSS), an accreditation pool (see Chapter 5.4). Student experts must be part of this accreditation pool and must complete a training programme offered by OAQ and VSS before they are eligible to participate as experts for the procedures.

Publication of reports

As described above (see Chapter 5.5) there still exist legal barriers with regard to the publication of decision and reports, according to the different assessment procedures conducted and the relevant legal frameworks, decision-making bodies and authorities involved. However, some of these obstacles have been overcome over the past years. In the case of the accreditation of the programmes of basic medical education, all decisions and reports based on

the MedBG/LPMéd must be published by law. The decision of the government to establish the legal fundamentals that allow the publication of negative decisions was an important step. It is likely that the new law and its bylaws will follow this example and solve existing problems regarding publication policies.

Internal Quality Assurance (iQA) and Feedback mechanisms

OAQ has experienced different quality improvement cycles during the last five years. In most cases, the reason to take measures in iQA was the development of a new domain such as compulsory accreditation procedures of medical education or programmes offered by UAS. This shows that iQA must be linked with the overall development of the portfolio of activities and cannot be limited to in-house issues. Numerous new instruments have been prepared, published and put into practice, taking account of the feedback of the relevant Scientific Board and of external experts.

One person coordinates the iQA of the agency and this person is also a member of the ENQA iQA group.

Internal feedback has been formalised by providing written records of weekly team meetings. A new set of internal handbooks and checklists allows feedback to be taken into account without delay. Feedback on IT facilities and on the OAQ procedures database are collected in an interactive table allowing technical problems to be fixed without delay by our external providers.

6.2 Internal organisation

Since 2006, the number of quality assurance procedures has substantially increased and the field of activities of OAQ has broadened. This development has made OAQ rethink its internal organisation. Three units were introduced that reflect the most important activities of the OAQ. They are a unit for procedures in the university field, a unit for procedures in the field of UAS and a unit for procedures in the field of medical education. Each unit is headed by one person (sector coordinator) who has the responsibility to coordinate the procedures in that domain.

Additionally, one person coordinates international activities, which comprises requests for services, European projects, distance-education, procedures abroad, international conferences, activities with the QA-networks in which the OAQ is a member, dialogue/reflection in HE policies and assessment procedures jointly coordinated with international bodies.

Finally, one person coordinates internal and external communications.

7 IMPROVEMENT MEASURES AND CHALLENGES 2011-2016

These are closely related to the draft law (HFKG/LAHE), which is expected to enter into force on January 1, 2013.

The HFKG/LAHE should bring improvement in the organisational aspects of the external quality assurance system, including an independent decision-making body for all external quality assurance procedures (Accreditation Council). The details of the OAQ's organisational link to the planned Accreditation Council are still to be defined by the policy makers.

Most prominently the question is being debated as to whether the OAQ will be the only agency or whether agencies from other countries will be permitted to operate in Switzerland.

The main challenge in this transitional phase will be achieving the development of a coherent institutional accreditation model responding to both national and international requirements in external QA. The experience gained by the OAQ in a decade of regulated external QA activities in Switzerland should be valued. The OAQ should indeed play a key role in the process of bringing together different HE contexts into a single external QA system applicable to all.

There is room for development in particular in respect to the accreditation of private universities in Switzerland. Under the current voluntary external QA system, consumer protection remains weak. In fact, today's legal framework regulating the provision of private HE in Switzerland does not entirely prevent low quality education institutions or even "degree mills" from operating. The HFKG/LAHE should improve this situation, as institutional accreditation would become obligatory for all public HEIs and private HEIs which denominate themselves as university institutions or universities, introducing greater consumer protection.

In order to face the challenges deriving from this important transitional phase, the OAQ underwent a strategic process at the end of 2010. During this participative process, the OAQ defined its goals for the period 2011-2012 and developed measures to implement them (see annexe 4.4.B).

8 LIST OF DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE (ANNEXES)

- 2.1.A Federal Law on Funding and Coordination of the Higher Education Sector HFKG (German version) and LAHE (French version)
- 4.1.A Annual report 2008
- 4.1.B Annual report 2009
- 4.1.C Annual report 2010
- 4.1.D List of procedures carried out since the last evaluation
- 4.1.E List of on-going procedures
- 4.2.A SUC Bylaws 2002
- 4.2.B Agreement OAQ-FOPH, accreditation of graduate medical programmes, 06.11.2006
- 4.2.C Agreement OAQ-FOPH, accreditation of post-graduate medical programmes, 26.10.2009
- 4.3.1.A Annual financial statements 2009 (Jahresabschluss)
- 4.3.1.B Revisionsbericht 2009
- 4.3.1.C Annual financial statements 2010 (Jahresabschluss)
- 4.3.1.D Revisionsbericht 2010
- 4.3.1.E Budget 2011
- 4.3.1.F Budget 2012
- 4.3.2.A OAQ Rules for Continuing Training of Staff (Weiterbildungsreglement)
- 4.4.A Mission Statement
- 4.4.B Chapter 4 of the Strategic Policy (Econcept)
- 4.4.C Annual plan 2012
- 4.5.B Scheme of formal procedural steps - Universities
- 4.5.C Scheme of formal procedural steps - UAS
- 4.5.D Scheme of formal procedural steps - Medicine (Graduate programmes)
- 4.5.E Scheme of formal procedural steps - Medicine (Postgraduate programmes)
- 4.5.F Scheme of formal procedural steps - Germany
- 4.5.G ECA Principles for the selections of experts
- 4.5.H Example of OAQ contract with external experts
- 4.6.A Example(s) of Guide to self-evaluation
- 4.6.B Example(s) of Guide to external evaluation
- 4.6.C Inventory of all the existing Guides (UAS, Germany, Medicine...)
- 4.6.D List of upcoming formal follow-up procedures
- 4.6.E Examples of protocols of meetings between the OAQ and the HEI prior the site-visit
- 4.6.F Examples of site-visit programme
- 4.7.A Quality principles and measures of the OAQ
- 4.7.B Management Handbook
- 4.7.C Internal Handbook
- 4.7.D External review report of OAQ accreditation by the GAC in 2010
- 4.7.E Agenda of weekly team meetings
- 4.7.F Coordination of OAQ international activities
- 5.1.A SUC accreditation standards (Accreditation Guidelines, 28 June 2007)
- 5.1.B FDEA accreditation standards for UAS (UAS Accreditation Guidelines, 4 May 2007)
- 5.1.C GAC accreditation criteria for procedures in Germany (Rules for the Accreditation of Study Programmes and for System Accreditation, 8 December 2009 in the version of 10 December 2010)
- 5.1.D SUC standards for IQA in universities (iQA Guidelines, 7 December 2006)
- 5.3.2.A Quality Standards for academic institutions. Points of Reference
- 5.3.2.B Quality Standards for academic programmes. Points of Reference
- 5.4.A Outline of workshop for student experts
- 5.4.B Example(s) of Briefing-slides

- 5.4.C Examples of selected expert panels
- 5.6.A OAQ example of re-accreditation
- 5.8.A Synthesis Q-audit report
- 5.8.B Article on OAQ-EAC Cooperation
- 5.8.C Paper focussing on institutional assessments: Beccari L.; Heusser R.; Schenker-Wicki A. (2009): The Swiss External QA System: lessons learned over the past five years.
In: EUA (ed.): Bologna Handbook, Raabe Verlag. Berlin, p. B 4.6-3: 1-16

9 LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CRUS	Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities
EAC	European Association of Conservatories
ECA	European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines
EUA	European University Association
EFKH	Federal Commission for Universities of Applied Sciences
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
FDHA	Federal Department of Home Affairs
FDEA	Federal Department of Economic Affairs
FOPH	Federal Office of Public Health
GAC	German Accreditation Council
HEI	higher education institution
HR	human resources
INQAAHE	International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
iQA	internal quality assurance
KFH	Rector's Conference of the Swiss Universities of Applied Sciences
MEBEKO	Commission for Medical Professions (Medizinalberufekommission)
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OAQ	Swiss Center of Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education
OPET	Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology
QA	quality assurance
SAC	Swiss Accreditation Council (for Medical Education)
SER	State Secretariat for Education and Research
SUC	Swiss University Conference
UAS	Universities of Applied Sciences
VSS	Swiss Student Union

Abbreviations of legal texts:

Accreditation Guidelines	Guidelines of the Swiss University Conference for Academic Accreditation in Switzerland, 28 June 2007 (SR/RS 414.205.3)
UAS Accreditation Guidelines	FDEA Guidelines on Accreditation of Universities of Applied Sciences and Degree Programmes, FDEA, 4 May 2007
UFG/LAU	Federal Law on Financial Aid to Universities of 8 October 1999 (SR/RS 414.20)
MedBV/OPMéd	Ordinance on Medical Professions, 27 June 2007 (SR/RS 811.112.0)
MedBG/LPMéd	Federal Law on Medical Professions, 23 June 2006 (SR/RS 811.11)
iQA Guidelines	Guidelines for Quality Assurance at Swiss Universities, SUC, 7 December 2006 (SR/RS 414.205.2)
HFKG/LAHE	Federal Law on Funding and Coordination of the Higher Education Sector (draft)