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der schweizerischen hochschulen

Annual Report 2002

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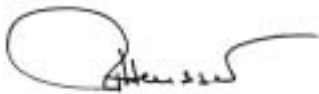
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Foreword

In 2002 the OAQ's activities were focused on the establishment of an accreditation system for academic institutions and programs in Switzerland. The guidelines for accreditation and the quality standards, which form the basis of the accreditation decision, underwent a wide-ranging national review by academic institutions and interested parties from the fields of education, science, research and politics, and were subsequently approved by the members of the Swiss University Conference (SUK) in December 2002. Switzerland now has, for the first time, a procedure for assessing whether institutions and programs at university level comply with minimum quality requirements.

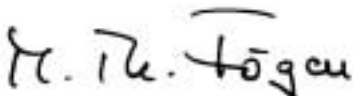
The OAQ's close cooperation with national and international partners was intensified in 2002. The OAQ became a member of various international quality assurance networks and co-initiated two European networks for accreditation agencies. The aim of this cooperation is to ensure that the OAQ's activities are in line with best international practices, and that accreditation decisions are also recognized in other countries. On a national level the OAQ is participating in a number of commissions and project groups, among them the Project Management Bologna Coordination organized by the Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities (CRUS). The OAQ also proposed the establishment of a network of persons responsible for quality at Swiss universities, an initiative that was welcomed both by the Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities and the universities themselves.

It would not have been possible to master the challenges facing the OAQ without skilled and dedicated employees. We owe them our special thanks. But we would also like to thank all those who support the OAQ and contribute to its development.



Rolf Heusser, MD, MPH

Director of the Center of Accreditation and Quality Assurance
of the Swiss Universities (OAQ)



Prof. Marie Theres Fögen

President of the Scientific Advisory Board

1 The OAQ's activities in 2002

1.1 OAQ office

The main focus of the OAQ office's activities in the year under review was accreditation. A review of international accreditation systems formed the basis for the "Guidelines for Academic Accreditation in Switzerland" which were drawn up in collaboration with European accreditation and quality assurance agencies. The guidelines underwent a broad review by a number of academic institutions and representatives from the fields of education, science, research and politics; the guidelines and the associated quality standards were subsequently revised by legal experts and approved by the members of the Swiss University Conference (SUK) on 5 December 2002. The instruments necessary for the accreditation process (detailed explanations of the quality standards, guide to self-evaluation by the universities, guide for external experts, contracts) were drafted by the end of 2002, and the operative task of accreditation can now begin.

Another important area was international and national collaboration. The OAQ joined three international quality assurance networks and co-initiated two European networks for accreditation agencies (a regional network linking Switzerland, Germany and Austria and a network of accreditation institutions in Western Europe). The objective of this involvement is to ensure that Swiss accreditation decisions are, in future, recognized beyond Switzerland, too.

Intensive preliminary work was carried out to clarify the future accreditation of the universities of applied sciences in Switzerland and the accreditation of studies in the medical and psychological fields. At the behest of the Secretary of State for Science and Research, the OAQ also investigated whether and to what extent benchmarking is a suitable instrument for quality assurance.

In addition, the OAQ took the initiative in forming a network of quality managers at Switzerland's universities. This initiative was commended by the Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities (CRUS) and the universities.

1.2 Director and academic staff

The OAQ office is headed by the Director. He represents the OAQ both internally and externally and is responsible for the planning and implementation of all activities. The number of academic staff remained unchanged throughout 2002. These five members of staff have backgrounds in the humanities and social sciences, natural sciences and engineering sciences. They work on a part-time basis. In addition to their joint work on accreditation, the academic staff are responsible for special areas such as national and international education policy, quality criteria for distance learning, implementation of the Bologna Declaration, evaluation, internal quality management, etc.

The Director or the academic staff represented the OAQ at 16 international meetings and conferences, which offered them a stage to present the work done by the OAQ in lectures and presentations. Written summaries were produced of all international conferences (UNESCO meetings, ENQA meetings, etc.). These may be consulted at or ordered from the OAQ secretariat. In addition, the accreditation and quality assurance agencies in seven European countries were visited during 2002 to enable an exchange of information and to provide an opportunity to discuss unresolved questions (e.g. mutual recognition of accreditation decisions, accreditation of institutions versus accreditation of programs, linking evaluation to accreditation, etc.). A particularly close working relationship has since developed with accreditation and quality assurance experts in Germany, the Netherlands, Austria and the Nordic countries. In addition to its international activities in 2002, the OAQ held around 200 discussions, meetings and presentations in Switzerland with the aim of exchanging information, expertise and experience and promoting the national networking of the OAQ.

1.3 Secretariat at the OAQ office

Two employees in the secretariat, who also work part-time, support the academic staff in their many and varied tasks. The technical infrastructure was established and expanded in view of the forthcoming accreditation procedures. External experts assisted the secretariat in developing a concept for a comprehensive database, after which various quotations for its implementation were obtained. Security aspects were clarified and the first steps in this direction were taken. Our colleagues in the secretariat are responsible for the efficient running of our day-to-day business, and they also support the Director in implementing the measures, projects and activities defined in the annual plan.

1.4 Scientific Advisory Board

The Scientific Advisory Board is responsible for the scientific quality of the work done by the OAQ and supports the OAQ office in an advisory capacity. The OAQ office and the Scientific Advisory Board met for four working meetings at which the accreditation concept, the accreditation process and the quality standards were discussed extensively and brought into line with international requirements. Other decisions taken concerned the schedule of fees, applications for accreditation that had been received and quality evaluations within the qualification procedure for the granting of financial support. In May 2002, the Scientific Advisory Board also met with representatives of the Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities (CRUS).

2 Accreditation

2.1 Definition and objectives of accreditation

Accreditation is a formal, transparent means of evaluating quality in which defined, internationally compatible standards are used to establish whether academic institutions and/or the programs they offer meet minimum requirements in terms of quality. By definition, the accreditation process must be carried out by an independent body. Accordingly, most European countries have set up accreditation and quality assurance agencies; Switzerland joined this trend in establishing the OAQ. Accreditation decisions in tertiary education provide the public and all the involved interest groups with a guarantee that the quality of teaching and studies at an institution complies with international requirements. Accreditation results are thus an important element in the international recognition of university diplomas and titles. In many European countries, accreditation of programs became mandatory when the university system was changed to the bachelor and master degree structure. We can assume that the significance of accreditation will increase as the details of the European education space become more specific. Moreover, procedures of this kind contribute towards regulating national and international education markets, which are becoming increasingly complex.

2.2 Guidelines for academic accreditation in Switzerland

According to the Law on Financial Aid to Universities, one of the central tasks of the OAQ is to develop guidelines for implementing the accreditation procedure for universities in Switzerland. Priority was given to this task, and it has been concluded successfully. The accreditation guidelines were subject to a wide-ranging review by academic institutions and interested parties from the fields of education, science, research and politics, and were approved by the Swiss University Conference (SUK) in December 2002. Academic institutions in both the public and private sectors are now able to submit requests for accreditation either for the institution as a whole or for the programs offered. It is primarily teaching that is evaluated for accreditation purposes. As stated in the guidelines, accreditation is a three-stage process. Self-evaluation by the unit seeking accreditation is followed by an on-site visit by a group of independent experts to ascertain whether specified quality standards are being met. The decision to grant accreditation or not is based on the reports generated by the self-evaluation and external evaluation phases. The decision is prepared by the OAQ and taken by the SUK. If the result is positive, the institute is awarded a quality certificate. The results of the accreditation procedure are published with due regard for data protection requirements.

The Swiss accreditation system is far more than just a form of quality control. The procedure for evaluating quality and the quality standards were conceived in such a way that the participating universities are also given important information on how quality can be enhanced.

2.3 Accompanying instruments in the accreditation process

Besides the accreditation guidelines, the OAQ has developed the following instruments for the accreditation process:

- *Quality standards for academic institutions and programs. Points of reference*
To make the quality expectations clear, detailed points of reference and matching questions to the academic institutions have been used to explain the quality standards.
- *Guide to self-evaluation. Instructions for universities*
The guide explains in detail how universities can prepare for external evaluation. The self-evaluation by the institution seeking accreditation enables it to collect all the information it will need for the subsequent external evaluation. Moreover, the self-evaluation phase offers the institutions or programs an opportunity to examine their own activities using external criteria. The self-evaluation phase can therefore contribute greatly to improving quality quite independently of any accreditation decision.
- *Guide to external evaluation. Recommendations for experts*
This document serves to support the group of experts carrying out the external evaluation at the university. During the two-day on-site visit, talks are held with various leading figures at the institution seeking accreditation. Based on these talks, the experts assess quality against the standards laid down in the accreditation procedure. The guide provides recommendations on the time frame and organization of the on-site visit and on formulating a standardized final report.
- *Accreditation of private academic institutions and programs. Criteria for the preliminary examination by the OAQ*
In accordance with the "Guidelines for Academic Accreditation in Switzerland", the OAQ can carry out a preliminary examination following an application for accreditation by a private academic institution and/or a program. The preliminary examination is based on a preset and publicly available list of criteria established in 2002 in close cooperation with the Scientific Advisory Board and with an eye on conditions applicable in other European countries. The preliminary examination is to ensure that the same preconditions regarding the object of accreditation prevail for the private applicant as for any public academic institution.
- *Contracts and supplementary documentation*
Sample contracts have been established both for the accreditation process involving private institutions and for the involvement of external experts. Other information material is available, in which the process outlined only briefly in the accreditation guidelines is explained in greater detail.

2.4 Specific quality standards for accreditation

In 2002 the OAQ started to draft specific quality standards for the following areas:

- *Quality standards for accreditation in human medicine*

Accreditation guidelines for medicine need to go beyond the generic quality requirements formulated in the "Guidelines for Academic Accreditation in Switzerland". They also have to take into account the specific requirements of the professions concerned as formulated in the revised Federal Law on Academic Training in the Medical Professions (MedBG), and the quality standards must be in keeping with the international requirements for medical professions. For this reason the OAQ has started working closely with the deans of the medical faculties and the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health (SFOPH) to define specific accreditation standards for human medicine. This work is proceeding in a very constructive manner and is expected to be concluded in the spring of 2003. The final version of these specific quality criteria will be submitted to the Swiss University Conference (SUK) for approval.

- *Quality standards for distance learning and e-learning programs*

It is not necessary to formulate new accreditation standards in order to evaluate the quality of distance and e-learning programs and the institutions that offer them, but the existing quality standards do need to be weighted to reflect the specific nature of these programs and the points of reference need to be made more precise. This task is being based on the work done by institutions providing distance learning programs and accreditation agencies, both in Europe and in the USA. Specific quality standards for distance and e-learning programs and institutions should be finalized by the spring of 2003.

- *Quality standards for bachelor and master degrees*

The OAQ is working with the Project Management Bologna Coordination attached to the Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities (CRUS) to define specific quality standards and competence categories for bachelor and master degrees. This work is based on the defining document drawn up jointly by a number of European countries (Dublin descriptors). The intention is to conclude work on these specific quality standards by June 2003 and then to assess various new bachelor and master programs in Switzerland to see whether the standards can be used to good effect.

2.5 Preliminary work regarding accreditation of universities of applied sciences

In 2002 the OAQ worked closely with the Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology (OPET), the body responsible for revising the Law on Universities of Applied Sciences. The draft of the revised law provides for accreditation of the universities of applied sciences by the OAQ, the intention being to apply the same procedures and quality standards as for universities. On several occasions the OAQ presented its ongoing work on accreditation guidelines for universities to the committees responsible for the universities of applied sciences and to a number of universities of applied sciences. In 2002 the OAQ received applications for universities of applied sciences or their programs to be accredited, but since the legal basis for this category of accreditation has not yet been established, the OAQ has been unable to pursue these applications. The OAQ is continuing intensive negotiations with the aim of finding a satisfactory solution for the universities of applied sciences as rapidly as possible.

In 2002 the OAQ also received requests for accreditation from schools of hotel management. But in this case, too, the OAQ is powerless to act since its current mandate covers only universities in Switzerland. The situation is similar to that of the universities of applied sciences, and the OAQ is examining whether it could extend its services to offer equivalent quality evaluation procedures for schools of hotel management.

2.6 Applications for accreditation received by the end of December 2002

Even before the accreditation guidelines were completed, faculties, departments and programs at various universities approached the OAQ with requests for accreditation in the near future. There appears to be a particularly great need for accreditation in the economic sciences, the engineering sciences and medicine. These disciplines are strongly dependent on international recognition of their diplomas and qualifications.

In addition to public universities, eight independent institutions also submitted applications for accreditation in 2002. In accordance with the valid accreditation guidelines, the OAQ will carry out a formal preliminary examination before the Swiss University Conference (SUK) decides whether these applications can be pursued or not.

2.7 National collaboration

Collaboration and networking with national academic partners is one of the OAQ's special interests. In 2002 the OAQ took part in a large number of meetings, discussions and events in Switzerland.

The OAQ also joined the following working groups in Switzerland:

- Indicator Group of the Swiss University Conference (SUK)
- Project Management Bologna Coordination and network ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) attached to the Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities (CRUS)
- Quality Assurance in Healthcare project group at the Federal Office of Metrology and Accreditation (METAS)
- Commission of the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health (SFOPH) charged with revising the Federal Law on Academic Training in the Medical Professions (MedBG)
- Steering committee at the SFOPH for the Federal Law on Professions in Psychology (PsyG)

The OAQ works closely with the universities and their representatives (principals, deans, professors, students) and supports the quality management efforts of the universities by providing services on request. The OAQ has proposed the establishment of a network of quality managers at the universities.

2.8 International collaboration

The OAQ bases its work on best international practices and draws heavily on developments in education policy in Europe. Major questions such as the creation of a European education space, international recognition of titles and diplomas and regulation of free trade in educational opportunities can only be resolved in a transnational context. Hence, it is very important for the OAQ to collaborate closely with European and international quality assurance and accreditation agencies.

2.8.1 Involvement in international networks

The OAQ joined a number of European and international quality assurance networks in 2002 and took part in their activities. Below is a list of these networks:

- *European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)*
This network was set up in 1998 and currently has 46 members in 23 European countries. The objective of the ENQA is to promote the European dimension of quality assurance in tertiary education. ENQA promotes the exchange of information between the various accredit-

ation and quality assurance agencies and organizes themed workshops in which the OAQ also played an active part in 2002 (workshop on institutional evaluation in Norway, workshop on benchmarking in Finland).

- *International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE)*
The membership of this network, founded in 1991, comprises institutions on all five continents which are involved in academic quality assurance. The primary goal of the network is to disseminate information on current theories and practices in quality evaluation and quality improvement in tertiary education. In conjunction with the accreditation agencies in Germany and Austria, the OAQ has prepared a contribution for the INQAAHE's conference which will be held in April 2003 in Dublin.
- *Joint Quality Initiative (JQI)*
This network was founded in 1999 with the aim of developing a consensus on best practices in quality assurance and the accreditation of bachelor and master programs in Europe. In 2002 the JQI approved a joint paper (the Dublin descriptors) defining the generic competences of individuals with a bachelor or master degree. These "BaMA descriptors" are currently being tested in a number of European countries and integrated into national accreditation systems. The OAQ has approached the CRUS's Project Management Bologna Coordination to request that this European document should be discussed with a view to possible application in Switzerland.

2.8.2 Initiative to constitute regional accreditation networks in Europe

In the summer of 2002 the OAQ proposed the formation of a regional accreditation network encompassing Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Objectives and an organizational structure were drafted and resolved by consensus between the three countries at the initial meeting in Bern and the follow-up meeting in Bonn. The network intends to pursue joint projects relating to accreditation including, for example, the formation of a joint pool of external experts. The network also aims to pursue political activities. As a first step, the chairmen of the German and Austrian accreditation councils and the Director of the OAQ sent a letter to the ministers of education in their respective countries. The letter pointed out the growing importance of accreditation (creation of the European tertiary education space, GATS treaties, etc.) and proposed a workshop on accreditation to tie in with the meeting of ministers in September 2003 in Berlin. The Head of the Federal Department of Home Affairs, Federal Councillor Pascal Couchepin, responded very positively to this initiative. The German Accreditation Council has stated that the workshop can take place as planned in Berlin.

In December 2002 the OAQ discussed with representatives of the Dutch accreditation body the possibility of forming a more comprehensive network involving all the accreditation agencies in Western Europe. This idea was given a more definite form, and the constitution of the network

is planned for June 2003. The German-speaking countries will be joined in the network by the accreditation agencies in Belgium, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Spain and the Netherlands. The main objective is to pursue measures to promote mutual and transnational recognition of accreditation decisions and procedures.

2.8.3 Presentation of the Swiss accreditation system at international conferences

The Swiss accreditation system was presented during major plenary sessions at the following international accreditation conferences:

- Meeting on "Quality Assurance in Higher Education" organized by the Institute of Higher Education Research and the Conference of Rectors in Higher Education, Wittenberg, Germany, March 2002
- International accreditation seminar run by the Agency for Quality Assurance through Accreditation of Programs (AQAS), Cologne, Germany, June 2002

The Swiss accreditation model and other European models were also discussed at the following international workshops:

- International quality benchmarks in postgraduate education, Donau-Universität Krems, Krems, Austria, May 2002
- Workshop on benchmarking organized by the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), Helsinki, Finland, June 2002
- Seminar on accreditation and continuous quality improvement run by the Ecole Nationale de la Santé Publique, Rennes, France, August 2002
- Workshop on the Joint Quality Initiative run by the Joint Quality Initiative Network, Amsterdam, Netherlands, September 2002
- Workshop on institutional evaluation organized by the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), Tromsø, Norway, December 2002

Finally, the Director of the OAQ was invited to moderate an international round-table discussion to tie in with the anniversary celebrations of the German Accreditation Council in Bonn on 19 December 2002. The panel consisted of representatives from the EU Commission, the European University Association (EUA), the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the German Accreditation Council.

2.8.4 Visits to accreditation and quality assurance agencies in other countries

In 2002 the Director and academic staff at the OAQ visited the following European accreditation and quality assurance agencies:

- National Agency for Higher Education, Sweden, February 2002
- Association of Universities, Association of Universities of Professional Education, and Center for Higher Education Policy Studies, Netherlands, February 2002
- Quality Assurance Agency, United Kingdom, March 2002
- Austrian Accreditation Council, April 2002
- Austrian Council of Universities of Applied Science, April 2002
- Danish Evaluation Institute, Denmark, April 2002
- Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation, Germany, June 2002
- German Accreditation Council, December 2002

Other informal contacts with representatives of European and international quality assurance agencies took place in the course of the conferences and meetings mentioned above. Members of the OAQ asked other people for their assessment of the Swiss accreditation system, and the feedback was exceptionally positive. The strengths and weaknesses of the various national accreditation and quality assurance systems were also discussed and cooperation projects were initiated (e.g. reciprocal involvement in accreditation procedures).

3 Quality assurance

Under the terms of the Cooperation Agreement between the Federal Government and the University Cantons on Matters Relating to Universities, the OAQ is obliged to carry out certain quality assurance tasks. For example, it informs the Swiss University Conference (SUK) of quality assurance requirements and checks regularly whether these are being met. It also drafts recommendations for the evaluations carried out by universities on their own responsibility. The OAQ is also required to participate in international collaboration in the field of quality assurance and can provide the universities with services to support them in their quality management efforts. In the latter case the OAQ respects the universities' own responsibility for internal quality assurance measures and evaluations.

3.1 Initiative to establish a network of quality managers at Swiss universities

At the moment the internal quality assurance measures carried out by universities in Switzerland are very diverse. The OAQ would like to contribute to greater harmonization and coordination of these activities, and has therefore proposed to the Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities (CRUS) the establishment of a network of quality managers at the universities in Switzerland. This initiative was positively received by the CRUS and the universities, and a constituting meeting will take place in the spring of 2003. Possible functions of a network of this kind include an exchange of information on evaluation activities and discussion of best practices with the aim of enhancing internal quality assurance. However, it will be up to the network to decide how it will be organized and which areas it will tackle.

3.2 Benchmarking as a means of quality assurance

In 2002 the OAQ was requested by the Secretary of State for Education and Science to establish whether and to what extent benchmarking is a suitable instrument for quality assurance. This mandate was pursued by studying work that has already been published in the field of ranking and benchmarking in Switzerland. In 2002 the OAQ also took part in two international benchmarking conferences (at the ETHZ in May 2002 and the ENQA workshop in Helsinki, Finland, in June 2002).

Existing studies show that benchmarking projects are an excellent instrument for assuring and improving quality, particularly if they have an international basis. Nowadays, the European countries tend to use both traditional benchmarking models (comparisons) and, increasingly, successful new models (creative benchmarking) which go beyond quality comparisons and include a joint effort to produce good practices for various areas of activity (e.g. evaluation of lectures, staff-to-student ratios, examinations, etc.). Before a benchmarking project is started, important questions such as responsibilities, objectives, participants and decision-making processes have to be clarified. It is desirable for Swiss universities to take part in international academic benchmarking projects; certain questions could be discussed within the new network of quality managers at Swiss universities. In addition, the OAQ could organize an international benchmarking conference in Switzerland to provide initial impetus for broadly based

projects. The aim here must be to involve particularly those institutions and universities which have already looked at academic benchmarking in the past (ETH Board, Federal Statistical Office, Centre for Science and Technology Studies, Swiss National Science Foundation, certain universities, etc.).

3.3 International and national collaboration

As mentioned above, the OAQ works closely with international quality assurance and accreditation agencies. An effort has been made to forge a close working relationship with experts in France, the United Kingdom, Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands in order to clarify unresolved questions concerning the implementation of institutional quality audits; these countries also carry out quality evaluations of this kind, or will do in the future. The results will be important for the quality evaluations which are carried out in Switzerland on behalf of the Federal Office for Education and Science (FOES) as part of the qualifying procedure for subsidies.

The OAQ is also involved in quality assurance questions being handled by the following national networks and working groups: Indicator Group of the Swiss University Conference (SUK), Project Management Bologna Coordination and network ECTS of the Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities (CRUS).

4 Qualifying procedure for financial support

Under the terms of the Federal Law on Financial Aid to Universities, funding provided to universities and institutions is dependent, among other things, on whether the academic institution concerned provides high-quality services which are examined by the OAQ and recognized by the Swiss University Conference (SUK). The quality evaluations foreseen in this context are very similar in method and content to the accreditation procedure, although accreditation and recognition are not equivalent in formal terms. A positive accreditation decision on its own does not qualify the institution to receive subsidies; additional criteria must be fulfilled before the institution can receive financial support.

4.1 The mandate from the Federal Office for Education and Science (FOES)

Under the new guidelines governing the qualification procedure for subsidies foreseen by the Federal Law on Financial Aid to Universities (UFG) of 10 December 2002, the BBW mandates the OAQ in agreement with the SUK to examine whether the university or institution requesting subsidies provides high-quality services within the meaning of Article 11 para. 3 item A of the UFG. The quality of institutions which have not received subsidies before is evaluated using the same practices as for academic accreditation. The OAQ has been mandated to carry out two evaluations of this kind in 2003; one was started in December 2002. The OAQ will be mandated to carry out a summary quality assessment of universities which already qualify for subsidies; the main focus will be on the quality assurance systems operated by these universities (institutional quality audits). In 2002, the OAQ started the preliminary drafting work on these summary quality assessments with the intention of following best international practice.

5 Information and communication

The OAQ's information and communication activities comply with the tasks, projects, publications and events foreseen in the 2002 annual plan. Firstly, a basis for a coherent and long-range information and communication policy was drawn up. This included commissioning an external expert to help develop a communication concept describing various elements including the starting position, the principles governing internal and external work, the vision of the OAQ, its statements on accreditation and quality assurance, the primary and secondary target groups, the communication objectives and strategy and the measures that need to be implemented.

The OAQ's logo and image

A logo and image designed to ensure the unique presence of the OAQ in the public eye were developed in conjunction with a CD/CI agency; this work was completed in mid-May.

Target-group-specific mailing database

The secretariat at the OAQ office created a mailing database of the national and international institutions, organizations, partners, decision makers and opinion leaders relevant to the OAQ so that they can be contacted specifically and efficiently in the future. Another mailing database was set up containing target-group-specific and general media in Switzerland.

The 2001 Annual Report

The Annual Report covering the period from 1 October to 31 December 2001 was published at the end of March in four languages (G/F/I/E). Its purpose was twofold: firstly, the OAQ wanted to report on its activities in the first 90 days of operation; secondly, the aim was to present national and international partners, organizations and institutions a detailed description of the organization. For this reason the Annual Report covered more than just the activities of the OAQ; it also described the employees, the Scientific Advisory Board, tasks in 2002 and the OAQ's vision for 2006. The Annual Report was distributed widely both in Switzerland and abroad (to some 500 recipients).

The website www.oaq.ch

The concept and editorial content for the website were completed at the end of September. The website went online at the start of October in four languages (German, French, Italian and English), and its start was announced in a national mailing action. The information on the website is arranged under the following headings:

- Profile (legal basis, mandate and functions, employees)
- Background information (education policy, Bologna Declaration, universities act, accreditation in Europe)
- Accreditation ("Guidelines for Academic Accreditation in Switzerland", application forms for accreditation, report on accreditation and evaluation in Europe)
- Activities of the OAQ (annual reports, vision for 2006)
- Information and communication (FAQs, laws, bylaws)
- Links (authorities, national institutions, universities, student organizations, international organizations and institutions, links for specific professions and countries)
- How to contact the OAQ

The website was visited around 1,300 times between mid-October and the end of December 2002.

National media liaison

A targeted, stepwise approach to contact with the media allows the OAQ to make the best possible use of resources. In view of the enormous variety of tasks that the OAQ office had to carry out in the year under review (production of the accreditation guidelines, establishment of an efficient infrastructure, etc.), media contacts were primarily related to specific target groups. Contact with the general media will be intensified from January 2003.

Event for information managers at Swiss universities in December 2002

The universities are one of the OAQ's primary target groups. Therefore, the information managers from the universities were invited to Bern. The Director and academic staff presented the topics of accreditation and quality assurance in the national and international context, the current status of work at the OAQ office and the accreditation guidelines approved by the SUK on 5 December 2002. The intention is to continue contacts of this kind on a regular basis in 2003.

6 Financial details

6.1 Balance sheet and income statement for 2002

Balance sheet as at 31 December 2002

Assets	CHF
Cash and post office account	930.15
Federal current accounts, BEKB savings account	512,878.60
Prepaid expenses	27,287.95
Total assets	541,096.70
Liabilities	
Borrowings	211,940.43
Deferred liabilities	51.53
Reserve (unused contributions from 2002)	329,104.74
Total liabilities	541,096.70

Income statement: 1 January to 31 December 2002

Expenditure	CHF
Personnel expenses including social security	957,556.28
Public relations project, website	86,570.95
Operating expenses	
Rent/refurbishment	68,625.70
Furnishing	15,035.10
Hardware/software	30,481.60
Database	79,776.00
Operating expenses	114,460.08
Accreditation costs (documents, translation, legal support)	88,638.60
Total expenses	1,441,144.31
Formation of reserve (unused contributions from 2002)	329,104.74
Total	1,770,249.05
Income	
Contributions from the cantons	
BS	90,703.00
BE	132,603.00
FR	81,957.00
GE	157,512.00
VD	100,093.00
NE	36,939.00
SG	40,160.00
TI	10,413.00
ZH	224,120.00
Federal contribution	874,500.00
Interest income	21,249.05
Total	1,770,249.05

6.2 Auditors' report

EIDGENÖSSISCHE FINANZKONTROLLE
CONTRÔLE FÉDÉRAL DES FINANCES
CONTROLLO FEDERALE DELLE FINANZE
CONTROLLA FEDERALE DA FINANZAS



MONBIJOUSTRASSE 45, CH-3003 BERN

Reg. Nr. 3087 / 327.00.1.2

Bericht der Revisionsstelle

an die Mitglieder der Schweizerischen Universitätskonferenz (SUK)

Als Revisionsstelle haben wir die Buchführung und die Jahresrechnung (Bilanz und Erfolgsrechnung) des Organs für Akkreditierung und Qualitätssicherung der Schweizerischen Hochschulen (OAQ) für das am 31. Dezember 2002 abgeschlossene Geschäftsjahr geprüft.

Für die Jahresrechnung ist die Geschäftsstelle des OAQ verantwortlich, während unsere Aufgabe darin besteht, die Jahresrechnung zu prüfen und zu beurteilen. Wir bestätigen, dass wir die gesetzlichen Anforderungen hinsichtlich Befähigung und Unabhängigkeit erfüllen.

Unsere Prüfung erfolgte nach den Grundsätzen des schweizerischen Berufsstandes, wonach eine Prüfung so zu planen und durchzuführen ist, dass wesentliche Fehlaussagen in der Jahresrechnung mit angemessener Sicherheit erkannt werden. Wir prüften die Posten und Angaben der Jahresrechnung mittels Analysen und Erhebungen auf der Basis von Stichproben. Ferner beurteilten wir die Anwendung der massgebenden Rechnungslegungsgrundsätze, die wesentlichen Bewertungsentscheide sowie die Darstellung der Jahresrechnung als Ganzes. Wir sind der Auffassung, dass unsere Prüfung eine ausreichende Grundlage für unser Urteil bildet.

Gemäss unserer Beurteilung entsprechen die Buchführung und die Jahresrechnung dem schweizerischen Gesetz, der Vereinbarung vom 14. Dezember 2000 zwischen dem Bund und den Universitätskantonen über die Zusammenarbeit im universitären Hochschulbereich (SR 414.205) sowie der Geschäftsordnung vom 22. Februar 2001 des OAQ. Betreffend Verwendung der Rückstellung (nicht gebrauchte Beiträge 2002) von CHF 329'104.74 wird das OAQ mit den Geldgebern Kontakt aufnehmen.

Wir empfehlen, die vorliegende Jahresrechnung zu genehmigen.

Bern, 24. Februar 2003

EIDGENÖSSISCHE FINANZKONTROLLE

Hans-Rudolf Wagner
dipl. Wirtschaftsprüfer

Robert Homberger
Revisionsexperte

7 Annual program for 2003

7.1 Accreditation

Now that the accreditation guidelines and the accompanying instruments have been finalized, applications for accreditation may be submitted to the OAQ. The OAQ is particularly interested in applying the accreditation instruments in different settings (e.g. initial and further education, programs in various disciplines, etc.) at an early stage so that any improvements that need to be made can be implemented in good time. The accreditation guidelines were approved in December 2002 for an initial period of one year, so any necessary modifications can be made in December 2003. In addition, a number of preliminary examinations will be carried out in 2003 for private institutions having requested accreditation.

In the first half of the year, the OAQ will continue its work on designing and developing specific quality standards. Top priority has been accorded to specific quality standards for medicine, distance learning programs and institutions, and bachelor and master degrees. The Swiss University Conference (SUK) will decide whether these specific quality standards should be incorporated into the accreditation guidelines.

An international accreditation conference in Switzerland is planned for the winter 2003/04, the objective of which is to highlight the international importance of accreditation. It will also describe the Swiss accreditation system and compare it to European and international models. Organization of major international activities can also be expected from the regional accreditation networks that have recently been established. The main question for discussion by both the planned network of accreditation agencies in Western Europe and the network of accreditation agencies in Germany, Austria and Switzerland will be mutual recognition of accreditation decisions. Another important aspect will be to position the topic of accreditation in the light of the meeting of European ministers of education, which will be held in Berlin in September 2003.

7.2 Quality assurance

In the first few months of 2003, the OAQ will draw up a concept for carrying out summary quality audits on behalf of the Federal Office for Education and Science (FOES); evaluations of this type are a mandatory part of the qualifying procedure for financial support. These concepts for institutional quality audits should be implemented from the summer of 2003. The aim is to evaluate the quality assurance systems of all the universities in Switzerland over the next two years. The OAQ will subsequently, in collaboration with the SUK and the CRUS, formulate minimum requirements for quality assurance systems in higher education. The OAQ is also planning to hold an international workshop on institutional quality assessments, in conjunction with the ENQA; this workshop is scheduled for the winter of 2003/04 and will be held in Switzerland. The network of quality managers at Swiss universities initiated by the OAQ will be used to exchange experience with internal evaluations carried out by the universities. In addition, the OAQ will produce an overview of evaluations at universities in other countries. The objective is to draw up a list of good practices for self-evaluation by universities. The universities will be responsible for this project; the OAQ will have only an initiating and supportive function.

7.3 National and international collaboration

In 2003 the OAQ will continue its intensive collaboration with accreditation and quality assurance agencies in other countries. Collaboration with the various tertiary education institutions and interested parties at national level will be intensified.

7.4 Information and communication

The primary goal of the OAQ in 2003 is to increase the familiarity of the various national target groups with its function, its work, its products and its services. Representatives from institutions of higher education (universities and universities of applied sciences) will be informed in particular. Media releases and widespread mailing of the OAQ's published profile to a wide range of addresses should help to introduce the OAQ to the public at large. The aim here must also be to draw attention to the OAQ's website which is regularly updated (www.oaq.ch). This website is to be enhanced by a search engine and a mailbox for enquiries in the course of 2003. Interactive elements are planned for the future. In general, a communication concept developed by an external communication consultant and approved by the OAQ will be implemented on an ongoing basis.